



Early Theological Writings

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III

LOVE

[Hegel probably wrote the following fragment on *Love* (Nohl, pp. 378–82) late in 1797 or early in 1798, a year or eighteen months before *The Spirit of Christianity*. The surviving manuscript begins in the middle of a sentence, and the meaning of the opening paragraph and its connection with what follows is a matter for conjecture.

Hegel seems to have been thinking, as so often during his early years, of the oppositions within man, between man and man, between man and nature, etc., and of the problem of their unification. In ancient Greece he saw a happy and unified life, but misery and opposition seemed to him to characterize those under the influence of a positive or authoritarian religion. Noah, as we have seen in the first section of *The Spirit of Christianity*, opposed himself to both God and the world, with the result that there was no unity but only a relation of master and servant. Abraham saw not only himself but also his family and nation as God's favorite. Christianity has been less exclusive still, but, in so far as it remains a positive religion, it distinguishes between the faithful and the heathen and opposes the latter to the former. The cosmopolitanism of some eighteenth-century writers tries to overcome this opposition, but only at the expense of depressing the individual. In each of these instances a wider number of men are put on the same footing with one another; they enjoy the same rights and the same favor from the Lord, and they have the satisfaction of sharing in his dominion because they are his favorites; to this extent they are unified. But the unity of life is here broken by the relation (characteristic of authoritarian religion) of bondage to an objective Lord, and equally broken by the subordination of the individual to a universal end in which he has little or no share. The only solution of these discords is love, not the attenuated love which might be supposed to unite all Christians, but a genuine living bond, a true unity of opposites, like that which Jesus preached.

In this reconstruction of Hegel's first paragraph, as well as in the rest of the translation, the translator has been specially helped by Haering, *Hegel, sein Wollen und sein Werk*, I, pp. 366–90.]

(378) But the wider this whole [i.e., either the Jewish people or Christendom] extends, the more an equality of rights is transposed into an equality of dependence (as happens when the believer in

cosmopolitanism comprises in his whole the entire human race), the less is dominion over objects granted to any one individual, and the less of the ruling Being's favor does he enjoy. Hence each individual loses more and more of his worth, his pretensions, and his independence. This must happen, because his worth was his share in dominion [over objects]; for a man without the pride of being the center of things the end of his collective whole is supreme, and being, like all other individuals, so small a part of that, he despises himself.

[Here there is no living union between the individual and his world; the object, severed from the subject, is dead; and the only love possible is a sort of relationship between the living subject and the dead objects by which he is surrounded.] Since something dead here forms one term of the love relationship, love is girt by matter alone, and this matter is quite indifferent to it. Love's essence at this level, then, is that the individual in his innermost nature is something opposed [to objectivity]; he is an independent unit for whom everything else is a world external to him. That world is as eternal as he is, and, while the objects by which he is confronted change, they are never absent; they are there, and his God is there, as surely as he is here; this is the ground of his tranquillity in face of loss and his sure confidence that his loss will be compensated, because compensation here is possible.¹ This attitude makes matter something absolute in man's eyes; but, of course, if he never existed, then nothing would exist for him, and what necessity was there for his existence?² That he might exist is intelligible enough, because beyond that collection of restricted experiences which make up his consciousness there is nothing whatever; the eternal and self-complete unification [with the object] is lacking.³ But the individual

1. [I.e., what is lost at this level of thought is a material object and therefore something replaceable by something else.]

2. [I.e., if his existence (the existence of the subject) is not necessary, then the existence of matter (the object correlative to the subject) is not necessary or absolute either.]

3. [I.e., the subject may give up thinking of matter as something absolute and may take the object correlative with the subject to be only the states of his

cannot bear to think himself in this nullity. He exists only as something opposed [to the object], and one of a pair of opposites is reciprocally condition and conditioned. Thus his thought of self must transcend his own consciousness,⁴ for there is no determinant without something determined, and vice versa.

