

# Philosophy and Reality: A Historical Approach

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Received: 03/2024, Published: 04/2024

## Abstract:

Contemporary philosophy increasingly seeks its relevance amidst real-world concerns, especially given the paradigm shifts triggered by advancements in science and society. These shifts have seemingly marginalized philosophical thought, portraying it as detached theoretical speculation with no tangible connection to reality. This speculation is often criticized for its insular logic and metaphysical confines, suggesting a disconnect from practical issues. Such views, typically espoused by idealists, narrowly cast theoretical philosophy as the sole embodiment of philosophical inquiry, based on a restrictive interpretation that fails to capture the discipline's full scope. However, a closer examination of philosophy's history and its comprehensive theories reveals a discipline deeply engaged with the empirical world. Philosophical thought has historically responded to contemporary events and practices, reflecting diverse lifestyles and intellectual currents. Philosophy's history encompasses a spectrum of theoretical and empirical thought, urging scholars to unearth the strands of realism within the cognitive fields of philosophical history.

**Keywords:** Philosophy, Realism, Theory, Science, Metaphysics, History of Philosophy.

*Tob Regul Sci.*<sup>TM</sup> 2024;10(1): 1913 - 1925

DOI: [doi.org/10.18001/TRS.10.1.120](https://doi.org/10.18001/TRS.10.1.120)

## Introduction:

A widespread belief among both the general public and some intellectuals posits philosophy as primarily theoretical, engaging with abstract notions far removed from tangible reality. This perception confines much of philosophical research and the intellectual efforts of philosophers to the realm of traditional theories—subjects deeply rooted in the annals of philosophical history, yet isolated within a self-contained logic that seems out of touch with the practicalities of contemporary life and its challenges. Such a perspective has inadvertently disconnected philosophy from the urgent issues facing today's society, including scientific breakthroughs, environmental crises, healthcare advancements, political upheavals, cultural transformations, legal debates, human rights advocacy, and the impacts of globalization. These are not mere theoretical concerns but real-life issues that directly affect individuals' lives.

This characterization of philosophy, founded on a restrictive interpretation, fails to capture the discipline's full breadth and potential impact. A more thorough investigation into the history of philosophy and the array of theories it encompasses reveals a rich engagement with the concrete aspects of human existence. Philosophical inquiry has historically responded to real events and practices, reflecting diverse lifestyles and thought processes. Philosophy has navigated through a multitude of intellectual currents, spanning the entire spectrum of human thought. It is

imperative, therefore, for scholars and researchers in philosophy to elucidate the presence and significance of practical philosophy within its historical trajectory—from ancient Greek philosophy to contemporary schools of thought. This endeavor seeks to challenge and correct the prevailing misconceptions that relegate philosophy to the domain of theoretical abstraction. It calls for a revitalization of philosophical research through nuanced and detailed analyses, distinct from those previously undertaken, with the aim of uncovering the practical dimensions that have historically underpinned philosophical theorization. The history of philosophy should not be studied merely as a chronological sequence of events but rather through an examination of the fundamental problems and significant, reality-altering events. This approach presents the history of philosophy as a narrative of issues stemming from social and scientific realities, adopting a horizontal perspective that weaves philosophical theories with the fabric of contemporary social life, rather than a mere vertical recounting of philosophical thought's evolutionary depth. This horizontal exploration allows for an insightful appropriation of traditional philosophical doctrines in addressing and rationalizing the phenomena of our social reality, whether they relate to religion, politics, culture, or ethics. To dissect the components of this research paper concerning the realistic underpinnings of philosophical theories, the inquiry is framed as follows: **Does the history of philosophy rest solely on metaphysical speculations, or does it also encompass realistic philosophies with tangible dimensions, grounded in societal events and facts? What philosophical value do these hold within the historical evolution of philosophical thought? And how can philosophical research engage with the contemporary reality's challenges and developments?** The research is structured into three sections: the first explores the practical aspects of realism in ancient Greek philosophy; the second examines the philosophy of the Middle Ages; and the third focuses on modern philosophy. The conclusion synthesizes the findings, highlighting new avenues for future philosophical exploration in the contemporary context.

