<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>The Philosophy of the History of Religion: A Philosophical Detour by the Later Hegel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>SHIMODA, Kazunobu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>(2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue Date</td>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2433/241047">http://hdl.handle.net/2433/241047</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textversion</td>
<td>Kyoto University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Philosophy of the History of Religion
A Philosophical Detour by the Later Hegel
Kazunobu SHIMODA

From a historical point of view, it can be said that, while religion has always been a major issue in Western philosophy, the diversity of religions essentially belonging to various other cultures could not be handled by philosophical traditions aiming mostly at self-knowledge. However, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, an early nineteenth-century German philosopher, opened philosophical thinking to the colorful but averted field of historical religions. If this challenge is inevitable for Hegel's philosophy, a fundamental reconstruction of reason itself can be seen through his new orientation of philosophical thinking. How did Hegel do this and what does it mean? An effective approach to this problem will not be possible until rigid conceptions about the distinction between philosophical and religious studies are no longer dominant. Therefore, the aim of this book is to address this problematic situation and clarify some potentialities of Hegel's philosophy of the history of religion by examining his discussions about three main topics: religion (part one), history (part two), and the history of religion (part three).

Part one: Religion. Hegel's criticism of Jacobi and the philosophy of cultural religion

The motif of religious history was not a major theme in the development of Hegel's theory of religion until the Berlin Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion in his later years. For this reason, this book firstly investigates Hegel's philosophical motives toward the history of religion by confirming his thoughts during the Berlin period.

Thereby, we take up his brief argument concerning “thinking upon something” (Nachdenken), which was added as the introduction (preliminary notion: Vorbegriff) in the revised edition of Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences. Through an analysis of empirical thinking, Hegel attempts to establish the horizon of speculative logic. Therefore, the structure of “thinking upon something” is linked to the problem of empirical sciences and is regarded as a philosophy supporting the system of “philosophical Sciences,” which the Encyclopedia is about to present. During the activity of thinking upon something, the conflict between the mediation of thinking and the immediacy of experience is resolved. Hegel presented this argument, which described the dialectical unity of both concepts as “mediated immediacy,” to confront the “position of immediate knowledge,” for which the German non-philosopher Friedrich Heinrich
Jacobi was regarded as the representative. In opposition to Hegel, Jacobi had taken a hostile attitude toward philosophy in general by emphasizing the theoretical conflict between mediation and immediacy.

The construction of the logic of “mediated immediacy” by Hegel also clearly appeared in his Lectures of the Philosophy of Religion, especially those of 1827, the same year the revised Encyclopedia was published, which confirm the importance of Hegel’s critique of Jacobi in his religious research. Jacobi’s position excluded every medium and was condemned by Hegel from this point of view. By contrast, Hegel aimed to restore the logical medium by excluding the position of emotional immediacy. Nonetheless, the aim of Hegel’s criticism of Jacobi was not limited to only this position: the expansion of the concept of mediation by Hegel necessitated a fundamental reestablishment of religious philosophy. It is not only the logical media that are rejected as secondary by Jacobi’s position of faith, but also various mediations about historical and cultural events such as icons, myths, and rituals. Thus, the logical construction of Hegel’s “mediated immediacy” concept reversed the philosophical order of emotional faith, which Jacobi recognized as the most fundamental factor of all human abilities. As a result, the mediation of diverse religious phenomena was transferred to the center of Hegel’s philosophical considerations about religion: this is considered as a definitive and historical transformation of the concept of religious philosophy, as it led Hegel to develop further his own philosophy regarding the history of religion.

Part two: The idea of history and Hegel’s reconsideration about his the necessary introduction to Science

Nevertheless, it remains unclear why Hegel constructed his cultural philosophy of religion as essentially a description of world historical religions in which Christianity is viewed as the “consummation” of religion, remains unclear. Therefore, in the second part of this book, we examine the historicity of religious history.