In fact, nothing is unconditioned; nothing carries the root of its own being in itself. [Subject and object, man and matter,] each is only *relatively* necessary; the one exists only for the other, and hence exists in and for itself only on the strength of a power outside itself; the one shares in the other only through that power's favor and grace.⁵ Nowhere is any independent existence to be found except in an alien Being; it is this Being which (379) presents man with everything. This is the Being which man has to thank for himself and for immortality, blessings for which he begs with fear and trembling.

True union, or love proper, exists only between living beings who are alike in power and thus in one another's eyes living beings from every point of view; in no respect is either dead for the other. This genuine love excludes all oppositions. It is not the understanding, whose relations always leave the manifold of related terms as a manifold and whose unity is always a unity of opposites [left as opposites]. It is not reason either, because reason sharply opposes its determining power to what is determined. Love neither restricts nor is restricted; it is not finite at all. It is a feeling, yet not a single feeling [among other single feelings]. A

own consciousness. This makes the subject absolute, but it implies the intolerable thought that the subject lives in a vacuum, and therefore the subject is driven to think again.]

4. [I.e., instead of opposing himself to an object outside him, he must realize that subject and object are neither of them absolutes but are reciprocally conditioned and thus elements in a single living whole.]

5. [At this point Hegel ceases to think of the relation between man and the material world and thinks instead of the relation between the world (including mind and matter) and God. This relation is first conceived (as in a positive religion) as a relation between servant and master; only in Christ's religion of love is the relation truly conceived as a union in love.]

single feeling is only a part and not the whole of life; the life present in a single feeling dissolves its barriers and drives on till it disperses itself in the manifold of feelings with a view to finding itself in the entirety of this manifold. This whole life is not contained in love in the same way as it is in this sum of many particular and isolated feelings; in love, life is present as a duplicate of itself and as a single and unified self. Here life has run through the circle of development from an immature to a completely mature unity: when the unity was immature, there still stood over against it the world and the possibility of a cleavage between itself and the world; as development proceeded, reflection produced more and more oppositions (unified by satisfied impulses) until it set the whole of man's life in opposition [to objectivity]; finally, love completely destroys objectivity and thereby annuls and transcends reflection, deprives man's opposite of all foreign character, and discovers life itself without any further defect. In love the separate does still remain, but as something united and no longer as something separate; life [in the subject] senses life [in the object].

Since love is a sensing of something living, lovers can be distinct only in so far as they are mortal and do not look upon this possibility of separation as if there were really a separation or as if reality were a sort of conjunction between possibility and existence.⁶ In the lovers there is no matter; they are a living whole. To say that the lovers have an independence and a living principle peculiar to each of themselves means only that they may die [and may be separated by death]. To say that salt and other minerals are part of the makeup of a plant and that these carry in themselves their own laws governing their operation (380) is the judgment of external reflection and means no more than that the plant may rot. But love strives to annul even this distinction [between the lover as lover and the lover as physical organism], to annul this possibil-

6. [This may be a reference to Aristotle's doctrine that natural objects are composite of matter (mere potentiality, inactive and inactual) and form (intelligible actuality), or it may be an allusion to the doctrine of Baumgarten mentioned above, p. 214, n. 39.]

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ity [of separation] as a mere abstract possibility, to unite [with itself] even the mortal element [within the lover] and to make it immortal.

If the separable element persists in either of the lovers as something peculiarly his own before their union is complete, it creates a difficulty for them.⁷ There is a sort of antagonism between complete surrender or the only possible cancellation of opposition (i.e., its cancellation in complete union) and a still subsisting independence. Union feels the latter as a hindrance; love is indignant if part of the individual is severed and held back as a private property. This raging of love against [exclusive] individuality is shame. Shame is not a reaction of the mortal body, not an expression of the freedom to maintain one's life, to subsist. The hostility in a loveless assault does injury to the loving heart itself, and the shame of this now injured heart becomes the rage which defends only its right, its property. If shame, instead of being an effect of love, an effect which only takes an indignant form after encountering something hostile, were something itself by nature hostile which wanted to defend an assailable property of its own, then we would have to say that shame is most of all characteristic of tyrants, or of girls who will not yield their charms except for money, or of vain women who want to fascinate. None of these love; their defense of their mortal body is the opposite of indignation about it; they ascribe an intrinsic worth to it and are shameless.