### Greek Philosophy:

In examining the history of philosophy, it is crucial to adopt a multi-faceted perspective that transcends the conventional focus on speculative theorization. This approach seeks to reveal how philosophers have historically grounded their theories in the realities of their times. The interplay of historical and social factors was instrumental in shaping Greek thought. The amalgamation of diverse tribal cultures and the pursuit of varied occupations, such as agriculture and craftsmanship, catalyzed the prosperity of Greek city-states. This societal evolution spurred a reformative movement in governance and law, significantly advancing family law to align with legal standards, thereby establishing individual rights and responsibilities. The shift from a political system dominated by noble landowners and tribal chiefs, whose authority was rooted in familial solidarity and divine or hereditary rights, to one inclusive of citizens engaged in commerce and industry<sup>1</sup>, marked a significant progression. Such transformations underscored the profound influence of social changes on the development and flourishing of Greek cities, highlighting the primacy of practical endeavors over theoretical abstraction in driving civilizational advancement.

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<sup>1</sup>Amira Helmy Matar, "Greek Philosophy: Its History and Problems," Dar Qubaa for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, 1997, p. 37.

The Greek civilization is often heralded as a cornerstone of human cultural achievement, attributed to the richness of knowledge and intellectual fervor that characterized its society. The intellectual prowess of philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, in formulating foundational philosophical doctrines, continues to resonate in contemporary discourse, underscoring the enduring relevance of their contributions. Philosophical inquiry, in this context, emerges as a holistic endeavor, aiming not only to elevate cognitive understanding but also to refine ethical and behavioral norms. While human civilizations may vary in their distinctive attributes, the application of rational thought to address multifaceted issues remains a universal hallmark. Importantly, the efficacy of this rational engagement is most palpable in its capacity to effect positive societal transformations, affirming the integral role of philosophy in reshaping lived realities.

Notwithstanding the predominant emphasis on theoretical exploration within Greek philosophy, largely due to the exalted status conferred upon idealist philosophers and theoreticians, there exists a critical need to reassess the discipline's engagement with the practical dimensions of existence. The historical elevation of metaphysical discourse, often at the expense of a philosophy grounded in the pragmatics of public life, calls for a reinvigorated exploration of the tangible aspects of philosophical thought in Greek philosophy.

### The Sophists:

The foundational steps towards an engagement with practical reality began with the Sophistic movement, which embraced open discourse to tackle the lived experiences of human concerns. Central to Sophistic philosophy was the human condition in all its facets, considered the linchpin of their intellectual pursuits and deemed a wellspring of knowledge. Contrary to the notion of a universal truth grounded in reason, the Sophists introduced the concept of relative truth, contingent upon individual conviction. This truth, they argued, becomes valid for an individual based on their sensory experiences, which vary and evolve from one person to another. Their acknowledgment that sensory experiences differ across individuals led them to the conclusion that reality is subjective, encapsulated in Protagoras's renowned assertion: "**Man is the measure of all things.**"<sup>2</sup>

By positioning sensations as the metric of truth, the Sophists effectively dismantled the concept of an absolute truth. According to their perspective, the truth of any matter is inextricably linked to human sensations and perceptions of their environment, derived from personal convictions unique to each individual. This focus on personal reality in relation to one's own issues demands analysis from a subjective viewpoint, obligating only the individual concerned. The situations we encounter necessitate a specific pattern of thought, influenced by the context and circumstances, resulting in diverse responses.

Distinguished for their expertise in rhetoric and the art of persuasion, the Sophists instructed individuals on navigating life's challenges, including wealth acquisition and livelihood. They utilized education as a means to financial gain, particularly targeting the affluent's progeny, employing persuasive tactics to capitalize on opportunities for wealth accumulation and access to

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<sup>2</sup>Mehran Rashwan, Mohamed. "Introduction to the Study of Contemporary Philosophy." 2nd ed., Dar Al-Thakafa for Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 1984. pp. 45-46.

power. The Sophistic method of persuasion, characterized by its adaptability and strategic discourse, has become emblematic of contemporary political maneuvers. In modern political arenas, leaders often resort to convoluted rhetoric and adaptable narratives to navigate varying circumstances, with rhetorical strategies tailored to the specific audience.