It is clear that in an earlier period Hegel had positioned historical religions, including Christianity, within his philosophical argument in Phenomenology of Spirit. However, what must be clarified here are not the commonalities, but rather the differences that characterize the unique aspect of religious philosophy in the later period. Therefore, first, we compare this with the chapter on “Religion” in Phenomenology of Spirit, the proper theme of which was the necessary “introduction to Science” (Einleitung zu Wissenschaft), that is, Hegel’s own philosophical position. This aim, which confirms the formation of religious concepts through the “experience of
consciousness” as a series of religions leading to the Christian Trinity, and subsequently, to “Absolute Knowledge” as the position of Science, is also connoted in Hegel’s account regarding the history of religion. In other words, Phenomenology of Spirit obviously presents a motif concerning the “transition from religion to philosophy” under the subject of the entire work to connect the natural consciousness with the absolute stage. In this setting, both religion and religious history are positioned as inevitable preliminary stages to philosophy.

On the other hand, in later years, in the revised Encyclopedia, Hegel critically reexamines the introductory character of Phenomenology of Spirit. Upon this reexamination, what stood out was the aspect of “self-forming content,” which is only possible before the “experience of consciousness” as the main subject of Phenomenology of Spirit. As long as the historical “development” (Entwicklung) and “figuration” (Gestaltung) of mental phenomena such as law, humanity, art, and religion precede the explanation of the “experience of consciousness,” presupposing their hidden formation, it can no longer be the beginning of philosophy. Assuming that this was Hegel’s own reflection, we can then ask the following question to discuss further what Hegel was attempting to reconstruct: Is it therefore possible to say that the “introduction to Science” attempted in Phenomenology of Spirit had already been abandoned in the framework of Hegel’s overall philosophy? Or, instead of describing the “experience of consciousness,” will historical accounts discussing the development and figuration of various things play a new role in the introduction? If so, how can history be described as the introduction to philosophy?

To clarify these points, we focus on the important distinction between “development” and “figuration.” According to Hegel, the aim of historical philosophy is to capture the process of history as conceptual self-development; however, on the other hand, it has a non-conceptual characteristic as a figuration in a temporal dimension, which is an external aspect of history and is distinguished momentarily from the necessity of self-developing logic. Nonetheless, Hegelian philosophy reveals a dialectic that captures this aspect of figuration as its main factor; it is an idealistic notion of the “self-externalization of spirit” (Selbstentäußerung des Geistes) that was briefly described at the end of Phenomenology of Spirit.

The self-recognition of the spirit involves knowing oneself not only as self, but also as other (im Anderssein sich selbst zu erkennen), where a nonidentical self-identity is formed reflectively and regarded as the self of the spirit. To achieve this, the spirit determines a definitive strategy of abandoning its abstract nature. What is shown here is not a linear path from non-philosophy to philosophy, but rather a self-externalizing
detour that branches out from philosophy to non-philosophy. According to this argument, the figuration of history takes the role of “to be others” to reveal developments in the spirit. Therefore, if the purpose of historical philosophical perception is to understand the phase of its necessary development in the figuration of history and grasp its own self-exteriorization of the spirit, then the first approach to accomplish this task should be to describe the figuration of history.

Thus, the transition from non-philosophy to philosophy is carried out by self-negating in the spiritual detour. Although this philosophical assignment had already been presented as the “internalization and recollection (Erinnerung) of history” in Phenomenology of Spirit, it offers some clues for considering changes from the systematic position of Hegel's earlier main work. As we have already seen, its function of being an “introduction to Science,” which Hegel had emphasized at the time of its publication, is no longer recognized as being in the Berlin period. Instead, the role of presenting an “introduction to Science” has now been adopted by the historiography of philosophy, especially the new concept of “three attitudes toward objectivity,” which are described in the third edition of Encyclopedia.

