

## HEGEL'S EARLY ANTITHEOLOGICAL PHASE\*

IF THERE is one work which marks the beginning of a new epoch in the study of Hegel, it is Dilthey's *Jugendgeschichte Hegels* (1906), which informed the world that Hegel, too—all assumptions to the contrary notwithstanding—had once been young. The book was based on unpublished essays, written by Hegel in his twenties; and in the following year, this material was made available in a separate volume, admirably edited by one of Dilthey's students, Herman Nohl. Unfortunately, Nohl gave the book a very misleading title, *Hegel's theologische Jugendschriften*. Just as interest in Hegel was thus being revived in Germany after a long lapse, Hegel went into eclipse in England and in the United States; and it took forty-two years before some of these *juvenilia* were published in English, as Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* (1949). Few people nowadays read Hegel, but his name still has sufficient prestige for scholars to note the title of a work of this kind. Yet what distinguishes these essays from all of Hegel's later works is precisely that they are antitheological. A new reading of these early writings—which I can no more than summarize here—leads to a new conception of Hegel's intellectual development; it helps to correct what strikes me as a far-reaching and fateful falsification of German cultural history; and it offers what may well be the best introduction to Hegel's later philosophy.

Let me begin with the last point. To find an approach to Hegel's later philosophy is extremely difficult. A psychological approach must always stop short of a man's philosophy and is not even tempting in Hegel's case. The historical approach fails us, too. Some approach Hegel via Aristotle, and others proceed via Kant. The choice is arbitrary: each procedure is legitimate but limited, and we might as well begin with Plato, Proclus, Spinoza, or yet others. The really crucial question remains unanswered: How did Hegel

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come to relate his own philosophy so closely to that of his predecessors? How did he develop his unique conception of the relation of systematic philosophy to the history of philosophy? What led him—the hyperbolic expression is almost justified—to the discovery of the history of philosophy, a discipline which he established with his three volumes of lectures (posthumously published) on the subject?

Many studies, of course, have by-passed any historical approach and plunged immediately either into the Logic (the center of attention in the English literature) or, perhaps more judiciously, into the *Phenomenology*, which has more and more become the favorite of German Hegel scholars. When we are thus confronted with Hegel's full-fledged philosophy, however, we find Hegel reminding us constantly that it is very difficult to make a beginning: wherever he begins, all the rest is presupposed. He keeps comparing his philosophy to a circle and says, in effect: "In my beginning is my end" and "Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning" (T. S. Eliot). He insists on having a system, but denies that it is based on assumptions he could fairly state at the outset—or anywhere. Hegel is unintentionally obscurantist about this point. His central assumption is indeed different from a mathematician's axioms, or even from Spinoza's; he takes for granted the essential truth of all preceding philosophies. Heraclitus and Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle, Spinoza and Kant, and all the rest had seen the truth, but not all the truth; their insights were partial. What is needed is the crowning integration of their visions, a synthesis of all that has gone before. Thus Hegel's beginning, by presupposing his vision of the whole history of philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Schelling, presupposes his subsequent exposition. But in his early essays we encounter Hegel without any such premise—in fact, at first his attitude was just the opposite of this.

Let us now consider, one by one, the four essays which make up Nohl's volume. The first two are omitted from the English edition, which features a sixty-six-page introduction by Richard Kroner. This is as scholarly as one would expect from the author of the famous two-volume work, *Von Kant bis Hegel* (1921-1924)—but perhaps equally subjective. Even as the title of the earlier work suggested simultaneously Kroner's own development from Kant to Hegel, the title of, and introduction to, the *Early Theo-*

*logical Writings* intimates Kroner's development into a mystic and theologian. Hegel is now envisaged as "a Christian mystic" (p. 8) and a "Romanticist" (p. 14); and this conception, apparently shared by T. M. Knox, who did most of the translating, may be related to the complete omission of the first two essays. But are the other two "theological"? Only insofar as Webster gives one meaning of theology as "the critical, historical, and psychological study of religion and religious ideas." By the same token, however, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Nietzsche's *Antichrist*, and Freud's *Future of an Illusion* could also be called "theological writings"—which would surely be misleading. So, too, is this title in Hegel's case. His essays, while not antireligious, consistently deprecate theology in any customary sense of the word.

