CONCEPTS AND EFFECTS OF SOME INFLUENTIAL IDEAS

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CONCEPTS AND EFFECTS OF SOME INFLUENTIAL IDEAS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Within the past half-century, ideas and the part they play in the lives of the people of the world have been receiving more and more attention. The recent catastrophic World War II may be said to have been the direct result of the clash of antagonistic ideas, and today the major differences preventing the establishment of the United Nations Security Council may be traced directly to differing ideologies of the powerful nations, Russia, Great Britain, and the United States. In view of these developments, the subject for this study was chosen, and an attempt will be made to trace the history of ideas from ancient times down to the present with special attention being given to the ways in which ideas originated and how they have been used.

The specific aim of the study is to survey the two main types of ideas -- realism and idealism -- and their history.

Since the study is to cover the period from ancient history down to the present, it is apparent that attention will have to be limited to the great, sweeping ideas which have engaged the attention of the world at different times.
In the limited space for the study, no detailed treatment is possible, and tendencies rather than isolated instances will be studied.

The source of the data is varied. For the basic framework of the study, standard textbooks on the history of philosophies have been used. Modern books, periodicals, and newspapers have been drawn upon freely for supplementary reading. An effort has been made to look underneath the surface of the written histories and to present causes and results of ideas as well as the ideas themselves.

The study is divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter gives the purpose and the aim of the study, the source of data, the limitations of the study, and the method of procedure. The second chapter studies the idea itself -- its definition, function, ways in which it has been used, and the types of ideas. Chapter III is devoted to the study of the ideas of the ancient peoples of the world, particularly the Greeks. An effort is made to find the seeds of both the main types of philosophy, realism, and idealism. The Medieval Age is known as a transitional age between the ancient and the modern ages, and the story of it comprises Chapter IV. Chapter V deals with the many varied philosophies of the modern age, and brings the reader down to the present day. The conclusions gained by the writer from the study will be presented in the closing chapter.
CHAPTER II

DEFINITION OF IDEAS, THEIR FUNCTION,
AND TYPES OF IDEAS

Webster's Dictionary defines ideas as images or concepts in the mind.\(^1\) Lerner distinguishes ideas from thought by quoting a German philosopher, Kantorowicz: "Men possess thoughts, but ideas possess men."\(^2\) Man, he claims, thinks his own thoughts but has his ideas thrust upon him. These ideas are imposed by circumstances and arise out of his environment as a consequence of his spontaneous reaction to it. But, whatever the definition, there is no gainsaying that ideas have materially influenced the history of the world and that they are today dominating the actions of men. McGovern says:

Each successive wave of ideas is but the carrying out in the world of fact the ideas which have arisen and captivated men's thoughts at this period. The dominating ideas of each age find expression first in the thoughts and then in the actions of the great men in question, and through their activity the whole of humanity is thereby transformed.\(^3\)

The part that ideas are playing, have played, and will play in the lives of the people of the world has not always

\(^1\)Webster's Home and Office Dictionary, p. 535.
\(^2\)Quoted from Max Lerner, Ideas Are Weapons, p. 3.
\(^3\)William M. McGovern, From Luther to Hitler, pp. 286-287.
been fully recognized by the average man. Too often he has regarded them as something abstract and remote from his every-day life and as subjects for abstruse arguments only. But within the past half-century ideas have been used to build great nations and great war machines which have threatened the civilization of the world. It is becoming more and more apparent that ideas are something to be reckoned with as well as discussed.

Lerner says that the new impact of ideas on the race of man is bound to "play havoc with intellectual history as it has been traditionally written." Heretofore, there have been two ways of viewing the history of ideas. One is the narrow view wherein ideas have been considered as the best that has been thought and said by the men termed philosophers and described as genealogical succession of schools of thought. The other method has been to consider ideas as states of social consciousness. Today, Lerner sees the history of ideas as the expression of broad social and class forces. The history of thought is a succession of movements caused by class and group interests and power relations. In other words, ideas have been the definite outgrowth of social, political, and economic conditions and these will have to be known before any informative appraisal may be made of the ideas themselves.

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4Lerner, Ideas Are Weapons, p. 5.

5Ibid.
In order to understand the history of ideas as defined above, Lerner says:

We shall have to shift our emphasis so as to include not only the conditions of the creation of ideas but also the conditions of the reception, not only the impulsions behind the ideas but also the uses to which they are put, not only the thinkers but the popularizers, the propagandists, the opinion skill groups, the final audience that believes or disbelieves and acts accordingly. 6

What constitutes the subject-matter of ideas is a question that well might be asked here. In ancient days, man's philosophy or his ideas dealt mostly with metaphysical subjects; at least, that is how history has recorded the question. We know from our own reading and thinking that man has always been much concerned with questions of government and ways of living, but our conception of philosophy and the historian's conception is that philosophy has mainly concerned itself about the nature of man and the universe in which he lives. He has asked: What is mind and how is it related to the body? He has wondered if the behavior of human beings is part of the machinery of nature. Does the soul, if a person has a soul, survive death? What are the qualities we call good and evil? What can we do, if anything, about controlling our destiny? How much, if anything, can we know beyond science? Modern philosophy has broadened until it takes in every sphere of man's life, but in ancient days this was not so.

However, in any purely factual, as well as one is

6 Ibid., p. 6.
possible, history of the growth of ideas or of philosophy there will be found divergent viewpoints and two distinct schools of thought. The labels of these classifications of thought will not always be found to be the same from one period to another and one, from time to time, may sweep the world, but somewhere there will be found outcroppings of these different types of thinking. One of them may be labeled as objective or realistic and the other as subjective or idealistic.

In studying these modes of thought or ideas, it has been found difficult to formulate any cut-and-dried definitions for realism and idealism. There have been so many changes and so many different branches of each, especially of realism, that defining them is no easy matter. However, they both deal with man’s fundamental nature and the ultimate source of the cause of his actions. If a layman, totally inexperienced in the modes of philosophical thought and reasoning, may undertake to define the two types of philosophies, the definitions would be: Realism, taken as a whole, is a belief that our senses give us a true picture of the external world. Idealism is a belief that the physical or external world is either largely or wholly the product of the mind.

These definitions, however, will not be found true for these philosophies all the way through their history and development. Cushman says that there are three general
periods into which the history of philosophy naturally falls: ancient, medieval, and modern. He states:

The differences between these three periods of the reflective life of the European have been very real. They are not to be explained by merely political shiftings or economic changes; nor are they fully expressed as differences in literary or artistic productions. Their differences lie deeper, for they are differences of mental attitude. The history of philosophy is more profound, more difficult, and more human than any other history, because it is the record of human points of view.\footnote{Herbert Ernest Cushman, \textit{A Beginner's History of Philosophy}, p. 2.}

Cushman then goes on to say that the history of philosophy is an organic development from an objective to a subjective and objective mingle. Ancient thought is properly called objective, the medieval traditional, and the modern subjective. Cushman, it will be noted, treats the history of ideas in the traditional way: more or less cut and dried, and in "successive schools of thought."\footnote{Lerner, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5.} The present study will look for wide variations of both realism and idealism in all three phases of the history of the world.

Any study of philosophy today, however, must take some things into consideration that would not have been necessary to study one hundred years ago. One of these things is the way in which ideas have been used. In ancient times and on down through the medieval ages, philosophy was mainly a metaphysical subject and not too closely related to the
lives of the people. Man argued over whether a man was born good and acquired evil through bad associations, or vice versa. In other words, philosophical subjects were mainly used as arguments and discussions about abstract subjects. But with the coming of the twentieth century, ideas have become potent weapons in the hands of government agencies and as such have had, and are still having, potent and powerful influences on the destiny of nations and the people of the world. This phase of realism and idealism must also be studied.

Ideas have been recognized as weapons according to the way in which they have been used. An instrumental approach to an idea recognizes that ideas can be used in behalf of ways of life and in the struggle for achievement of these desired ways. Man, however, must not be used as a pawn in a political game and his individuality and his ability to think for himself must be preserved. In the manipulative approach to ideas, the common man is used as a tool like he has been in Germany and is in Russia today. The government of a state takes ideas and uses them for the benefit of the government and not for the people of the state. In this study of the history of ideas and types of ideas, the use which has been made of ideas will be noted as well as the influence the ideas have had upon the growth and development of civilization.
CHAPTER III

PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS OF THE ANCIENT

PEOPLE OF THE WORLD

Philosophy is considered to have begun with the Greeks, but any student of ideas will know that this is not so. Man had existed long before the Greek civilization was developed, and man has had ideas since he was first in this world. But man, before the times of the Greeks, was not articulate in expressing his ideas, and he had few means, except pictorially, to state them. The Greeks enjoyed a higher degree of civilization than previous ancient peoples, and the ancient Greek had leisure for contemplation and the means of recording his ideas. Hence, ancient Greece is rightly regarded as the cradle of philosophy and a fertile field for the study of ideas.

