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The Essentials of Philosophy

By Roy Wood Sellars

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An excerpt from the beginning of the CHAP. I WHAT PHILOSOPHY IS: A Preliminary Definition. Speaking in general terms, we may say that philosophy is a persistent attempt to understand the world in which we live and of which we are a part. This preliminary definition stresses the broadness of aim characteristic of philosophy. It is an effort of the intellect of man to answer fundamental problems and gain a comprehensive view of the universe. The conception of the exact nature of philosophy has varied from period to period as man's view of the world and of his place in it has changed. Hence the history of philosophy has usually been the best index of those gradual alterations in the dominant interpretation of man and reality in which science and religion find their focus. Plato believed that a supersensible realm of ideas existed apart from the world of perceptual appearance, and his philosophy was at once a cause and an effect of this outlook. It explained what reality was and how the human mind obtained valid glimpses of...



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