### Socrates:

Socrates's philosophical journey was fundamentally a critique of the Sophists, driven by a compelling urge to reshape the notions and ideas they had seeded in the minds of the young. He prioritized educational efforts that fostered virtues, goodness, and knowledge, adopting a methodology rich in Socratic irony and rooted in the generation of knowledge through dialogue and debate. This method, centered around discussions on human concerns, ethical dilemmas, and political issues, exemplified his philosophy of engaging with life's practical challenges. Thus, Socrates is credited with relocating philosophy from the abstract to the tangible, diverging from natural philosophy to a practice intertwined with everyday human experiences in the agora and beyond.

In Socrates's view, philosophy sought to clarify the essence and truths of life, revealing the criteria for a fulfilling existence achieved through addressing ethical, political, and pedagogical dimensions. He identified ignorance as the wellspring of evil and championed philosophizing as a path to self-awareness. His maxim, "**Know thyself**," was not just an invitation to philosophy but a call to introspect on the virtues that define a meaningful life—friendship, love, justice, fidelity, and courage—all of which forge the basis for living harmoniously with others within a framework of tolerance.

Socrates's educational approach, marked by engaging dialogue and persuasive discourse, aimed at kindling questions within learners and honing their ability to employ logic and critical thinking. This educational philosophy was designed to cultivate learners' intellectual abilities, enabling them to autonomously arrive at knowledge that informs ethical actions and virtues conducive to a life of dignity. This approach was transformative, altering a given social reality through public lectures and conversations that were as engaging as they were enlightening, as detailed in Plato's "The Symposium."<sup>3</sup>

These dialogues were not mere academic exercises but vital explorations intended to bind philosophy closely to the fabric of daily life, fostering intellectual and moral virtues essential not just for thought but for action. Socrates's interactions cut across societal strata, aiming to enhance the individual's capacity for sound judgment by activating rational thought in the face of life's multifaceted challenges. Philosophy, for Socrates, was deeply entwined with existence, a continuous dialogue with life itself, emphasizing that engagement with philosophical thought was tantamount to engaging with the very essence of being human<sup>4</sup>.

Socrates's philosophical practice was deeply embedded in the Athenian social fabric, focusing on the pressing ethical and political issues of his time. His philosophical inquiries were not only

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<sup>3</sup>Kilani, Majdi. "Greek Philosophy from Thales to Plato." Modern University Office, Walaa Abu Al-Khair for Printing and Reproduction, Alexandria, 2009. p. 183.

<sup>4</sup>Al-Fawi, Abdul Fattah Ahmed. "Studies in Greek-Islamic-Modern Philosophy." First Edition. Faculty of Dar Al-Uloom, Cairo University, 1992. p. 23.

relevant but vital to the Athenian youth, aimed at fostering a knowledge that could elevate individuals' lives through moral innovation. He underscored the existence of an unchanging moral law, beyond the whims of society and not reliant on the flimsy deities of Athens. Moreover, Socrates advocated for a political reformation, asserting that governance required the intellect of the finest minds to safeguard the state—a principle that resonates with contemporary political thought, recognizing the downfall of nations under the weight of incompetent governance.

### **Aristotle:**

Aristotle's philosophical stance is a testament to realism, clearly distinguished from Plato's idealistic views. He asserted that the genuine world is our tangible, material reality, unequivocally rejecting the existence of an ideal world. In Aristotle's perspective, truth is not an abstract concept but is anchored in the world we experience daily. It arises from reality, informed by human experiences and empirical observations. For Aristotle, engaging with the tangible aspects of the natural and social world is the cornerstone of our cognitive theories. Reality, as the repository of truth, precedes human existence, compelling us to investigate it and unearth its underlying principles. Aristotle posited, "Our judgments attain truth only when there exists something independently, which validates the judgment. A judgment is considered accurate when it reflects the actual state of affairs in the world, and false otherwise."<sup>5</sup>

Philosophy, in Aristotle's broad schema, is an exhaustive inquiry into the rational body of knowledge aimed at disclosing the ultimate reasons for existence. It involves a deep dive into the essence of beings or the factual nature of things, discerning foundational principles and causes. This exploration spans theology, physics, mathematics, ethics, politics, and economics, marking Aristotle as a comprehensive philosopher whose intellect traversed the entire spectrum of knowledge.