It should be remembered that the Greeks were fundamentally hylogists. The Christian believer of today thinks that the world was created by a Supreme Being and that this Being rules the universe and directs the movement of the earth and the stars and the moon and the sun. The Greeks did not know the Christian doctrine, and, like all primitive people, made their own explanations and created their own
gods. There were Dionysus, the God of Wine; Neptune, the God of the Sea; Venus, the Goddess of Beauty; Jove, the God of the Heavens; Diana, the Goddess of the Chase; and various other pagan deities to whom the Greeks paid tribute. The world changed around the Greek from day to day, and watching these changes, he wondered about the whys and the wherefores of things. His first attempts at philosophy, then, were occupied with the only world which man can present clearly to himself — the world of nature.

The Greek, however, was a seafaring man, and his voyages took him away from home and to various places. He had experience with the winds and the waves, he watched the succession of days and nights, he saw the eclipse of the sun and of the moon, and he came into intimate contact with all phases of nature. There was an orderliness and an exactness about the universe that he could not altogether attribute to the creation of his pagan gods, and he began to seek an answer through some realistic thinking of his own. Thales, a member of a prominent Grecian family on the Island of Miletus, broke away from the traditional superstitions and thoughts of his day and sought a natural explanation of the natural phenomena.¹ Instead of telling a mythical story of what happened in the past, he looked to the world of fact as it actually lay before his eyes in order to find the answer to his questions. He did not so

¹Arthur Kenyon Rogers, A Student's History of Philosophy, p. 12.
much ask what the original form of the world was, but what is fundamental in the world always. He found this ultimate substance in water. In the light of scientific knowledge of today, this conclusion of Thales may seem to be absurdly inadequate, but it was important in that he based his findings on the observation of his environment. He saw that water had a great mobility. It changed into steam with the application of heat and into ice when it became cold. It was essential to growth and generation everywhere. He saw the sun draw the water from the land, and he saw it return in the form of rain. He watched the water sink into the ground and he watched then the growth of plant life which provided food for man. To Thales, water had what appeared to him to be the power of universal transformation.

The importance of the work of Thales to the student of the history of ideas is that he derived his knowledge through his senses. The things that he speculated about were real things that he could actually see and feel. The first beginnings of Greek philosophy, then, aside from superstition, were of the realistic kind. Rogers says:

In the beginnings, philosophy and science are thus identical. The Milesians are physicists and astronomers, bringing their hypotheses to bear, first of all, upon the natural processes which constitute the subject-matter of science; and the same interest continues to play a large part in the work of their successors. Each has his more or less novel theories to propound concerning the general
course of the world's development, and the explanation of the phenomena which it presents; particularly of such facts as might naturally be expected to interest a seafaring people -- meteorological phenomena, and the movements of the heavenly bodies. It would only be confusing to give an account of these theories here; but it should never be forgotten that we are dealing throughout with what is essentially a physical and scientific philosophy.²

These early Milesians, however, also made some beginnings in the field of metaphysical philosophy. A controversy arose between some of the inquiring minds about the concept of change. The Milesians assumed that this change was self-evident, but they also felt that there must be some underlying unity back of all the changes. This raised two questions: Was a thing the same after it had been changed, and if it was not, what was the difference between permanence and change? Heracleitus, another Grecian philosopher and of a different school of thought, answered the vexing questions by declaring that there was no such thing as permanence. There was no "static Being, no unchanging substratum."³ Everything that existed was in a state of flux, of continued change.

These changes, according to Heracleitus, did not take place in an "unregulated and lawless way"⁴ but in a rhythmical way. The immutable law of necessity kept the changes within bounds of definite proportions. These statements of Heracleitus, however, only invited further discussion. What

²Ibid., p. 13. ³Ibid., p. 15. ⁴Ibid., p. 17.
was this immutable law, and what governed it? Heracleitus answered by saying that the answer involved knowledge. True knowledge, he claimed, was not that gained by or through popular opinion derived from sense experiences, but "it was the scanty gleanings of intellectual labor." He drew a distinction between "sense knowledge" and the "higher thought knowledge." Sense experience is fallacious, he claimed, and the source of all kinds of illusions. Man could only rise "above the realm of changing appearance, and attain to true reality" through thought. In other words, man could secure knowledge through his mind as well as his senses, and this was the true knowledge. So, paradoxically, the first seeds of realism and idealism may be found in the earliest recorded histories of the philosophy of the Greeks.

Heracleitus lived about the time of 536-470 B.C. It was but natural that other men in other places should challenge his theories, and the more important of these were Parmenides (about 470 B.C.), Xenophanes (570-480 B.C.), Empedocles (490-430 B.C.), Anaxagoras (500-429 B.C.), and Democritus (about 460-360 B.C.). Each had varying opinions about the theories advanced by Heracleitus, but Democritus was the greatest investigator of antiquity. He regarded the material universe as abiding Being, but in so large a way as to be able to construct upon it a psychology

\[5\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 18-19.}\]
and an ethics. Nature and spirit were differentiated, but each remained objective. The universe, according to him, consisted of two parts: The Plenum, or self-moving, qualitatively similar atoms; and the Void or empty space in which the atoms moved. The Plenum is Being; the Void is not-Being. Impact caused by the atoms coming in contact with each other was the cause of every occurrence and change. No event could be explained as the work of some mythical god or goddess or some spiritual agency. Mechanical cause is behind every event. For the first time the world was conceived to be a universal reign of mechanical law. Man was part and parcel of these atoms, hence his movements and actions were all a part of mechanical law as well. In this respect, Democritus can be regarded as the father of materialism.

Up to this point the powers of the Greek mind had been chiefly directed to the theoretical solution of the objective, cosmological problems that were connected with the processes in nature. Rogers says:

And along this line the results have been somewhat remarkable. In the space of a few generations, a conception has been elaborated which is strikingly similar to what has been, up to within a short time at least, the hypothesis of the most modern science. The reduction of qualitative to quantitative differences, the connection of mathematics with scientific method, the resolution of all phenomenal bodies into a multitude of minute moving particles, or atoms, of all change into change of position on the part of these atoms, and all efficiency into mechanical impact, is expressed with a definiteness that leaves little to be desired.6

6Ibid., p. 37.
In the light of recent discoveries concerning the atom and the uses to which it has been put, this knowledge that the ancient Greeks then worked out the fundamental facts concerning it appears rather startling. Democritus lived more than two thousand years ago. Why is it that the Greeks did not follow up Democritus' theories and achieve some direct results from it? The answer to this question apparently is that Democritus' theory was nothing more nor less than a theory; he had performed no scientific experiments to prove his assumption. The Greeks had no laboratories or equipment with which to experiment. Modern science is no guess at the ultimate nature of things in general, but it is an experimental investigation of the way in which things really act. It has not only learned the true nature of things but it has also learned to control them as well. Take, for instance, the atom bomb. Man has learned that all matter is composed of atoms; he has been able to break up these atoms in some of the elements and he has been able to control and direct the explosion which occurs. The Greeks, on the contrary, had not reached the point where they could control the behavior of objects, and their atomism was more of a philosophy than a science. As such, it had no great contribution to research techniques in the world. The mechanical view of the world tried to reduce things to a statement "which ignores all reference to the
facts of conscious life, of spiritual value, of aesthetic, and ethical, and social ideals. 7

From this point on, the Greeks put aside their scientific discussions about the world, and took up the ethical side of man's nature as a thing to be studied. There had already been a certain amount of ethical reflection among the Greeks. The writings of the so-called Seven Wise Men were largely moralistic. The government of the Greek cities, too, brought many questions. The Egyptian and the Persian kings, forerunners of the Greeks, had been absolute monarchs in their kingdoms. Obedience to them had been an unquestioning acceptance of law as divine and obligatory. The early Greeks paid obeisance to their mythological gods and accepted their rule as divine. But, gradually, the Greek cities began to work out a government based on the wishes of the people. The government of Athens has been known down through the centuries as the purest form of a democracy that the world has yet seen. In other Greek cities there were constant struggles between the aristocracy and the common people over the conduct of the government. New emphasis began to be placed on conduct, social questions, and the worth of the individual. Where the early Greek had sailed the seas on trading missions and speculated about the facts of the physical universe, the later Greek

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7 Ibid., p. 38.
lived in the cities, engaged in business in them, and possessed much leisure time for study and discussions. The emphasis passed over from the physical universe to ethical questions.