I. Under the first heading, "Folk Religion and Christianity" (the titles are Nohl's), we have five fragments. The main points, however, can be stated systematically, often using Hegel's own words.<sup>1</sup>

Hegel contrasts *subjective and objective religion*. "Objective religion is *fides quae creditur*, . . . can be systematized, presented in a book or in a lecture; subjective religion expresses itself only in feelings and acts" (p. 6). "Subjective religion is all that matters; . . . let the theologians quarrel about dogmas, about that which belongs to objective religion" (p. 8). "Subjective religion is pretty much the same in all good human beings, while their objective religion can have almost any color whatever" (p. 10). In support, Hegel cites Lessing's *Nathan*, the greatest literary achievement of the German Enlightenment—a drama with three heroes, a Christian, a Mohammedan, and a Jew, Nathan—the moral being stated in Nathan's version of the fable of the three rings. We cannot know which religion is true, should respect other religions, and, above all, should be moral. This is the work most often cited in these so-called theological writings, invariably with approval. In the present instance, Hegel concludes: "The most venerable human beings are assuredly not always those who have speculated most about religion and who very often transform their religion into theology" (p. 10).

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are mine and are followed by page references to Nohl's edition (1907).

There is no need here for citing some of Hegel's more sarcastic remarks.

Hegel's *difference with Kant*, however, requires comment. Let me quote again:

The understanding has produced splendid fruit, such as Lessing's *Nathan*, and deserves the eulogies with which it is ever praised. But the understanding can never transform principles into practice. The understanding is a courtier who obeys the moods of his master and knows how to produce justifications for any passion and any enterprise.<sup>2</sup> Enlightenment of the understanding makes more clever but not better [p. 12].

What is needed to produce moral conduct is, at least for the mass of the people—Kant notwithstanding—something in man's passionate nature; and "love, though it is a pathological principle of action, is unselfish" (p. 18). (The word "pathological" refers of course, to Kant's usage.) Moral teachings must indeed be "authorized by the universal reason of man"; but they must also be "so human that they correspond to that stage of morality which a people has attained" (p. 21). Kant's ethics thus seem unrealistic. The young Hegel, intent on the problem of popular education, finds reason alone insufficient to raise the masses to Kant's moral level. Sheer respect for the moral law will not do. Nor, Hegel thinks, will Christianity.

Hegel's vitriolic *treatment of Christianity*, often in terms of cutting contrasts with classical Greece, need not be detailed here. It is noteworthy, however, that Hegel does not even spare Jesus, whom he contrasts sardonically with Socrates, of whom he says:

Of course, one did not hear him deliver sermons on a platform or a mount—how could it even have occurred to a Socrates, in Greece, to deliver sermons?—he aimed to . . . enlighten [!] men. . . . The number of his closer friends was indeterminate; the 13th, 14th, etc., were as welcome as the preceding ones. . . . They were his friends, his students, but in such a way that each remained for himself whatever he was; and Socrates did not live in them and was not the head from which they, as members, received the juice of life. He had no mould into which he wished to pour his characters; . . . for that only small spirits

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hume, *Treatise*, bk. II, pt. III, sec. iii; "Reason is . . . the slave of the passions."

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would have been at his disposal; and indeed he cared for these, but they certainly did not become his most intimate friends. He had no mind to polish for himself a small corps to be his bodyguard, with the same uniform, the same drill, the same passwords—a corps that would have altogether one spirit and would forever have borne his name. . . . Each one of his students was himself a master; many founded schools of their own; several were great generals, statesmen, heroes of all kinds . . . not heroes in martyrdom and suffering, but in action and in life. Besides, whoever was a fisherman, remained a fisherman; nobody was to leave his home; with each he started with his handicraft and thus led him from the hand to the spirit. . . . He developed concepts out of the soul of man, where they had been all along and needed nothing more than a midwife. He gave nobody cause to say: How now? Is not this the son of Sophroniscus? Whence did he attain such wisdom that he makes bold to teach us? He did not offend anyone by swaggering self-importance or by mysterious high-flown phrases of the sort which impress only the ignorant and the credulous<sup>3</sup> [pp. 33 f.].