However, here it must be stated that in addition to the change in the concept of the “introduction to Science” was a new idea about the relationship between philosophy and non-philosophy. The “introduction to Science” through the history of philosophy is not intended to establish and justify a compulsory relationship between present and past in a historical way, but rather, to reveal the conceptual logical factors within non-conceptual elements such as historical facts.

Therefore, Hegel's idea of self-externalization of the spirit requests a different philosophical view. In historical descriptions, both historical figuration and the perspective of logical development are of essential importance. The integration of this idea with the concept of the “introduction to Science” positively affirms the initiation of the philosophical exploration of history and captures the ultimate form of self-recognition by spirit.

This idea, which is the central conclusion of the second part of this book, is also directly related to the consideration of the history of religion, which not only has the character of historiography, but also contains the concept of spiritual figurations. Moreover, while the history of philosophy is the representation of conceptual movement, considering the investigation in the first part of this book, the history of religion can be said to be a historical representation of representational elements. This double representational character suggests the problematic domain of the history of religion and therefore determines the task of a “philosophy of the history of religion,” that is, the
Part three, chapter one: The theoretical structure of Hegel’s “philosophy of the history of religion”

After discussing the cultural turn in the philosophy of religion (part one) and the figuration of history (part two), we next thematize Hegel’s historiography of world religions and its philosophical aim. Concerning these former argumentations, it must be considered the gradual weakening of the “transition from religion to philosophy” motif in the Berlin Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Admittedly, this subject remains in Hegel’s fundamental thoughts, but with gradual changes in what he refers to as an “escape into the Notion” (Flucht in den Begriff). As Hegel notes in the finale of each Lecture, religion should change its prelogical representative figure in the end and transform it to the conceptual form. However, especially in 1827, the year the revised Encyclopedia was published, Hegel stresses reconciliation between religion and philosophy as opposed to any type of negative transition, which runs parallel to the changes in his thoughts on the systematic construction of the philosophical Sciences. Therefore, to start an investigation into Hegel’s historiography of religion from other philosophical perspectives, which would enable a better understanding of spiritual philosophy, we must avoid limiting our interpretation to the “transition” motif or the (although definitive) position of Christianity.

As we saw in part one of this book, Hegel’s point of view about religion is not restricted to the objective aspect of God or subjective aspects such as feelings. According to Hegel, religious facts can indeed be found in the relation of both extreme sides—God and man—which is expressed as “knowledge about God.” Therefore, what the history of religion actually describes, as long as the religions perform this relation between God and man in various historical and cultural ways, is individual religious phenomena such as myths and rituals. From this aspect, the main subject of Hegel’s description of the history of religion can be considered the historical representation of the correlational movement between the “figuration of God and man” (Gestaltung des Gottes und des Menschen).

At the beginning of our inquiry into Hegel’s history of religion, we consider some structural changes in Part II of the Berlin Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. This change, which also involved a reconstruction of the connection between each religion, was principally caused by the dramatic augmentation of new information about this subject at that time; however, this change cannot be trivial because it
concerns Hegel's philosophical orientation itself, which leads to his description about the history of religion. Therefore, his “philosophy of the history of religion,” if possible, must be defined with this orientation only, which we can only recognize from the structural changes of his Lectures.

Hegel's reconsideration about “immediate” or “natural religion” as the beginning of religious history reveals not only Hegel's intellectual struggle with the problem of the origin of religion, including those of the Orient, but also a fundamental interest of his “philosophy of the history of religion.” The historical birth of religion, which was considered “knowledge of God,” therefore corresponds with the genesis of human consciousness. The distance from natural conditions defined by the primeval fear of natural forces characterizes a state of “magic” as the seed of religion that, according to Hegel, distinguishes mankind from other animals. Hegel identifies the religion of ancient China as being in such a historical stage and producing the first form of objectification.