This movement was furthered by conditions of political Greece. Participation in the government by the citizens called for training in public speaking. For the young men from wealthy parents, the career most desired was that of politics. The most obvious and indispensable qualification for such a career was this training for public speaking. A demand arose for teachers who could train men for public life. Out of this demand grew a band of men known as Sophists, who traveled from town to town in Greece teaching young men. They made the teaching of wisdom a profession. The aim of this teaching was not the acquisition of knowledge for the sake of culture or self-improvement, but to the end that the student might gain his point in argument. "The goal of the politician was not so much truth, as victory."8 This aim stimulated discussion and questioning of many facts and truths which had heretofore been accepted as proven or divine laws and regulations. The whole area of Greece became a ferment of discussions, the Sophists claiming that laws were only conventions made by a few powerful men, or by the few to enslave the many. Obedience

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8 Ibid., p. 43.
to law was, therefore, only a matter of personal interest. These man-made laws were "positive" laws, and those which were universal were "natural" laws. By claiming that obedience to law was only a matter of personal interest, the Sophists were forerunners of the German idealists who claimed that man's conscience was the final arbiter of what was right and what was wrong. In this way they turned the attention of man to himself and his interests as the principal object of inquiry. On the other hand, the Sophists maintained that man gained his knowledge through his senses, and this gave their philosophy a dual aspect, realistic and idealistic at the same time.

The main value to the Grecian world, and to the people who came after them, of the Sophist movement was that it stimulated a new emphasis on the individual worth of the man and on social conditions that enhanced or hindered this worth. There is no record that any of the Sophists' theories were inculcated into the movement -- because of its questioning and doubting nature, the whole Sophist movement fell into disrepute -- but the seed had been planted that were to grow in other lands in later centuries.

The Sophists, too, by their inquiring spirit laid a foundation for the work of the greatest of the Grecian philosophers, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Socrates maintained that all the knowledge that man really needed was knowledge of himself. He did not think knowledge of the
physical universe important, because he said that such knowledge would be of no use to man if he did possess it. All that really concerned man, he said, was how to live his life as a citizen in a state. Knowledge was valuable only when it was put into practice. "Virtue is knowledge." He aimed to make men good at the same time that he inculcated knowledge. Here, it will be seen, the ideas developed heretofore take one step further: they should be put into practice.

Plato differed from Socrates in this respect. His philosophy was more remote, more metaphysical. Circumstances, again, appear to have shaped much of his thinking. He was born in Athens in 427 B.C. and was an aristocrat both by birth and in the whole temper of his mind. He had a contempt for the masses of the people and for business or manual labor of any kind. Hence, he lived a life of ease and never entered into the practical or political life of the people of Greece. Like a character in Tennyson's poetry, he lived in an "ivory tower" and refused to come down. His philosophy, therefore, took on a more remote and a more intellectual aspect that that of Socrates, his immediate predecessor.

In his earlier years, Plato would have nothing to do with the world of physics, and to the end of his life he maintained that there can be no true knowledge of the physical

9Ibid., p. 52.
world; for it is a world of change, and therefore all scientific conclusions about it could be only probable. The world, as conceived by Plato, was a huge living thing, composed of an invisible body and an invisible soul. Its origin could only be traced to a reason working toward ends. In other words, there was predestination, a preconceived end with which man had nothing to do. It was this phase of Plato's philosophy that was emphasized in the Middle Ages.

It was in the field of ethics that Plato made his greatest contribution to philosophy. He believed that Being consisted of permanent moral and aesthetic concepts or types. Being to him consisted of Ideas. There were ideas of everything that was in existence. There were as many as there were class concepts, as there were qualities or things in the universe, as there were common nouns in the language. However, Plato differentiated between Ideas, and made the Idea of the Good dominating. These composed true reality and were immutable. The parts of life that were always shifting and changing -- perceptions -- were labeled Becoming. These two worlds are by nature separate; one is the object of the reason, the other is the object of the senses. One is incorporeal; the other is corporeal. Hence, Plato's dualism.

Plato had an intense dislike for a democratic form of government. He said that its liberty is only license. He

\[^{10}\text{Cushman, op. cit., p. 138.}\]
had no sympathy with the talk about liberty and equality. Men are not equal, he held, and the mass of men do not have the brains to know what is best for them. They will be vastly better off, he declared, if they will quit bothering their heads about affairs of state, and turn over their affairs to those whose wisdom gives them the right to rule. With a wise man, preferably a philosopher, at the helm of state, man will have a remedy for the ills of the world, and a chance for man to realize his highest life — provided the state will submit itself to wise direction.  

The idea of such a state is outlined in Plato’s Republic. It would seem to be based upon the thought that the claims of the state come first, and that the mass of men were not capable of governing themselves because they lacked reason. The citizens of the state should form three classes: artisans, warriors, and the rulers. The duty of the lower class should be to obey the rulers blindly, and perform its work faithfully. Neither they nor the warrior class should own individual property. Wives should be held in common, and children be brought up by the state, and kept in ignorance of their real parents. This philosophy, however, it should be stressed, remained an academic one. Plato, with his contempt for the democratic form of government in Greece, could not have hoped that his views would be

11Rogers, op. cit., p. 83.
accepted by the free citizens of Greece. Like Democritus' theory concerning the atom, Plato's Republic remained merely a theory.

Aristotle was the last of the great Grecian philosophers. He was born at Stagira in 386 B.C. 12 He received his philosophical education at the Academy in Athens, but he early broke with Plato on many of his theories and set up ones of his own. He had a more scientific mind than Plato, and was more practical in his explanations of objects. Rogers says that he combined, as few other philosophers have, the scientific and the metaphysical mind.

He differentiated himself from Plato in his conception of Ideas. Plato had held that Ideas were Being. Aristotle thought that it was impossible to set up Ideas apart from things. Ideas, to him, existed in the world and in things, not outside and apart from them. Furthermore, these Ideas changed and developed. Plato's conception of Ideas was that they were already perfect and were static. Aristotle's theory of changing concept substituted a dynamic reality for a static one. This concept foreshadowed many of the philosophical ideas of the modern age.

Aristotle differed, too, from Plato in his theory of the concept and function of a state. Man, to him, was more than an individual. He was not self-sufficing, but had to cooperate with others to be sure of subsistence, and to

attain the "good" life. His notion of a "good" government was the rule of one man, if this man was wise. He believed in the institution of slavery, and he thought no man who "earned his bread" could practice virtue. Greatness was impossible, he said, to a state that produced numerous artisans. 13 He was opposed to Plato's ideas about family life and the care of the children by the state.

Thus it can be seen that the germs of both realistic and idealistic thinking are found in the early philosophy of the Greeks. The main point to remember, however, is that this mixture of philosophies, as worked out, were mainly a part of the thought of the people and were not used by the governments in any way to further or suppress any movements. Aristotle went so far as to point out the essentials necessary to the well-being of the state, but they were not put into practice. The state was the offspring of necessity, and arose out of the needs of utility. Race, blood, soil, and geographical position were all the matter of the state. The individual was subordinated, but not absorbed in the state. This qualification is another thing to remember.

Aristotle died in 322 B. C. The dissolution of the Greek Empire had already begun at that time, and things went from bad to worse. Macedonia captured the country,

13 Ibid., p. 117.
and the failure of the Greek civilization became a settled fact. In 146 B.C. Corinthis, then the capital of Greece, was captured by the Romans and Greece became a Roman province under the name of Achaia. The period that followed is known as the Hellenic-Roman period, and it developed some outstanding philosophical ideas.

These ideas, more or less, were the outgrowth of the troubled times that followed the downfall of Greek civilization. In the heyday of Grecian culture, men had either paid homage to some mythical god or to the traditional duties of citizenship. Now that these were swept away, man turned to philosophy for guidance and comfort and the way in which he might obtain as much satisfaction as possible in the troubled days in which he lived. Stoicism, skepticism, and Epicureanism were the result.

These three philosophies sought the same end -- the withdrawal of the individual from the world and his exaltation above his environment. Man was not the creator of his destiny; this was some great outside force, and all that he could do was to endure that which was thrust upon him. Their main virtue is that they prepared the way for the leaven of Christianity which was even then gaining ground in the Roman Empire. Each in itself was a phase of realism in that reality was regarded as static and unchanging.

Stoicism had more of a religious element in its
philosophy than did either Epicureanism or skepticism. It had attempted to act the part of a substitute for religion, and to meet the needs for satisfying which the old mythological religion had long since lost the power to do. It was outside of stoicism, however, that the demands of the time were met most completely. The Greek people as well as the Romans had sought salvation in the purely intellectual processes and had failed. It was easy, then, for them to turn to the Oriental philosophies of the East, and to neo-Platonism in the end. The ultimate end of the neo-Platonist was not thought, but mystic contemplation or feeling. Any adequate feeling for natural law disappeared, and hence the period of time from 100 B. C. until 476 A. D. is known in philosophy as the religious period;¹⁴ but it was not a Christian religion. Neo-Platonism was a pagan religion. It was idealistic to the extent that the physical universe was disregarded in the explanation of the cause of things.