Nor does Hegel, at this stage, except Luther. He reproaches “the Reformers” for their

Christian police institutions. . . . The establishment of church power as the champion of the freedom of conscience against the power of the princes never occurred to them; they subjected Christianity to worldly power. . . . How far Luther, for example, was from any idea of the worship of God in spirit and truth, can be seen from his sorry quarrels with Zwingli, Oecolampadius, etc. He took from the clergy the power to rule by force and over men’s purses, but he himself still wanted to rule over their opinions [p. 42].

Hegel also charges Protestantism with the substitution of “theological prejudices concerning an innate corruption of human nature” for “a real knowledge of the human heart”; and he is altogether “ashamed” of “theological compendia” (pp. 43 f.). He concludes that Christianity cannot raise the masses to a high level of morality, and he particularly objects to any Christian institutions: “Institutions and laws of a small society, where each citizen retains the freedom to be, or not to be, a member, are in no way admissible when extended to a great civil society, and cannot co-exist with civil liberty” (p. 44). And “nothing is more intolerable than pub-

<sup>3</sup> For Nietzsche’s comparable views, cf. my *Nietzsche* (Princeton, 1950), chs. xii-xiii.

licly employed guardians of morals. Whoever acts with a pure heart is always the first to be misunderstood by the people with the moral and religious yardstick" (p. 45).

Even so, Hegel believes that religion alone can make the masses moral—but a *folk religion*, not Christianity. This conception, influenced by Hegel's idealized picture of classical Greece and by Herder, differs from contemporary romanticism by insisting on the primacy of morals and the sovereignty of reason. "The highest end of man is morality, and among his dispositions for promoting this end, his disposition for religion is one of the most outstanding" (p. 48). "We consider it a necessary requirement for a folk religion that it does not force its teachings upon anyone, nor does violence to any human conscience"; its doctrines "must not contain anything that universal human reason does not recognize—no certain or dogmatic claims which transcend the limits of reason, even if the sanction therefor had its origin in heaven itself" (p. 50). Incomprehensible doctrines and mysteries, though backed by the most venerable traditions, "reason must repudiate; in its demands for moral goodness it cannot compromise" (p. 52). Hegel also rejects any doctrines which are said to "transcend reason without contradicting reason"; perhaps "the doctrines as such do not contradict reason, but it contradicts reason to believe them" (pp. 53 f.).

Some of this seems even more rigoristic than Kant. What is less rigoristic, however, is the concern with "the education of mankind" (Lessing), and the search for an appeal not to reason alone, but to the whole human being, including the imagination. And while the appeal to art and "aesthetic education" (Schiller) was the most characteristic solution of the decade, it is interesting that Hegel looked to religion. But it is hardly surprising that he could not give us any concrete picture of such a purely rational folk religion, and was hence unable to conclude any of the drafts on which we have drawn here.

Knox explains his omission of these fragments in the English edition by saying that they "are concerned in the main with questions treated more systematically and maturely in the essays which I have translated" (p. v); but by the same token, one might ignore all of Hegel's early writings. Rather it seems important to recognize the full extent of Hegel's affinity with, and debt to, the Enlightenment,

both to gain a better understanding of his intellectual development and to bridge what strikes me as a fatal cultural gap between Germany, on the one hand, and France, England, and the United States, on the other. Most modern German writers deprecate the Enlightenment as shallow and un-German, and mistakenly read their own antipathy into their heroes. This is doubly unfortunate, because the Enlightenment is after all the cradle of modern democracy, and also the basis of most modern Anglo-American philosophy. We can help to bridge this cultural gap when we recognize that most of the greatest German thinkers were by no means basically opposed to the Enlightenment, but rather sympathetic toward it, and certainly unthinkable without it. This is true not only of Leibniz, Lessing, and Kant, but also of Goethe and Schiller, Fichte and Hegel, and (as I have tried to show elsewhere) Nietzsche.