Hegel's examinations of how Buddhism can be positioned in this history show one of the most visible differences among the Berlin Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. While a positive connection between Buddhism and the religion of ancient China was emphasized in the Lecture of 1824, in 1827, Hegel opposed both of these Asiatic religions by drawing attention to the first figuration of the idea of the reflective “self” in Buddhism. This change in characterization makes it obvious what Hegel was attempting to describe through the history of religion—the “intensity of subjectivity” in historical religions—and the criteria with which he ordered them.

Part three, chapter two: Against the thought toward origin

Therefore, the history of religion can be delineated as a process that gradually demonstrates how the freedom of the spirit has been realized in various religions, using the “intensity of subjectivity” for a scale. Hegel's own methodology in analyzing historical religions to understand other religions and cultures takes this type of perspective.

Next, we examine his criticism of the modern rational notion of “natural religion,” which before Hegel, was often praised by deistic philosophers and naturalists as an innocent ideal. According to Hegel, for such theorists, the historicity of religion means nothing else but to distance itself from the fundamental source of everything. Conversely, Hegel first determines natural religion historically as a stage of “magic” and focuses on its distance from the state of nature. The development but not the “origin” of
religious history therefore acquires a positive meaning, which is especially noticeable in the Lecture of 1827.

A critical aspect of Hegel’s “philosophy of the history of religion” is his confrontational stance with the metaphysical and naturalistic position of “thought toward origin,” which tends to regard all historical and cultural mediations as unnecessary and instead attempt to grasp only the essence of religion. Hegel’s basic attitude is reflected in his approach to the problem of translation and interpretation in regard to Indian religions particularly centered upon the Bhagavad Gita. In a dispute with his contemporary, Wilhelm von Humboldt, concerning the increasing interest in ancient Indian culture, Hegel sounded the alarm on the extravagant praise of this Hindu classic. According to Hegel, Humboldt attempts to abstract present and universal importance directly from this classical work, whereas Hegel tries to maintain the historical context in order to characterize the figurative potentiality of its subjective freedom of spirit.

Another type of “thought toward origin” can be found in the stance of the Romanticists from the same period, such as Joseph Görres, who attempted to return into the lost origin of history and was therefore attacked by Hegel, who saw this as an impetuous and anachronistic attitude that was negative toward historical figurations. However, it is more important to consider Hegel’s exceptionally high evaluation of one of his colleagues in Heidelberg, Friedrich Creuzer, whose work on ancient symbolism and mythology promoted the tendency of religious romanticism in Heidelberg at the same time as Hegel’s development of his “philosophy of the history of religion.” Creuzer dismantled superficial cultural identities to the contextual elements of peculiar formations through pursuing the interchange of various symbols between several cultures. However, although Hegel was somewhat sympathetic toward Creuzer’s position of philology, he took distance from it and elaborated his own historiography about world religions. A determination by Hegel about Egyptian religion as “symbolic,” especially in the Lecture of 1827, can be discussed from this point of view. While Creuzer considered some cross-sectional types of symbols in ancient cultures, Hegel revealed the “intensity” that centralized the subjective ability of symbolic thinking in the historical culture of Egypt and its distinctive movement of contextual figuration through the crystallization of culture referred to as “Egypt.”

Part three, chapter three: Toward Christianity. The historicity of self-testifying subject

In this chapter, to turn attention toward historical figurations and the
development of religion through the criticism of “thought toward origin,” and to reveal the cohesive power of culture and the crystallization of the subjective intensity of spiritual freedom on the basis of Hegel’s “philosophy of the history of religion,” we examine his description of Judaism, the religion of ancient Greek and Rome, and finally, Christianity as the “consummate religion”. In the Lecture of 1824, it is clear that Hegel makes speculative efforts to define Judaism as a medium between Oriental and European religions and to construct a reverse correspondence between natural and spiritual religions. This complex structure changed in 1827 to a philosophical conception in which the elements of the subjective spirit, such as symbols, signs, pure ideas, and finite will, were figuratively formed in the Egyptian, Greek, Judaic, and Roman religions as their own central determinations. Furthermore, indicating the religion of thinking, namely Christianity, as its prolongation, the structure of the 1827 Lecture explicitly shows Hegel’s specific awareness of the problem regarding the plural moments of reasoning in the pre-philosophical dimension.