Neo-Platonism, however, faded before the onslaught of a powerful new force that was then beginning to make itself felt all over the then-known world. This new movement was the spread of the Christian religion which claimed that there was one Supreme Ruler of the universe who was invisible but all-powerful. This Being had created the world and all that was in it, and He ruled the world from an invisible

¹⁴Cushman, op. cit., p. 208.
throne in the Heavens. He had created the world, and that fact explained all that man had been trying to find out for centuries. The source of knowledge was not in reason, but in revelation.

The ideal of Christianity brought a new consideration of the worth of the individual. Aristotle and Plato had had a great contempt for the masses of the people; neo-Platonism had appealed to the intellectual element; But this new religion was for all, the humblest as well as the richest. God, instead of being a powerful potentate, to be approached only through rites and ceremonies which were a state matter, was an all-forgiving Father to all men. Rogers says:

Wherever this conception really came home to men, it worked an immediate and vast change in all the ideals of society. The artificial barriers of rich and poor, slave and free, noble and common, became a thing of no importance. A new respect for human life grew up amid the almost incredible callousness of the Roman world. Hope and confidence took the place of despair, or a forced unconcern; the goodness of God, and the worth of the human soul, must in the end lead to happiness.15

The importance of this new religion in the life of the world cannot be measured. The greater number of the people, however, embraced the tenets of Christianity, and churches were built all over the country in which to worship the unseen Christian God. How these churches grew and developed and promulgated a set of rules whereby people were to live is a story for theology, but gradually a theological system

was built up with one parent Church at the head of it -- the Church in ancient Rome. Augustine, one of the powerful rulers of the Roman Empire, was a Christian in belief, and he substantially aided in establishing the Roman Church as a mediator between God and man. The Roman world at that time was beset on all sides by infiltrating barbarian tribes, and need for some authority was apparent. Augustine visioned an ideal Church which offered an infallible system of doctrine, based upon authority, and satisfying the religious needs of man. In a book, The City of God, Augustine formulated his views of the Church in an elaborate philosophy of history. Without realizing it, he was building an edifice that was to have an amazing influence and effect on the world even down to the present time.

Man had sought to explain the universe in the early days through observation and speculation. Then he had turned to the realm of the intellectual for the explanation, but no concrete result or satisfactions had ensued. Now, he turns away from both the realistic and the idealistic formulas and takes up the spiritual one whereby he accepts knowledge as coming through faith and the written word of God. The end of the ancient period of thought had come to pass, and a new period begins -- a period which is familiarly known as the Medieval or the Dark Ages. The significance of this name will be studied in the next chapter of this study.
CHAPTER IV

PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Cushman divides the Middle Ages into three periods: Early Period, 476-1000; Transitional Period, 1000-1200; and the Period of Classic Scholasticism, 1200-1453. He further states that these periods make a long and unproductive stretch of time philosophically for eighteen hundred years. DeWulf differs from Cushman in this belief, and he states that the study of medieval philosophy has undergone considerable change in recent years, and that now students of philosophy find the medieval world a fertile field for study.\(^1\) Of the thirteenth century, in particular, he says:

If one seeks the origin of the difference in mentality found in the nations of the West, one is forced inevitably back to the thirteenth century. This century witnessed the formation of the great European nations, the dawn of a more definite conception of patria, the decisive outlining of the ethical features of the peoples who were henceforth to fill history with their alliances and rivalries. The thirteenth century is characterized by unifying and cosmopolitan tendencies; but, at the same time, it constitutes a great plateau whence are beginning to issue the various channels which will run later as mighty rivers in different and even opposite directions. Many peculiarities in the medieval way of conceiving individual and social life and many

\(^1\)Maurice DeWulf, Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages, p. 1.
of their philosophical conceptions of the world have entered into the modern views; and indeed, many doctrines which are now opposed to each other can be traced to their origin in the thirteenth century.2

The Middle Ages, then, can be considered a seedbed for the propagation of many of the ideas that have come down to the modern day and have been developed by many of the leading nations. As such, the period has an importance all its own and its achievements in the field of philosophy are not to be lightly passed over.

A glance at the political map of Europe at the time of the fall of Rome in 476 A. D. will aid the reader in orientation of what is to follow. Rome, it will be recalled, had ruled almost all the then-known world for several centuries. Gradually the barbarian tribes from the North had infiltrated the Roman Empire and in 476 the capitol itself was taken. The great contribution of Roman civilization to the world had been a strong government and a system of laws that have been used as a model ever since. The far-flung empire had been held together by an amazing legal system which had kept order and maintained a civilization that embodied the best in thought and deeds of the Greeks as well as the Romans. With the breakdown of this legal machinery, the country broke up into small feudal kingdoms ruled over by powerful lords or nobles. These lords, in turn, in most instances were vassals of the Pope, the head of the

2Ibid., p. 15.
Roman Catholic Church. The Church owned a great deal of the land in the country, and these powerful nobles held it then as fiefs. Since the masses of the people lived on the land and owed allegiance to one or to another of these nobles, it is clear that the church had a great deal of influence in the country.

The schools, too, were held in the monasteries. There was no such thing as public education, and the schools that were conducted were mainly for the sons of the nobles or for those who wished to study for the priesthood. The teachings of the Church, too, discouraged speculation and experimentation. The Bible was divine, and all the knowledge that man needed to know was encompassed within its covers. For a number of centuries, these conditions prevailed and we have what is known as the "Dark Ages."

However, the period was not barren. Rogers says that the time was necessary if freedom of ideas was once again to prevail.3 The barbarians, he said, had in them the possibilities of higher developments than those which had preceded them. They had a pronounced sense of individuality and love of freedom, simplicity of character, and high moral standards. They furnished an "admirable soil for Christianity."4 But a long period of training was necessary to raise the Teutonic tribes from their barbarian status to

3Rogers, op. cit., p. 201.
4Ibid.
that of the civilized world, and this the Roman Catholic Church was instrumental in doing. Rogers says:

It was the great work of the Middle Ages and of the Church to take this raw material, and mould it into a definite shape; to impress upon it, by external authority, the ideas and institutional forms which could be rescued from the wreck of the ancient world. . . . The time came once more when a criticism of beliefs and institutions was possible and necessary; that it did not result, as it had in the case of Greece, in the overthrow of society, was due partly to a difference in racial characteristics, but also to the thoroughness with which the Middle Ages had done their work of education. The result was not a violent break from the past, but a gradual transformation, on the foundation of the essential truth in the old, which still persisted and guided the process of emancipation.5

By the beginning of 900 A. D., a somewhat greater activity had begun to show itself in the life of thought, and we have the beginning of intellectual interests which were new and which culminated in the development of the philosophy of scholasticism. Scholasticism is the term given to the type of intellectual life, and hence of education, that prevailed from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, inclusive. It was not characterized by any group of principles or beliefs, but it was rather a method or type of intellectual activity.

As it was worked out, scholasticism was the complete reduction of religious thought to logical form. For this form, the medieval intellectuals turned to Aristotle, and scholasticism is often defined as the "union of Christian

5Ibid., p. 201.
beliefs and Aristotelian logic." All knowledge taught had to have the consent of the Church, and it had to be reduced to logical form.

The greater part of the discussions and the teachings dealt with theological philosophy and such questions as justification, predestination, the Trinity, the freedom of the will, the doctrine of the eucharist. Monroe says:

The proper philosophical statement of these and similar doctrines, the reduction of all to a harmonized system, their presentation with answers to all objections to the orthodox view and with refutations of all unorthodox interpretations, constituted the content of scholastic literature. Now it happened that during the very same period when circumstances emphasized the necessity of supporting by reason the beliefs of the Church, a certain fragmentary knowledge of the fundamental philosophical problems discussed by Plato and Aristotle became prevalent.

Plato's views were the foundation of what at that time was called realism. He had held that ideas, concepts, universals, constituted the only realities. The view that such ideas or universals were only names and that reality consisted in the individual concrete objects -- in the species of Aristotle -- was called nominalism. The conflict between these two metaphysical beliefs continued for more than four centuries, and constituted a major portion of the philosophical discussions of that time.

For the purpose of this study, not too much emphasis is due these discussions but more concern is felt for the

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6Paul Munro, Brief Course in the History of Education, p. 131.

7Ibid.
effects of them on the lives of the people. Some of these will be considered here.

For one thing, scholasticism gave a unity to the people at a time when various beliefs were prevalent. The Crusades had caused an infiltration of Oriental beliefs, and of those of Asia Minor. Scholasticism strengthened some semblance of government by binding the people more closely together.

The founding of the great universities of the Medieval Age is attributed directly to the scholastic philosophy of the period. These universities grew to the extent that they were almost on a parity with Church, state, and nobility. They provided a retreat for the genius who kept alive the intellectual spark and preserved the spirit of inquiry. It is true that scholasticism was dogmatic, and that it frowned upon innovations and was opposed to rationalism and radicalism, but it did preserve the studious element, and prepared the ground for such men as Roger Bacon, Dante, Petrarch, Wycliffe, Huss, Copernicus -- the men who brought the modern spirit.