### **Stoicism:**

The Stoic philosophy underscored the paramount importance of virtue and the manifestation of ethical principles in daily life. For the Stoics, philosophy transcended a mere pursuit of knowledge, becoming intrinsically linked to ethical practice. They perceived the universe as a dynamic system regulated by natural laws, dismissing the relevance of metaphysical constructs. Central to their belief was the idea that life's ultimate aim is the pursuit of pleasure aligned with the good, with all individuals naturally seeking to avoid pain, the only inherent evil.

Guided by Zeno of Citium, Stoicism focused on the practicalities of existence, aiming to forge pathways towards an enhanced life through practical engagement with the everyday. Stoicism posited that the true purpose of philosophical inquiry was the attainment of happiness and well-being, setting it apart from earlier philosophies deemed too abstract and disconnected from human concerns. For the Stoics, virtues such as simplicity and ethical integrity were paramount. They argued that while scientific inquiry might achieve objectivity and logic, it necessitates an ethical framework that manifests in our daily conduct. Thus, philosophy was seen as a lifestyle,

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<sup>5</sup>John Searle, "Mind, Language, and Society: Philosophy in the Real World," translated by Saeed Al-Ghanmi, Arab Scientific Publishers, 1st edition, 2006 , p. 29.

empowering individuals to adeptly navigate and adapt to the diverse realities of life and a broad spectrum of circumstances. This adaptive approach required an awareness to discern between good and evil, virtue and vice, life and death, enabling individuals to actualize their genuine existence. They advocated for a life of simplicity, one that arises naturally from the essence of nature itself.

The Stoics introduced "a novel logic where sensory and rational knowledge coexist without conflict, searching for truth within the existential realities that people face in their life experiences."<sup>6</sup> Truth, when connected to our everyday experiences and trials, becomes a more potent agent of success, building individual confidence with positive repercussions for society at large. This actionable truth, gleaned through practice and experimentation, has tangible impacts, distancing itself from metaphysical speculation.

Philosophical action, when in sync with nature, culminates in wisdom, reducing the propensity for arbitrary decisions driven by whims. The sage navigates life's variances as presented by nature, accepting adversities as part of one's destiny, and undertaking actions that respect the laws of nature because they adhere to the principle of goodness—a natural precept. "The sage aligns their behavior and mental state with nature's requisites, while the ignorant fail to do so, opting instead to fault the natural law. Therefore, individuals must strive to align their inner psychological states with their external conditions."<sup>7</sup>

### Epicureanism:

Epicureanism positions reality as the cornerstone of philosophical exploration, asserting that the tangible world we engage with, far removed from metaphysical speculation, is the true domain of knowledge. This school of thought maintains that knowledge is principally attained through sensory experience, viewing the senses as the external gateways to the external world. "Our sensations, mental constructs, and emotions serve as the arbiters of truth, where sensation is understood as the direct apprehension of objects, stripped of any cognitive or mnemonic processes. Indeed, mental activities and memories are fundamentally dependent on sensory input."<sup>8</sup>

For Epicureans, truth is ascertainable only through its practical implications in reality, with the ultimate aim of diminishing pain and achieving happiness and well-being through purposeful action. "Epicureanism conceives of philosophizing as a pragmatic endeavor, a series of strategic choices leading toward end goals." <sup>9</sup>This integration of thought and action underscores a key tenet of realist philosophy.

The revival of the Greek tradition of engaging with our surroundings philosophically is crucial to our philosophical investigations, positioning philosophy not just as a theoretical pursuit but as a

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<sup>6</sup>Othman Amine, "Existential Philosophy," Anglo-Egyptian Library, Cairo, (n.e.), 1945, p. 90.

<sup>7</sup>Badoui, Abdul Rahman. "Encyclopedia of Philosophy." Vol. 2. Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, 1st edition, 1984. p. 53.