Seen in this perspective, even some relatively minor errors seem regrettable, when Kroner claims in his Introduction, in a one-page summary of the fragments just considered, that Hegel here opposed Christianity "as the religion of the Enlightenment dominated by reason" (p. 3). As we have seen, Hegel subjects Christianity to a severe criticism, in large part because he considers it utterly at odds with the ideals of the Enlightenment.

The romanticized picture of the young Hegel can be traced back to Dilthey, whose sympathies were decidedly with the early German romantics, particularly with Novalis and Schleiermacher, of whom he wrote brilliant studies. It was this interest which led him to the Hegel of the seventeen-nineties. We can still be grateful to him for calling attention to Hegel's early writings, but the time has come to renounce the misconception that these writings are theological, or that—to cite Kroner once more—"during Hegel's young manhood he was an enthusiastic Romanticist" (p. 14).<sup>4</sup>

This last issue, of course, hinges at least in part on the meaning one attaches to the word "romanticism." Kroner, for example, says

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<sup>4</sup> It is with this claim that section "III. Romanticism" (in Kroner's Introduction begins, and the sentence sets the tone for the whole section. I am, however, in complete agreement with Kroner when he says later on that Hegel "was realistic enough to see the weaknesses of past civilizations, and he was anti-Romantic in glorifying the present as the fruitful moment or *kairos* given to his generation" (p. 16); and yet later: "Hegel was called upon to transcend the horizon of the Romanticists, to reconcile their revo-

that the "philhellenic affection is in itself a Romantic trait" (p. 16). My own view, on the other hand, depends on the distinction between the peculiar "classicism" of Goethe and Schiller, of which Goethe's *Iphigenie* (1790) is perhaps the outstanding example, and the "romanticism" of the Schlegels, Tieck, and Novalis—the group who coined the word in the following decade and soon abandoned "philhellenism" for the sake of Germanic models. My point is that Hegel did not at any time align himself with the romantics against Goethe and Schiller—enthusiastically or otherwise. The formative influences on the young Hegel were rather Goethe and Schiller and, besides Kant, Lessing. The "philhellenism" of his previously cited panegyric on Socrates, with its constant blasphemies against Christ, strikes me as anything but romantic. And it is certainly not "theological."

II. "The Life of Jesus" (1795), the second essay in Nohl, begins with the singularly untheological and unromantic declaration, reminiscent of Robespierre: "Pure reason, incapable of any limitation, is the deity itself" (p. 75). Jesus' "parents were Joseph and Mary" (p. 75); and the account closes with Jesus' burial (p. 136). In between we find—as Knox says in accounting for his omission of the essay—"little more than a forced attempt to depict Jesus as a teacher of . . . Kant's ethics" (p. v). Thus the young Hegel lets Jesus say: "What you can will to be a universal law among men, valid also against yourselves, according to that maxim act—this is lutionary message with the more sober views of Enlightenment. . . . He was called upon to intellectualize Romanticism and to spiritualize Enlightenment" (pp. 20 ff.).

I also agree heartily with Dilthey, when he says parenthetically that Hegel "had experienced the Enlightenment in himself and had lived through it and overcome it; but at the same time he had also absorbed into himself its enduring elements. And this bestowed on him—as it bestowed on all those men of his generation who stood firm against romanticism in the nineteenth century, defending science—men like Wilhelm von Humboldt, Niebuhr, Schleiermacher, Herbart, and the great scientists—a mental hold and a solid firmness, while Schelling, like Friedrich Schlegel, was to lose himself in mysticism" (*Jugendgeschichte Hegels*, p. 36). This comment is the more remarkable, seeing that Dilthey was under the erroneous impression that Hegel turned against the Enlightenment much earlier than he really did, and also in view of Dilthey's pronounced sympathy for what he considered Hegel's next phase, namely "mythical pantheism." Haering has shown conclusively that this phase is merely Dilthey's construction and incompatible with the evidence (Hegel, I, 291 ff., 547 ff.).

the basic law of ethics, the content of all legislation and of the sacred books of all peoples" (p. 87). "Oh, that men had stopped here and never added to the duties imposed by reason a lot of other burdens to bedevil poor humanity" (p. 102). "Thus many . . . who worshipped Zeus, or Brahma, or Wotan, will find grace before the judge of the world" (p. 107). Hegel's Jesus knows no authority but that of reason, rejects faith, and demands only "the service of reason and virtue" (p. 122). And while there are no references to Kant in the footnotes, it seems noteworthy, in view of Hegel's later development, that the authorities cited include, besides the Gospels, not only Lessing's *Nathan* (p. 100) but also Goethe's *Iphigenie* (p. 98).