Another important point in each Lecture is how Christianity is connected with other religions. In the Lecture of 1824, Hegel emphasized the historical connection between the situation in the Roman Empire and the emergence of Christianity. According to Hegel, the idea of the Judaic God being beyond the world and the feeling of fear toward it were followed by its absence and the denial of immanent meaning in the world. Subsequently, particular individuals raised their position to absolute subjects, but at the same time, lost their own dignity as human beings, as we can see in the example of the gladiatorial shows held in the Colosseum. Hegel here comprehends this absolutization of individuals and the painful deprivation of human value as a type of historical preparation for the arrival of Christianity, which Hegel views as the end point of the history of religion. Finally, by recognizing the new subjectivity created by this stage, the so-called testimony of the spirit (Zeugnis des Geistes) as a preliminary step of the philosophical “we,” Hegel qualifies his historiography of religion as a genealogy of reason in the pre-philosophical dimension.

Part three, chapter four: A system of testimony of the spirit in the Lecture of 1827 and a cultural recontextualization of philosophical self-recognition as the conclusion to the “philosophy of the history of religion” by Hegel

However, this genealogy in 1824, which repeats the structure of Phenomenology of Spirit, cannot be regarded as the conclusion of this book or of Hegel’s “philosophy of the history of religion.” Rather, in the Lecture of 1827, we can find a
distinctive orientation of thought after the “introduction to Science,” which characterizes his Berlin period, as we have already seen in parts one and two of this book. Differing from the other Lectures, his discourses about Christianity here are concentrated into a Christian representation of the Trinity, which is also referred to as “God as Spirit.” On the central point of his arguments stands a characteristic type of Christian subjectivity that is termed a “testimony of the spirit.” His analysis in 1827 about the self-realizing “subjective intensity” within the history of religion is therefore accomplished through all of his arguments, from the most primitive to the highest stages of religion. The God of the Trinity is a God of love, thereby “externalizing” itself to the finite world and denying its abstract way of being before promising redemption in the representation of death through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hence, a possible type of faith that corresponds with this idea of God must be one that also “believes himself out of himself.” In other words, this type of belief is a belief in a God capable of self-figuring to the outer world. Therefore, it constitutes the immanent authority of an absolutized subject capable of totally affirming itself in the presence of a self-realizing God.

It is already obvious that this testimonial disposition of the Christian subject shows Hegel’s model of philosophical thinking as “recognition of itself out of itself” in a pre-philosophical dimension. Now, Hegel confirms the pre-conceptual construction of his philosophy itself as a historical and cultural figure of Christianity. This recognition, so to speak, “Nachdenken” in religious history, performed under the double representative character of the “history” of “religion” positions the “self-externalization of the spirit” as the ultimate form of spiritual freedom. In addition, by establishing a logical reflective structure in Hegel’s speculation, which was developed in the form of a historiography of religion, a representative figuration of philosophy itself as the self-testifying subject is finally discovered, and thus, all of the historical descriptions of world religions gain a special meaning in terms of philosophical self-recognition. In conclusion, this book confirms Hegel’s philosophy of spirit as a consequence of his “philosophy of the history of religion” and defines it as a “cultural recontextualization of philosophical self-recognition.” Therefore, Hegel’s philosophy of religion realized in his later Berlin period was not a traditional attempt to reveal religious truths by returning to historical or metaphysical origins, but rather, it was an inquiry to offer a new type of philosophy by reorienting philosophical insights making the philosophical reasoning accessible to religious facts and causing a detour in philosophical investigations to diverse mediations and figurations of historical cultures.