<sup>8</sup>Majid Fakhry, "History of Greek Philosophy from Thales to Aristotle and Proclus," Dar Al-Ilm Lil Malayin, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st edition, 1991, p. 166.

<sup>9</sup>Mehran Rashwan, Mohamed. "Introduction to the Study of Contemporary Philosophy." 2nd ed., Dar Al-Thakafa for Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 1984. p. 46.

practical exercise in living. This approach allows philosophers to attain true happiness by alleviating suffering—a particularly pertinent consideration in contemporary times. It necessitates the exclusion of anything that might detract from one's tranquility and happiness. "Philosophy, then, is an examination of human reality and its implications through theoretical frameworks and a critical methodological approach... It also ties this examination of lived reality to the potential for expression and reform, seeking the pinnacle of human happiness."<sup>10</sup>

Contemporary French philosopher **Michel Onfray** introduces a pragmatically oriented philosophical project in his work, "**A Counter-History of Philosophy**," where he reevaluates the history of philosophy, steering clear of metaphysical and theoretical dogmas. His work tackles issues relevant to everyday life, democratizing philosophical inquiry to make it accessible beyond the confines of specialized academic circles, under the banner of 'philosophy for all.' Onfray emphasizes a pragmatic approach to the history of philosophy, challenging the notion that theoretical, metaphysical philosophy, often celebrated by idealistic schools of thought, represents the sole facet of philosophical inquiry. He highlights several neglected practical philosophical theories, advocating for the revitalization of their intellectual heritage due to its significant role in broadening the scope of philosophical research to encompass applied, practical elements. Among these is **Cynicism**, portraying the philosopher as a free agent, master of their actions and guided by practical judgments, unrestrained by theoretical constructs. Their philosophy mirrors their real-world practices, where virtue is not a consequence of academic learning but a result of lived practice and daily spiritual exercises. Thus, for them, philosophy is intrinsically linked to the challenges and changes of life, necessitating a real will to achieve happiness.

### Medieval Philosophy:

This period marked a philosophical dormancy, largely due to theology's grip on human intellect. Philosophical endeavors were predominantly aimed at justifying and bolstering sacred texts, with a focus on harmonizing philosophy with religion. Yet, a discernible divide existed between Christian and Islamic philosophical traditions.

**Christian Philosophy:** The Middle Ages saw theological faith prevail within the intellectual sphere, established as an incontrovertible truth by the Church, drawing philosophy into its fold. This dominance of religious belief relegated human reasoning to the peripheries, constraining intellectual inquiry within theological parameters. Philosophical efforts were thus largely dedicated to elucidating and affirming these religious convictions, with deviation branded as heresy. Consequently, philosophy found itself under the aegis of theology, tasked with addressing religious matters while steering clear of speculative and vacuous debates disconnected from the concrete reality shaped by religious devotion. Christianity's tenets and rituals were not just matters of faith but constituted an experienced reality, constraining philosophical exploration to the domains sanctioned by Christian doctrine. This was particularly evident in the philosophy's nascent stages, notably the Patristic era, which was characterized by a Platonic influence that relegated reason to a subordinate role to revelation, epitomized by Saint Augustine. However, this stance evolved during the Scholastic period, influenced by Aristotelian thought, which sought a conciliation between Christian religious doctrine and Greek philosophy, emphasizing

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<sup>10</sup>Al-Turki, Fatehi. "Philosophy of Everyday Life." Mediterranean Publishing House, Beirut - Tunis, 1st edition, 2009. p. 23.

logical argumentation to substantiate the existence of God and His relationship with humanity and the universe. Saint Thomas Aquinas notably advocated for this rational approach, diverging from the mystical. Broadly, Christian philosophy's engagement with societal realities and the pragmatics of life was circumscribed by its religious preoccupations.