A pure heart is not ashamed of love; but it is ashamed if its love is incomplete; it upbraids itself if there is some hostile power which hinders love's culmination. Shame enters only through the recollection of the body, through the presence of an [exclusive] personality or the sensing of an [exclusive] individuality. It is not a fear *for* what is mortal, for what is merely one's own, but rather a fear *of* it, a fear which vanishes as the separable element in the lover is diminished by his love. Love is stronger than fear. It has no fear of its

7. [I.e., if a lover does not surrender himself completely to his beloved, he is as it were dividing himself into separate compartments and reserving one of them for himself.]

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fear, but, led by its fear, it cancels separation, apprehensive as it is of finding opposition which may resist it or be a fixed barrier against it. It is a mutual giving and taking; through shyness its gifts may be disdained; through shyness an opponent may not yield to its receiving; but it still tries whether hope has not deceived it, whether it still finds itself everywhere. The lover who takes is not thereby made richer than the other; he is enriched indeed, but only so much as the other is. So too the giver does not make himself poorer; by giving to the other he has at the same time and to the same extent enhanced his own treasure (compare Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* [ii. 1. 175-77: "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, My love as deep;] the more I give to thee, The more I have"). This wealth of life love acquires in the exchange of every thought, every variety of inner experience, for it seeks out differences and devises unifications ad infinitum; it turns to the whole manifold of nature in order to drink love out of every life. What (381) in the first instance is most the individual's own is united into the whole in the lovers' touch and contact; consciousness of a separate self disappears, and all distinction between the lovers is annulled. The mortal element, the body, has lost the character of separability, and a living child, a seed of immortality, of the eternally self-developing and self-generating [race], has come into existence. What has been united [in the child] is not divided again; [in love and through love] God has acted and created.

This unity [the child], however, is only a point, [an undifferentiated unity,] a seed; the lovers cannot so contribute to it as to give it a manifold in itself at the start. Their union is free from all inner division; in it there is no working on an opposite. Everything which gives the newly begotten child a manifold life and a specific existence, it must draw into itself, set over against itself, and unify with itself. The seed breaks free from its original unity, turns ever more and more to opposition, and begins to develop. Each stage of its development is a separation, and its aim in each is to regain for itself the full riches of life [enjoyed by the parents]. Thus

the process is: unity, separated opposites, reunion.⁸ After their union the lovers separate again, but in the child their union has become unseparated.

This union in love is complete; but it can remain so only as long as the separate lovers are opposed solely in the sense that the one loves and the other is loved, i.e., that each separate lover is one organ in a living whole. Yet the lovers are in connection with much that is dead; external objects belong to each of them. This means that a lover stands in relation to things opposed to him in his own eyes as objects and opposites; this is why lovers are capable of a multiplex opposition in the course of their multiplex acquisition and possession of property and rights. The (382) dead object in the power of one of the lovers is opposed to both of them, and a union in respect of it seems to be possible only if it comes under the dominion of both. The one who sees the other in possession of a property must sense in the other the separate individuality which has willed this possession. He cannot himself annul the exclusive dominion of the other, for this once again would be an opposition to the other's power, since no relation to an object is possible except mastery over it; he would be opposing a mastery to the other's dominion and would be canceling one of the other's relationships, namely, his exclusion of others from his property. Since possession and property make up such an important part of men's life, cares, and thoughts, even lovers cannot refrain from reflection on this aspect of their relations. Even if the use of the property is common to both, the right to its possession would remain undecided, and the thought of this right would never be forgotten, because everything which men possess has the legal form of property. But if the possessor gives the other the same right of possession as he has himself, community of goods is still only the right of one or other of the two to the thing.