Then, too, scholasticism classified knowledge. This classification, no doubt, was dogmatic, but some one system was needed in the chaotic world of the Middle Ages. At the base of beginning of knowledge was the science of observation -- information gained from and through the senses. Philosophy made up the middle of the structure, and theology
was the apex. This classification, according to DeWulf, has satisfied thinkers "athirst for order and clarity."

However, in the light of some of our modern ideas, there were some other phases of scholasticism that deserve attention here. There was a divergence in the way in which the neo-Latins and the Anglo-Celts and the German tribes looked at life.

Scholasticism, as the Anglo-Celt understood it, laid emphasis upon the worth of the individual, or person, as the only human reality. Each person had a body, an intelligence, and a will, and a liberty all his own. The human individual had a right to personal happiness and to a life in Heaven after death. Intangible rights protected him against the state or the group. There was no place for the subjugation of one man to another. Scholastic philosophy, too, disliked monism and pantheism, and sought to eliminate these from any of its teachings. It had a horror for any doctrine that suppressed individuality.

On the other hand, the German mind accepted the doctrine of neo-Platonism. Meister Eckhart was the most celebrated of the German thinkers along these lines. Where the Anglo-Celts predicted clear ideas and precise expressions, neo-Platonic Germans opposed ambiguous theories and misleading comparisons. They had a decided leaning

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8DeWulf, op. cit., p. 85. 9Ibid. 10Ibid., p. 291.
toward pantheism, which unites men with God even to the point of fusion. They believed in the mystic communion of the soul with the Deity. They had a passion for hair-splitting discussions and a contempt for clarified intellectualism. Then, too, they showed the want of balanced equilibrium through exaggerations of doctrines regardless of all else.

It is apparent, then, that the differences that have so widely split the Germans and the Anglo-Celts and resulted in World War I and World War II had their inceptions in the Middle Ages and in the very nature of the people themselves.

The Medieval Age passed out of existence in the fifteenth century, but its philosophical systems have left their imprint on western minds. Dewulf says:

The study of modern philosophy must lean not alone upon Greek philosophy, but equally on the conceptions of the world and of life which formed the temperaments of our own very ancestors. We are closer to them than we are to the Greeks; and, in the light of history, the study of their philosophy appears as a necessary stage in our philosophical education.11

The ideas of the medieval people, it appears, influenced not only the destiny of the people of that age, but the people of our own generation as well. As such influences, they perhaps have been far more potent than those of the old Greek philosophers whose work we have been prone to regard with such great reverence.

11Ibid., p. 299.
CHAPTER V

REALISM VERSUS IDEALISM IN THE MODERN AGE

The development of philosophical ideas in the modern age which extends from the time of the Reformation down to the present, is so interwoven with the political history of the time that no adequate understanding of these ideas is possible without some knowledge of geographical and political conditions.

In classical times, the small city-state had been the unit of government. The Roman Empire changed this status and the dominating power became a nation that controlled almost all the then-known world. The Middle Ages continued this tradition with the exception that the Roman Catholic Church, instead of the political unit, became the head of both temporal and spiritual government, and the Pope was the supreme arbiter of man's destinies. The German tribes who had overrun the Roman Empire and caused its downfall split up into many different factions and began to unify the people under them in various districts. The great feudal lords, also, tended to form small states within their domains. Boundary lines began to take shape.

A glance at the map of Europe at the beginning of the fifteenth century will be of aid in orientating the reader
for the study to follow. Italy, for long the seat of the Holy Roman Empire, was divided into a number of city-states. The states controlled by the Roman Catholic Church extended diagonally across the peninsula. The countries of England, France, and Spain had well-defined boundaries, and independent, established governments of their own. The country that is Germany today was called "The Germanies" by the French because it consisted of two or three hundred states, which differed greatly from one another in size and character. Switzerland, as the Swiss Confederation, had already taken shape. Russia was a great nebulous shape in the far north and east, but was too far removed from the centers of civilization to be of much importance. Macedonia, Greece, Servia, and Bulgaria were all a part of the Ottoman Empire.

European states, seemingly independent of each other, were all united by one common bond, one religion. The Pope, head of the Roman Catholic Church, had the power to excommunicate any ruler who dared to differ from him, and to ruin him in more ways than one. The Church's organization with its powers to assess and levy tithes and contributions extended to all parts of these states. The prevailing philosophy was that of the Middle Ages -- subordination of the individual to a Supreme Arbiter which in this instance was

1 James Harvey Robinson, *History of Western Europe*, p. 321.

the Roman Catholic Church, the representative of God. All the "natural laws" were made by God in the beginning, and were controlled by Him. The individual, as a free agent, had no place in the world scheme of things.

Strong forces, however, had been at work in the undercurrents of medieval thought and these forces at length brought about many changes in ideas both in spiritual and in temporal matters. The first great changes came out of Germany.

Martin Luther, a monk of the Roman Catholic Church, led the reform movement against the authority of the Church. Philosophy, it should again be stressed, at this time dealt mostly with religious tenets and doctrines. Luther rebelled against some practices of the Church -- alms, indulgences, and dogmatic decrees. Prior to Luther the state was generally regarded as subordinate to the Church, and it was generally held that no state law was valid if it conflicted with canon or church law. Also a temporal magistrate had been regarded as being subservient to an ecclesiastical official, and that the first must obey the commands of the latter was usually accepted as proper. Under such a system, it was impossible for the state to be considered the all-important element in human activities.\(^3\)

Luther stoutly maintained that the true Church to which

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\(^3\)McGovern, *From Luther to Hitler*, p. 31.
man should give allegiance was an invisible church, one of the spirit. To the medieval mind the church was a visible community, consisting of all Christians, ministered to by priests who themselves had certain sacramental powers, and ruled by an ecclesiastical hierarchy at the apex of which stood the Pope. Luther believed that the true church was an invisible, intangible group of men and women who were under the direct rulership of God Himself.\(^4\) If this church was invisible, it was impossible for it to be formally organized or to have any control over temporal matters.

Luther, like other philosophers, had some very definite ideas about the true place of the state in the affairs of men. At first he maintained that membership in the church was a personal matter, and that neither the state nor the church had the right to interfere with an individual's creed. Later, however, he came to the belief that it was the duty of the church to enforce membership at least in the visible church, which was the earthly representative of the invisible church, among its citizens. As a result the independent European and German nations, which followed Luther in his revolt from the Catholic Church, imposed the Lutheran religion on their subjects.

Luther regarded governments and rulers as necessary

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 33.
evils. Before the fall of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, man had no need of political organization, but because man sinned, evil and wickedness followed in the world. To control these, Luther felt that it was necessary to provide man with a stern discipline and to place over him stern rulers. This temporal government, however, he felt was divine in origin, because it was part of God's plan for the world. The secular ruler, therefore, was supreme and should be obeyed by all. The state superseded the individual. In this doctrine of Luther's, is found the seed of the later idealism of Kant, Schiller, Fichte, and Hegel.

The seeds of another type of philosophy, liberalism and democracy, were likewise planted by another faction which also disagreed with the beliefs and practices of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. Calvin, who was born in France in 1509, was early influenced by the teachings of Luther, and was persecuted and driven from France by the Catholics there. He settled in Switzerland and wrote a great book, *The Institutes of Christianity*. He rejected the rulership of the Catholic Church with the Pope at its head, and acknowledged God as the only Ruler of the Protestant Church. However, Calvin was made to advocate one noteworthy departure -- where Luther recommended autocratic rule of the church by the state, Calvin would entrust the ruling power of the church to a synod constituted on a semi-democratic basis.
He entrusted the management of church affairs to the ministers and elders, or *presbyters*, hence the name Presbyterian. Such an idea was completely foreign to Luther's temperament. He had a very poor opinion of the abilities of the average man. Man, he held, was full of wickedness and needed laws to restrain him. All human souls might be equal in the sight of God, but on earth they were unequal.\(^5\) Hence, Luther may be regarded as the apostle of autocracy and Calvin as that of democracy. Ideas, it may be seen, were once again fomenting action in the world.

The struggle which followed amongst the followers of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant reformers was a long and bitter one. The English king, Henry VIII, repudiated Roman Catholicism, but he set up his own state-controlled church in its place. Attempts were made later to return England to its status as Catholic, but they failed and down to the present day England has its own Established Church. It has been as zealous as the Catholics in promoting membership in this church and has persecuted other religious faiths. The original settlers of America fled England in order to be where they could worship as they pleased.

The history of France for a long time was nothing more nor less than the history of a long and bloody series of civil wars fought between the Catholics and the Protestants. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) was a conflict in Germany

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between the Catholics and the Protestants. The Spanish government, staunch supporter of Catholicism, fought many wars trying to overcome Protestant supporters in other nations. The lump result of all these wars was that religious toleration was granted to all religions in Germany, and each ruler of the small German states was to have the right to determine the religion of his own state. Spain remained Catholic, but France, fundamentally Catholic in belief, had no state church.