**Islamic Philosophy:** In contrast, Islamic philosophy afforded philosophy and philosophers a significant role within society, employing reason to scrutinize worldly and religious matters and to address societal challenges with a rational and measured approach, eschewing extremism. For example, **Al-Kindi's** correspondences with Al-Mu'tasim had a transformative impact on society, advocating for the integration of philosophical sciences that were harmonious with Islamic teachings. Despite their philosophical inclinations, Islamic scholars maintained a delicate equilibrium, ensuring that their philosophical inquiries did not encroach upon the domains of revelation or prophecy. **Al-Kindi's** work distinguished between the empirical sciences and philosophy to safeguard religion's prerogative in revealing truths that surpass human cognition.<sup>11</sup>

Al-Farabi's "The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City" significantly influenced subsequent political philosophers and the broader realm of political thought by delineating the ideal qualities of a ruler and establishing the ethical underpinnings of political governance. He contended that ethical considerations are indispensable to political practice, arguing that neglecting these aspects invariably leads to tyranny and jeopardizes the state's stability—a cautionary note that remains pertinent for contemporary political systems and global leadership.

Al-Farabi's vision for a virtuous city was not an abstract utopia but a pragmatic response to the societal contexts of the Islamic world, advocating for governance that directs citizens towards virtuous conduct, supported by leadership that nurtures and preserves these qualities to ensure societal cohesion and continuity<sup>12</sup>.

Ibn Rushd bridged the gap between reason and revelation, asserting the symbiosis between wisdom and religious law. He aimed to establish a foundation of rationality in religious discourse to counteract fanaticism and intolerance, arguing that philosophy and religion, both embodiments of truth, are not in conflict but in concordance. His enlightening perspective underscores the critical need for reason in navigating contemporary challenges, promoting dialogue over discord, and averting sectarian strife that has fragmented the Muslim community due to a lapse in rational engagement.

### **Modern Philosophy:**

Modern philosophy heralded a paradigm shift, placing a premium on addressing the concrete challenges of society and life. This era saw a closer alignment with societal issues, propelled by the advent of science, which effectively ended the theological stranglehold on intellectual thought. Philosophy transitioned from its theological servitude towards an embrace of empirical science, seeking to keep pace with scientific breakthroughs. Philosophers turned their attention to integrating findings from various natural sciences and observing social phenomena, thereby

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<sup>11</sup>Sakr, Ibrahim Mohamed Ibrahim. "Problems of Philosophy." Arab Thought House, (n.e.), 1997. p. 33.

<sup>12</sup>Benabdellali, Abdessalam. "Political Philosophy in Al-Farabi's Thought." Dar Al-Talia'a, Beirut, 4th edition, 1997. p. 85.



opening avenues for artistic and ethical values and aiming to bridge the gap between philosophy and empirical science.

**Francis Bacon:** Francis Bacon underscored the critical role of inductive reasoning as a methodology integral to natural science, facilitating our understanding and interpretation of nature's reality and laws. The emphasis on empirical evidence underscored that scientific knowledge is inherently empirical, setting English philosophy on a distinct trajectory towards pragmatism by the twentieth century. Bacon contended that science without practical application was mere vanity and absurdity, advocating for induction as essential, driven by achievements in naturalistic research.

Bacon criticized the philosophical stagnation due to the preoccupation with theoretical considerations and metaphysical quandaries filled with illusions. He called for a novel methodology to rejuvenate philosophy, steering humanity towards advancement and flourishing, achievable only through an empirical engagement with reality and uncovering natural laws.

**John Locke:** John Locke marked a definitive phase in the Enlightenment, particularly with his "Essay Concerning Human Understanding." Enlightenment thinkers centered on the individual, advocating for personal freedom and human rights, thereby nurturing a political consciousness that led to revolutionary movements challenging absolute power in both religious and political spheres. This readiness to advocate for "democratic governance and the rights of the populace... owes much to the Enlightenment regarding political independence, economic freedom, religious tolerance, and social progress potential."<sup>13</sup>

Locke's political philosophy, grounded in realism, mandates freedom. He opposes Hobbes's notion of man's inherent malevolence, affirming natural rights, including liberty, and stressing equality in attaining these rights. Defending these rights is crucial to safeguarding related freedoms such as property and personal autonomy. Property rights emerge from labor rights, accessible to all without bias, while personal liberty entails making uninfluenced decisions. "Political authority rests on mutual consent, reflecting societal members' equality in reason and liberty"<sup>14</sup>. Locke's insights significantly altered Europe's political landscape, emphasizing freedoms and political practices relevant to real life.