8. [Here Hegel added and afterward deleted the words: "The child is the parents themselves."]

IV

FRAGMENT OF A SYSTEM (1800)¹

(345) *Absolute* opposition holds good² [in the realm of the dead.] One kind of opposition is to be found in the multiplicity of living beings. Living beings must be regarded as organizations. The multiplicity of life has to be thought of as being divided against itself; one part (346) of this multiplicity (a part which is itself an infinite multiplicity because it is alive) is to be regarded purely as something related, as having its being purely in union; the second part, also an infinite multiplicity, is to be regarded as solely in opposition, as having its being solely through a separation from the first. Therefore the first part [the unity] can also be defined as having its being only by means of separation from the second one. The unity is called an organization or an individual. It is self-evident that this life, whose manifold is regarded purely as being related and whose very existence is exactly this relation, can also be regarded as being differentiated in itself, as a mere multiplicity, because the relation between the separated is not more intrinsic to it than the separation between that which is related. On the other

1. [Hegel's manuscript apparently consisted of forty-seven sheets, of which only the thirty-fourth and forty-seventh survive. In both of these he seems to be dealing with problems similar to those treated in *The Spirit of Christianity*, especially with the problem of unifying opposites—eternal and temporal, God and man, subject and object, etc.—opposites which reflective thinking has been unable to unite. The key to their union he finds in his conception of life. He holds that religion in its highest form conceives of God not as a mere object separated from man but as infinite life united with men who, as living beings, share in that life and can rise to its level in religious experience. Since these philosophico-religious problems occupy the whole of the extant manuscript, the title given to it by Nohl is somewhat misleading. It contains some of the seeds of the later system, but there is nothing to indicate that Hegel was writing the sketch of a system rather than a theological essay.]

2. [The first sentence is fragmentary; the restoration of what is lost is purely conjectural. The first paragraph deals with the problem of life as a multiplicity of individual organisms, separated and yet united.]

hand, it must also be considered as capable of entering into relation with what is excluded from it, as capable of losing its individuality or being linked with what has been excluded. Similarly, the manifold itself, excluded from an organic whole and existing only as thus opposed [to it], must nevertheless be conceived, in itself and in abstraction from that organization, not only as absolutely manifold, yet at the same time itself internally related, but also as connected with the living whole which is excluded from it.

The concept of individuality includes opposition to infinite variety and also inner association with it. A human being is an individual life in so far as he is to be distinguished from all the elements and from the infinity of individual beings outside himself. But he is only an individual life in so far as he is at one with all the elements, with the infinity of lives outside himself. He exists only inasmuch as the totality of life is divided into parts, he himself being one part and all the rest the other part; and again he exists only inasmuch as he is no part at all and inasmuch as nothing is separated from him. If we presuppose life undivided as fixed, then we can regard living beings as expressions or manifestations of that life. Precisely because these manifestations are posited, the infinite multiplicity of living beings is posited simultaneously, but reflection then crystallizes this multiplicity into stable, subsistent, and fixed points, i.e., into individuals.

If on the contrary we presuppose individual lives, namely, ourselves, as the spectators, then that life which is posited outside our own restricted spheres is an infinite life with an infinite variety, infinite oppositions, infinite relations; as a multiplicity, it is an infinite multiplicity of organizations or individuals, and as a unity it is one unique organized whole, divided and unified in itself—Nature. Nature is a positing of life, for reflection has applied to life its concepts of relation and (347) separation, of the self-subsistent particular (something restricted) and the unifying universal (something unrestricted), and by positing these has turned life into nature.

Now because life, as an infinity of living beings or as an infinity of figures, is thus, as nature, an infinitely finite, an unrestricted re-