Once these questions of religion were more or less settled, other questions began to come to the forefront, questions that had only been dormant and which were gradually fermenting. These were the old questions raised by the ancient Greeks as to the source of knowledge. Even in the thirteenth century there were a few scholars who criticized the habit of relying on Aristotle for all knowledge. The most distinguished fault-finder was Roger Bacon, an English Franciscan monk, who died in 1290. Bacon declared that even if Aristotle had been very wise, he had only planted the tree of knowledge, and that this tree had not at that time put forth all its branches or yielded its fruit. He held that truth could be reached a hundred times better by experiments with real things than with poring over the bad Latin translations of Aristotle. He said that if he had his

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6Ibid., p. 273.
way, he would burn all the books. He advocated three ways of reaching the truth: he proposed that natural objects and changes should be examined with great care in order that the observer might determine exactly what had happened in each case. Secondly, he advocated experimentation. He was not contented with observation, but tried new and artificial methods and combinations. Thirdly, he saw the need for scientific apparatus for experimentation in seeking the truth.

Bacon's work is important in the study of realism, for he pioneered the school of empirical philosophers of England, and more or less tended to mold that country in the path it has traveled. England has ever been a conservative nation, and has developed slowly from one precedent to the other. The scientist is a level-headed conservative person who bases his premises on actual experimentation with concrete objects. Men of this nature have had no little place in shaping the England of today.

Materialism also got an early start in England. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was one of the greatest of the English speculators and political philosophers. He was concerned above all with the individual and his rights and privileges, yet he believed that the state should have full control over all the actions of the individual. He was a firm believer in the doctrine that all knowledge comes through sense

7McGovern, op. cit., p. 66.
experience and he rejected the idea that ideas are implanted in the soul of man by God. Because of his views, he is called the ancestor of all modern materialists. He thought that the whole world could be reduced to matter; that is, he thought that in matter was the explanation of all the changes that took place in the world. He believed that experimentation through scientific methods was the way to learn about what constituted matter. He despised traditionalism. He believed in an authoritarian type of government and that the state was supreme over the individual.

Hobbes lived during the time when the Stuart kings ruled England. These kinds were strong exponents of the theory that kings derived their right to rule from God. Hobbes' writings went a long way toward establishing this belief in the minds of the English people. He maintained that there were three fundamental natural laws. The first of these was that a state of peace should be maintained. The second natural law was an outgrowth of this: each man must relinquish his natural right to do as he pleased and give this to the state. The third law was that the rights, once given, could not be returned. By the terms of Hobbes' thinking, each member of the community would forego his natural rights to the state or the sovereign, and then the sovereign would have absolute and complete control over all members of the state. In this respect, the sovereign
would have the power to make and repeal all laws, to appoint and dismiss all officials, and the right to maintain peace or to conduct war with neighboring states. Over and above the sovereign was the law of God, but it was up to the state to decide what is and what is not God's law. The state had the absolute right to control the individual, and this state, in turn, should be ruled by a single individual. The importance of Hobbes' writings cannot be estimated because they influenced that has come after him. It should be noted here that this was an instance of the government using the philosophical ideas prevalent in the country and incorporating them into direct action by the government. Philosophy was not merely theoretical reasoning or a metaphysical subject.

Francis Bacon was another English philosopher who was a contemporary of Hobbes. His philosophical reasonings were more metaphysical than the political philosophy of Hobbes. He rejected the previously accepted aim -- the theoretic formation of knowledge -- in favor of the practical and useful aim. The intellectual life was to be made fruitful, as the old speculation was not, by being made practical. This fruitfulness was to be gained by giving the intellectual life a new foundation -- nature. Neither theology nor metaphysics, the basis of previous philosophies,

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8 Munro, op. cit., p. 248.
but physics was to serve as the foundation for the new. Even the moral and political sciences were to receive new meaning by being founded upon, or referred to, the natural sciences.

This new tendency was away from the formalism of scholasticism and toward a new realism. Objects and ideas took the place of words and abstractions. Closed systems of thought began to disappear, and progress was made toward the formulation of fruitful principles of interpretation and methods of investigation that could never produce a perfected system of thought. Evolution was foreshadowed by these ways of thinking.

Locke, another great English philosopher, furthered the empirical ways of thought. He was born in 1632 and lived until 1704. Metaphysically, Locke believed that man derives his knowledge from experience, and he believed also that reason is the foremost, dominant factor in human, certainly in social life. By the use of reason, men learn to control their passions. Reason strives to regulate human intercourse. Locke thought that all laws and all governments should be in accordance with rational principles. He believed that a man’s mental and moral ability is largely the result of experiences, sensations, or the education to which he is exposed. If one man appears better and wiser

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9 Mc Govern, op. cit., p. 82.
than another, he thought that one had had a better upbringing than the other. In this respect, he believed in the influence of the environment.

However, it was in the field of political philosophy where Locke's influence was felt so strongly. At the time of the death of Hobbes in 1679, the governments of Europe were absolutist in character. France was under the heel of the Bourbon kings, and the government of England was an absolute monarchy. Russia was beginning to emerge as a nation under Peter the Great, and the tribes of Germany, under the preceptorship of the Duke of Brandenburg, were uniting to form what shortly afterward became Prussia. Absolutism seemed everywhere triumphant. But in 1688 a revolution freed England from the rule of the Stuarts and William and Mary of Orange were asked by the English people to become their rulers. The new monarchs did not come at the behest of some Divine power, but at the request of the people of England. Locke's political philosophy did much to prepare the way for such a step and to justify it in the eyes of an otherwise absolutist world.

Locke believed that men were rational and that they were born more or less equal. Hobbes believed that in a state of nature that men has a "natural" right to steal or kill if he can do so without harm to himself. Locke thought this doctrine was horrible. He said that in a
natural state each man has a right to life, liberty, and property, and that he may not rightfully interfere with these natural rights of other men. These rights were guaranteed by natural law, which was a moral law, established by God, and discoverable by reason. In Locke's philosophy, the purpose of the state is merely to see that natural rights are guarded and natural law executed judiciously. To secure these ends every state should have as its fundamental aims the transformation of the unwritten precepts of natural law into established, settled, and known law, regarding the interpretation of which there can be no dispute. There should be impartial judges to settle disputes and the establishment of a police power to see that the decisions of the judges are carried out.\textsuperscript{10}

Locke also accepted the liberal theory that all rulers derive their authority from the people, and rejected the idea that kings ruled by divine appointment. The government, he also said, was not based on force but on the social contract. He also believed that the functions of government should be divided into coordinating spheres: legislative, executive, and judicial.

The doctrine of the "natural right to property" was also advocated by Locke. According to Hobbes, in a political state a man possesses no inherent rights to private

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 85.
property. What property a man possesses is granted to him by the state and can be repossessed at will. According to Locke, property was the fruit of man's own labor and the state had no control over it.

In evaluating Locke it should be remembered that he lived and wrote in a time not far removed from the French Revolution and from the American Revolution. His beliefs were later incorporated into the American Declaration of Independence and form one of the foundation stones of a democratic philosophy which has had momentous implications in the world development.

These three men, Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke, also laid the framework which has made England a bulwark of realism. These men all believed that knowledge was to be gained either through the sensations or through reason. The world was a concrete thing, and was certainly not a thing to be conjured up out of the mind.

Locke's reference to a social contract diverts the interest now to France. This country was an absolute monarchy in the eighteenth century. Louis XVI once described it very well in the following words:

The sovereign authority rests exclusively in my person. To me solely belongs the power of making the laws, and without dependence or cooperation. The entire public order emanates from me, and I am its supreme protector. My people are one with me. The rights and interests of the nation are necessarily identical with mine and rest solely within my hands.11

11Quoted in Robinson, op. cit., p. 545.
In short, the king still ruled "by the Grace of God." He did not need to render account to any man for his governmental acts; he was responsible to God alone.

Here, as elsewhere, a storm of ideas was gathering which finally culminated in the French Revolution. Two writers and philosophers did more to stir up discontent in France than anything else. These men were Voltaire (1694-1778) and Rousseau (1712-1778). Voltaire exalted reason and led a powerful attack on the Roman Catholic Church. The absolute power of the king did not greatly trouble him, but the church with, as he deemed, its deep-seated opposition to reason and its hostility to reform, seemed to him fatally to block all human progress. He was a deist and held that God revealed Himself in nature and in human hearts, not in Bible or church.

Rousseau was a social reformer. In his famous book, *The Social Contract*, he made the statement that man was born free, but that he was everywhere in chains.\(^\text{12}\) He declared that the real sovereign is the people. Although the people may appoint a single person, a king, to manage the government for them, they should make the laws because it is they who must obey them.