**John Stuart Mill:** John Stuart Mill's realist perspective shines through his views on freedom as a tangible aspect of political engagement. In his seminal work "On Liberty" (1859), Mill highlights freedom's pivotal role in societal development, asserting that no society can claim freedom without universally guaranteeing it. Rejecting the notion of absolute truth, Mill advocates for the free expression of ideas, denouncing intellectual tyranny as an obstacle to free thought and expression. He critiques political despotism, delineating the limits of political power over individuals and curtailing political tyranny."Protection,

therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough: there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by

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<sup>13</sup>William KleeWright, "A History of Modern Philosophy," translated by Mahmoud Sayed Ahmed, introduction by Imam Abdel Fattah Imam, Enlightenment for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st edition, 2010, p. 154.

<sup>14</sup>Youssef Karam, "History of Modern Philosophy," Dar Al-Qalam, Beirut, Lebanon, (n.d.), (n.e.), p. 151.

other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them."<sup>15</sup>

Society, while preventing harm, should not coerce conformity to majority beliefs about individual benefit. Freedom's prerequisites include not imposing our perceived truths on others. Every individual should enjoy complete freedom of conscience, allowing them to express scientific, practical, ethical, and religious viewpoints, and to live according to their preferences and interests, provided they cause no harm to others. The legitimacy of ideas does not stem from widespread acceptance but from the continuous opportunity to challenge them, a right that must be universally upheld. "History demonstrates that many initially minority-held new ideas were partially correct. Unlikely is the erroneous opinion to gain widespread acceptance if freely debated. Only through a diversity of opinions can all facets of truth be duly recognized and affirmed."<sup>16</sup> Thus, Mill encapsulates realism in the nexus between politics and freedom.

### Jean-Jacques Rousseau:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "The Social Contract" profoundly resonated with the reality of its time, addressing pivotal issues relevant to political practices. This work significantly influenced the shaping of republican ideals in France and the United States, advocating for direct democracy where citizens actively participate in law-making through public assemblies and elections. Rousseau's thought played a crucial role in affirming civil and political rights for every citizen<sup>17</sup>.

Rousseau's philosophy was deeply entwined with the political realities of his age, underscoring the relevance of such concepts in our current political sphere, which should be founded on respect for and adherence to the law. Consequently, delving into such philosophies in academic research and contrasting them with today's political realities is increasingly imperative.

In contemporary times, philosophy must engage with the multifaceted realities of daily life—spanning political, cultural, and social spheres—and remain abreast of its evolving dynamics. Philosophy needs to connect more intimately with people's concerns, utilizing its methodologies to overcome its perceived elitism and demonstrate its practical, applicable essence. Philosophy should not only probe the essence of human existence in its abstract sense but also its manifestations in individual and societal contexts.<sup>18</sup>

The Enlightenment sought to free humanity from dogmatism, despotism, injustice, and fear, including dominion by religious and political authorities. It aimed to move beyond theological explanations of the world towards a rational, scientific interpretation. However, the liberated reason soon became a subjective tool, undermining the humanistic intent that justified its existence, using it for dominating nature and instinctual drives. This marked a regression in

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<sup>15</sup>Mill, John Stuart. On Liberty. 1859. Batoche Books, Kitchener, 2001.P.9.

<sup>16</sup>William KleeWright, "A History of Modern Philosophy," translated by Mahmoud Sayed Ahmed, introduction by Imam Abdel Fattah Imam, Enlightenment for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st edition, 2010, p. 239.

<sup>17</sup>ibid

<sup>18</sup>Al-Turki, Fatehi. "Philosophy of Everyday Life." Mediterranean Publishing House, Beirut - Tunis, 1st edition, 2009. p. 12.

reason's capability to act as a liberating force for humanity, necessitating philosophy to continually reinvent itself, adapting to changing realities in pursuit of freedom.