Montesquieu (1689-1755) was another writer who influenced the development of ideas in France at this time. He

\(^{12}\text{Ibid.}, \text{ p. 551.}\)
thought that the whole doctrine of natural rights was meaningless and that the social contract theory was absurd. He was a great admirer of Locke, England's great political philosopher, and he outlined a system of constitutional government wherein the system of checks and balances as we know it in American government was advocated.

These ideas advanced by leading thinkers and writers found their repercussion in the two great revolutions of the eighteenth century, the American Revolution which brought about the establishment of the United States, and the French Revolution which overthrew the Bourbon monarchy.

A brief summary of the development of ideas in England and France shows that they were very decidedly those of a realistic nature. Natural laws, which could be understood by the use of reasoning, were the common beliefs. A world in which everything was explained through religious dogma had changed into a world which depended for its information upon experimentation, observation, and sensation.

But while this philosophy of realism had been developing in England and France, another far-different type of philosophy had been taking root gradually in Germany where a strong powerful monarchy had been forming while England was developing a democratic spirit. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century most observers thought that belief in authoritarianism had gone forever. But at the very time when liberalism seemed to be gaining ground, a movement was
even then getting under way to undermine it. At first the doctrines taught by an idealistic school in Germany were little noticed by the world at large, because the teachers were university professors and their work attracted only those interested in metaphysics. But a group of writers in the field of history and law took up these new doctrines and through their writings and efforts governments then undertook to put these ideas into practice. They have had world-shaking consequences.

The major prophets of idealism were the German professors, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. However, there were many important differences between the viewpoints of these men.

Kant was born in 1724 and lived until 1804. He was a teacher of philosophy at a small German university in East Prussia, and he had no active contacts with the outside world. He was generally regarded as an impractical, unworldly, and absent-minded professor. The importance of his studies is the use which was made of his ideas by other philosophers and the leaders of the German government.

Kant had three basic ideas that were the cornerstones of his philosophy. First, he believed in the supremacy of the spiritual over the material. According to him, the physical or external world is either largely a product of

\[13\] McGovern, op. cit., p. 132.
the mind or else it possesses little importance of its own, nor does it have meaning. Men before Kant had believed that the world of appearances was due merely to the actions of external objects upon our passive minds. Kant thought he had proved that the world of appearances was due quite as much to the workings of our own mind as to the actions of external objects.

The second basic doctrine of Kant's was the supremacy of pure reason over sensation or experience. To him the world of appearance was due far more to the functioning of the subjective mind than to the action of the external objects upon man's senses. He, then, ignored the senses, sensation, and sensual experience and looked to the mind and the action of the mind, reason, to solve all the problems of reality.

The third basic idea in Kant's philosophy was the supremacy of the universal moral law over the wishes, caprices, and desires of the individual citizen. To Kant the all-important thing was not what a man wanted to do but what he ought to do. Man is governed by his own moral convictions; he himself decides what is wrong and what is right.

The importance of Kant's philosophy is the influence it had on later German philosophers. Most of the classical liberal philosophers had argued that freedom of action or liberty meant the ability of each man to do what he wished
to do and that good government consists in seeking the greatest happiness of the greatest number of its citizens. Kant maintained that all rights and all laws exist only latently and abstractly in the state of nature, and that they can only become real and concrete when individuals' wills are fused into the common will, which is the state.\textsuperscript{14} The state should be all-powerful; it has and should have supreme authority. He did not agree with Locke about property ownership, but he did not advocate land socialism. His espousal here of an authoritarian state was an important step in the growth of authoritarianism in Germany because Kant was a popular and respected teacher and philosopher. Kant also believed in the law of progress or evolution. Ancient philosophers thought that all knowledge was finished, and that all that could be learned already had been. They also believed that man was degenerating instead of progressing.

An English scientist, Charles Darwin, published two books within the lifetime of Kant that revolutionized European intellectual circles. The books were \textit{The Origin of Species} (1859) and \textit{The Descent of Man} (1871). Evolution, which heretofore had seemed merely an idle philosophical theory, now appeared to be established as a scientific fact.

Darwin's main points were these: The struggle for existence meant the universal competition which goes on between

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 145.
all organic beings for the means of livelihood. In this struggle, the fittest and the strongest survive. Darwin made no attempt to apply this doctrine of his to social and political fields, but remained a biologist. It remained for the German philosophers to do this.

A disciple of Kant in Germany was Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who rose from the ranks of the humble peasants to the chair of philosophy at Jena University, then the center of German culture. The basis of Fichte's philosophy was the mind, or, as he preferred to call it, the I or ego or self. He felt that the basis of all man's morality must be man's free will. Freedom to him meant the liberation of the individual from his own baser self, his purely natural instincts and promptings -- internal freedom, and the liberation of the individual from the arbitrary interference of others -- external freedom.

In Fichte's philosophy the chief function of the state was to set forth the conditions which would enable a man to be free in the above senses. The state might forcibly remove all the external objects and institutions which tend to make man a slave to his own senses. In addition, he thought that the state could and should, through compulsory education, seek to transform the character and disposition of its citizens.

Fichte believed that the state had three main functions. He said that a national state must be based, not on lines
or boundaries, but on unity of language among its citizens. Nationalism in the political sphere, he said, could not function smoothly without economic nationalism. Inside a state's borders, he believed, the government should assume far-reaching control over all the economic activities of its citizens. These political beliefs of Fichte's are important because they had a wide influence on those who came after him. The recent Germany of Hitler, it will be recalled, sought a unity of language as the basis of a national state, and his economic nationalism was one of the main supports of the Hitler state.

Hegel, foremost of the German group of idealistic philosophers, developed and popularized the beliefs of Kant and Fichte. He was regarded in Germany during his lifetime with the reverence accorded Plato and Aristotle in ancient days, and his teachings therefore were most important.

In common with Kant and Fichte, Hegel rejected the English type of philosophizing with its reliance upon sensation, experience, and experiment. He believed that reason plus a touch of intuition was the source of all knowledge. He was also a traditionalist and believed in progress of the human race. There were five principal tenets in his belief:

1. Throughout the whole course of the universe, man's

\[\text{McGovern, op. cit., p. 236.}\]
history and action are dominated by thought; in the long run thought is the only thing that counts.

2. The whole universe is the creation of thought.

3. Thought or reason, the only ultimate reality, is not static but dynamic.

4. Among social institutions that must dominate mankind, society is higher and more important than the family, but the state is higher and more important than society.

5. The national state is greater than humanity as a whole; war between the national states is useful and inevitable.\(^\text{16}\)

This last statement concerning the usefulness of war is indeed significant, since this represented the German's attitude toward war. If this belief is or was basic in Germany, it is no wonder that the German nation prepared constantly for war.

Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) was another German philosopher who subscribed to this belief of Hegel's about war, and who advanced the thought a little farther. According to him, each nation had the right to change treaties made in earlier times and each nation had the right to judge for itself whether these circumstances have or have not changed. He also rejected any idea of a world court, a league of nations, or the arbitration of international disputes. Frequent wars, he argued, were good and salutary.

\(^{16}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 287-288}.\)
McGovern says:

When we come to review Treitschke's political philosophy as a whole, we find it to be little more than the Hegelian system, denuded of its metaphysical background, except for the important distinction that while Hegel looked upon the state as an embodiment of reason, Treitschke, preaching in a more practical age, called it the embodiment of force or power. Treitschke was neither as completely statist nor as completely authoritarian as the modern Nazis, but the widespread popularity of his Politics was an important factor in preparing the German public to accept the later Nazi ideology. 17

In the light of the conclusions reached by these German idealists, it is not difficult to understand what happened in Germany when a man possessed of the ability of Adolf Hitler gained control of the government. Hitler was not so much to blame for what happened as he is generally credited with being. The Nazi philosophy had been carefully built up and developed through a succeeding series of philosophers.

Other nations have also been affected by these beliefs of the German philosophers. In Italy, Benito Mussolini built his Fascist ideology on that of Hegel and Kant. What happened to Italy under such a combination is both tragic and significant. In England Hegelianism gave rise to a school of political philosophers, but these philosophers -- Carlyle and Green -- had only an indirect influence upon practical politics. The English, too, rejected the authoritarianism and the idea of a dictatorship which were part and

17 Ibid., p. 387.
parcel of the Nazi creed.

It is interesting to note the growth of idealism in the United States, the traditional home of democracy. The earliest philosophers of the country had been mostly theologians, but Thomas Jefferson and other stalwart Democrats were followers of Locke and Montesquieu. They founded a government which was based on the rights of the individual under natural laws to freedom of life, property and religion. The views of the theologians had little practical effect on the development and growth of the country, but the views of the political philosophers had a powerful influence in building a country that came to be considered the world over as "the land of the free."

However, in more modern days, some of the university professors, notably William James, have struck out in new lines of thought. To James the universe and mankind are not governed by fixed, rigid, determining laws which cannot be broken. Rather, he says, there is a large proportion of free will and of chance in the workings of the universe, and in human activities. In other words, the individual has something to do with what happens. Instead of observing, James believed in acting. In place of the old doctrines, he postulated that of pragmatism -- an idea is true if it works and is of benefit to the individual. The goodness and badness of an object must be judged by its results.

\[\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 402.\]
In other words, we decide if an experience is good or bad by the results it has upon us.

This new idea of James caught on rapidly, and for a while here in the United States it exercised a profound influence especially in the field of education. Where once education had been ruled by dogmatic, natural laws laid down by authorities, it came to be conceded as a dynamic process in which the individual played an important part. However, there was no political import in this educative process; the basic philosophy of the United States is and has been that man is essentially free. But pragmatism sought to educate for better citizenship by participation rather than by observation. The doctrine itself did not enter into governmental activities, nor was it manipulated in any way by any ruler or group of rulers.

The outstanding idealist of the United States was Josiah Royce, who, like the German professors, was a university professor. Royce, however, was metaphysical in his studies and discussions and much of his work dealt with metaphysical subjects and the connection between essence and existence. In this respect, Royce departed less widely from the position of Hegel than preceding American philosophers. He emphasized the teleological nature of the world whole, and gave less attention to pure intellectual theory.19

19Rogers, op. cit., p. 505.
Then, too, he gave more stress to the importance of the individual.

John Dewey gave further impetus to the individual when he stressed the value of practical knowledge to the exclusion of the intellectual theory. Much of this doctrine of John Dewey's has become the foundation stone of the educational processes in the United States. But it should be stressed that this adoption of the philosophy of John Dewey has been voluntary on the part of school administrations and school boards. The United States very wisely left the matter of education in the hands of the several states, and there is no central agency in Washington which decides national policies or sets up school curriculums. Within the past few years, however, the federal government has aided state schools more and more in the various fields such as home economics and agriculture, and the tendency along that line at the present time is for more and more federal control of all the schools of the land. The various states very vigorously have resisted this tendency, and the struggle between the two is on at the present time. The underlying philosophy on which this government was founded states that the government should interfere as little as possible with the daily lives of its people. The states of the Union still claim their privilege of "state's rights."

Idealism, however, has suffered a serious setback in
all portions of the world within the past decade. Germany, the chief exponent of German idealism and the power which used "ideas as a weapon" suffered a crushing defeat in World War II. Italy, also an exponent of idealism through its belief in Fascism, was likewise defeated. Realism, with its concreteness, its stress on the practical, its reliance on experience, has taken a firm hold on present-day thought. Science, too, has made great strides in its deductions of the nature of the universe -- deductions which are gained from scientific experiments and not from mere theorizing.

The study would not be complete, either, without some mention of one of the great forces of realism today -- communism. Basically, this is a movement which was originated to benefit the human race, is based on the deepest moral motives, and is a part of the philosophy of the world. In the hands of the Russian rulers, communism has been another powerful idea that has been used manipulatively. A brief resume of its doctrines and origin is pertinent here.

Contrary to popular belief, communism is not an outgrowth of World War I and it did not originate in Russia. The philosophy has had a gradual growth since the days of Plato's envisaged ideal Republic, and has outcropped at various intervals in history. It remained for Karl Marx and his co-worker Max Engel to formulate the philosophy, and the part that Russia has played in it is the same that
Hitler played in adopting the philosophy of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel: communism was put into every-day, practical use by Russia and the government fashioned along the lines laid down by the German philosophers.

Marx differed from his contemporaries in the field of philosophy in Germany. He did not subscribe to the Hegelian ethical theory, or to the belief in intellectualism. Rather, he postulated the theory that a material explanation could be found for events and conditions. In a paper, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, he said:

I use the term, "historical materialism" to designate that view of the course of history, which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes of the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggle of these classes against one another. 20

In another paper, *Wage-labor and Capital*, Marx elaborated on this materialistic thesis:

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society -- the real foundation on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life. It is not the

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consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness.\textsuperscript{21}

It is evident from these statements that Marx held that the final causes of every social change are changes in modes of production and exchange. These changes, in turn, are governed by certain universal laws of motion of both world and man in which through a process of evolution one order is surpassed by new orders in a never-ending cycle. Marx, with these opinions, definitely broke away from the Hegelian school of intellectualism.

One of Marx's fundamental theories was eternal progress and growth. He declared that man's whole existence, since the dissolution of primitive society with its common ownership, had been a history of class struggles between the ruling powers and the oppressed. This struggle, he maintained, would continue until a communistic state was reached. Eventually, a genuinely classless society would emerge in which there would be absence of distinctions not only between classes but between town and country. There would be no such thing as poverty or wealth, but all would share equally in the benefits of society. Proletariats and capitalists would both disappear. Through universal cooperation, men would enjoy the all-sided fruits of the earth, and be free to train themselves as they chose.

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{ibid.}, p. 60.
This theory of Marx's did not gain approval in his homeland, Germany, but it remained for Russia to accept it and to take the idea and apply it to her government in 1918. Since that time communism has not only made for itself a mighty empire in Russia but has spread until the communistic ideas pervade every country in the world today. We are too close to the problem to appraise it properly or to determine its final outcome in influencing the thought of the world.

But there is no question that the greater part of the world is governed by realistic philosophy today. We only have to read the newspapers, books, and magazines to find evidences of it everywhere. As the situation stands today, realism versus idealism has triumphed, but in the changes that continue to come, the pendulum may swing back to idealism. The world moves, and ideas continue to develop.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Idealism and realism had their roots in ancient Greek philosophy, but there is a great deal of difference between the Greek realists and idealists of that day and those of today. Early Greek philosophy, realistic or idealistic, was objective, while that of both kinds today is subjective to a large extent.

The ancient Greek first tried to explain the phenomena of nature that he saw all around him through observation and speculation. He had no scientific instruments or laboratories whereby he could make actual experiments, and he depended upon observation and speculation. When this failed to give conclusive results, he turned to the mind and the realm of thought for the explanation. Some of the greatest philosophers of all time, Plato and Aristotle, differed in their basic conceptions, but advanced systems of thought which have influenced the patterns of thought in the world ever since.

After the capture of the Grecian cities by Rome, the old philosophy of the Greeks was supplemented and eventually supplanted by that of skepticism, stoicism, and Epicureanism.
All these philosophies were realistic in that their exponents believed in predetermination or the reign of natural law. They were gradually replaced by the growth of Christianity which, at the time of the fall of Rome, was beginning to spread all over the world.

Christianity gave an entirely new slant to the thought of the world. The ancient Greeks had been hylozists; that is, they believed in gods. However, they believed in a number of gods whereas the Christians had only one God. This God was omnipotent and supreme; He had created the world and all life, including man, that lived upon it. He made the laws that governed the world, and since this was so, there was no point in man speculating on what made the sun come up in the morning and go down in the evening. Likewise, the nature of man was predetermined, and there was no use in speculation concerning that. This new attitude did not encourage the development and growth of philosophy, and for more than a thousand years after the fall of Rome in 476 A. D. there was little accomplished in the field of philosophy.

The mind of man was still active, though, and after the Renaissance and the Revival of Learning, the attention of the world turned again to Greece and there was a revival in the study of Grecian philosophy. This revival led to the formation of new concepts and to the old division of thought between those who thought knowledge of the universe
came through experience and those who believed it came through the mind or reason.

The realistic way of thinking was more prevalent in England and France than idealism in the days immediately following the Renaissance movement, and this type of thought has continued to dominate English thinking. The discoveries of science encouraged men to believe that all the workings of nature could be explained by experiments and through sense sensations. The idealistic ways of thought, on the other hand, were found for the most part in Germany where some great universities had been founded. The German philosophers, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, advocated a subjective idealism wherein the mind was the supreme Absolute.

The metaphysical theories of the German philosophers were not as influential in their effects on the civilization of the world as were their political theories. Kant laid the foundation stones of an authoritative state wherein the individual was completely subordinate to the state, and the others completed the edifice. Hitler, in seizing the German government and making a totalitarian nation out of it, took the thoughts of the philosophers and put them into actual practice. German idealism was strongly in favor of nationalism and just as strongly opposed to internationalism. Idealism failed here because it was not universal; it became narrow, nationalistic, and authoritarian.
The idealism of the New World has not been as subjective as that of Germany and is of a more universal type. With the growth of the country and the development of science, a spirit of realism has supplanted that of idealism to a large extent.

The outstanding conclusion reached from the study is that ideas are transitional. They have evolved continually since any history of them is available, and they have grown out of the conditions of the world at their times of emergence. The names of great men are linked with the development of ideas, but the ideas themselves have grown out of existing conditions. The history of ideas is a history of how man has tried to make known his needs and how to secure them.
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