### **Karl Marx:**

Marxist philosophy, distinguished by its grounding in realism, views the world as material and in perpetual motion, subject to dialectical evolution. Marx posited that our understanding of the world is achieved through consciousness, which aims at transforming reality. For Marx, philosophy is a means of awareness and change, rejecting idealistic tendencies predicated on abstract absolutes and universal reason. He redirected philosophy from speculative idealism to engaging with the tangible, real-world issues of politics and socio-economics. Consciousness, shaped by the production of material values and societal evolution, sees historical shifts in material conditions reflecting social and human changes within society as the foundation of human consciousness. Marx asserted, "Our social existence shapes our consciousness, not the other way around."<sup>19</sup>

Marx dismantled the premises of contemplative, idealistic philosophy, focusing instead on the tangible social reality. Authentic consciousness arises through societal struggles between the bourgeoisie, which aims to maintain its privileges, and the proletariat, aspiring for recognition and change through revolution. Marxism's critique of the capitalist bourgeois system exposed its fallacies and biases against the lower classes. This material dialectic, driven by social and economic conditions, transformed Marx's philosophy from traditional philosophical reflection to a practical, reality-based approach. Existence, always in flux, lacks fixed attributes, with each era defined by its distinctive social organization. It is these social interactions that forge ideas, customs, and traditions.

Marx's realistic interpretation of history propelled his philosophy to prominence among contemporary thought, inciting political and social revolutions through the consciousness derived from societal changes. Humans endeavor to improve their social conditions through a consciousness that unites theory and action, altering historical trajectories through feasible, real-world actions. Understanding the world becomes possible only through engaging in diverse human activities to discern objects and phenomena. Marx's vision of consciousness emerged from exposing the injustices and exploitation endemic in capitalist bourgeois regimes, inevitably leading to transformative changes in reality.

### **Conclusion:**

The discussion above reveals that traditional philosophical theories have engaged deeply with matters of reality, contrary to their frequent portrayal as merely metaphysical and detached from the practical concerns of existence. This philosophical heritage of realism carries significant epistemic and behavioral value, demanding a rational and professional approach. By selecting insights that enrich our daily experiences, we can bridge the gap between the annals of philosophy and the pressing issues of our time, leveraging the beneficial aspects of this intellectual tradition.

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<sup>19</sup>karlmarx , contribution à la critique de l'économie politique, traduit par Maurice Husson et Gilbert Badia, édition sociales, Paris,1972,p10.

The essence of truth in philosophy transcends the confines of abstract theoretical reasoning. Instead, it emerges from practical actions and processes that span the entirety of social and political life. Michel Foucault poignantly captures this sentiment, suggesting that the truth philosophy seeks is not merely to be grasped by our thoughts but to be crafted, invented, acted upon, and realized.

Keeping philosophical research in step with the enlightening impact of general and particularly modern philosophy is crucial for its applicability in contemporary societal development. The rich intellectual, scientific, and philosophical legacy we inherit is laden with valuable experiences, ideas, and visions that contribute to the renaissance of our societies. Emphasizing practical and applicable insights from this rich tradition, without reducing philosophical inquiry to a mere theoretical exposition of historical philosophies, is essential. Such an approach prevents the philosopher from experiencing confusion and alienation due to the disconnection between the theoretical frameworks studied and the reality experienced. Philosophical theories aim to serve as tools for addressing and navigating the complexities of social reality, proposing solutions for its advancement towards a more civilized and progressive state. Thus, it becomes imperative to explore and integrate philosophical theories that have critically engaged with and sought to improve societal realities, as exemplified by the Enlightenment philosophers. Their knowledge and methodologies should be actively incorporated into our research and educational agendas, celebrating the transformative impact of philosophers who have steered reality towards improvement.

The relevance of philosophical thought is intimately connected to its ability to address the pressing realities and the fate of humanity. As this thought aligns with the characteristics of our societies, it secures a place in our present, fostering a cognitive awareness that opens up new avenues for engaging with the issues and dilemmas of our era. This transition from theoretical isolation to a more engaged exploration of life's myriad issues underscores that knowledge is not merely the alignment of words with things through the lens of pure reason but is an interpretative engagement with reality and its unfolding scenarios. Areas such as human rights, environmental sustainability, civil society, legal frameworks, and political structures necessitate closer philosophical scrutiny, drawing the field nearer to the tangible, lived reality.

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