What is the motivation behind this tour de force? I suggest that this is Hegel's attempt to write the scripture of his folk religion. Moral demands are strengthened psychologically by the thoroughly humanized story and figure of Jesus. The result should be compared not only with the Gospels but also with Kant, who is here made readable and palatable for the people. Theology is still rejected, and Jesus is used to propagate Kant's ethics.

III. We now come to "The Positivity of the Christian Religion" (1795). Hegel informs us at the outset that it is his basic assumption "that the end and essence of all true religion, and of our religion, too, is the morality of man" (p. 153). He is still the heir of Kant and the Enlightenment, and neither a theologian nor a romantic. He defines "positive" as meaning "founded on authority and placing the worth of man not at all, or at least not only, in morality" (p. 155); and he has in mind a contrast which corresponds quite closely to that drawn recently by Erich Fromm, in *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950), between "humanistic" and "authoritarian" religion.

Once again I cannot agree with Kroner, who says that "obviously, Hegel was fighting especially against the Roman Catholic church." In support, Kroner cites Hegel: "Great men have claimed that the fundamental meaning of 'Protestant' is a man or a church which has not bound itself to certain unalterable standards of faith but which protests against all authority in matters of belief" (p. 8). But Hegel immediately goes on to disagree with these great men and insists that the Protestant churches have, as a matter of fact,

not lived up to any such "negative determination" (p. 199). Not only does he include Protestantism in his indictment, but it is the point of his essay to show that the seeds of positivity or authoritarianism can be found in the very teachings and conduct of Jesus. For this, however, he does not blame Jesus, but only his contemporary audience, the Jews, who, according to Hegel, were impervious to any other approach.

Hegel's sarcastic, and often picturesque, criticisms of Christianity are not accompanied by positive proposals, or based on an independent position. He writes as a historian, with a special, ironical interest in reversals. He has no platform of his own but is following the historical development in search of one. This distinguishes him even now from many exponents of the Enlightenment, but he himself is preoccupied with his difference with the churches. For example, each claims that nothing is

as easy as finding the truth; one only needs to memorize one of its catechisms. And it does not accept [Schiller's verse, from "Das Ideal und das Leben"]:

Only seriousness paled by no toil,  
Finds the deeply hidden fount of truth;

the church holds open market with it; the river of churchly truth roars noisily through all the streets, and everybody can fill his brains with its water [p. 204].

These are themes developed in the preface to the *Phenomenology* in Hegel's critique of Jacobi and the romantic cult of inspiration, and still later in his polemics against Fries.

Hegel not only understands "the positivity of the Christian religion" as the loss of any gain that Jesus may have presented originally, but he rejects the traditional account of the spread of Christianity as owing to its superiority, and he relies heavily on Gibbon. "The spread of the Christian religion was accomplished by anything rather than reason and understanding. . . . The Greek and Roman religion was only a religion for free peoples, and with the loss of freedom . . . its adequacy for human beings had to be lost, too" (p. 221). Hegel—like Nietzsche almost a century later—thus considers Christianity a religion adequate for slaves:

The despotism of the Roman princes had hounded the spirit of man from the face of the earth; deprived of freedom, he was forced to let

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that which was eternal in him, his absolute, flee into the deity; and the spread of misery forced him to seek and expect blessedness in heaven. The objectification of the deity went hand in hand with the corruption and slavery of man, and it is actually only a revelation and a manifestation of this spirit of the times [pp. 227 f.].

One may feel reminded of Marx, who later sought to disentangle the Hegelian dialectic from the theological framework of Hegel's mature philosophy; but Hegel is concerned solely with the human spirit, and political and economic conditions interest him from this point of view alone.<sup>5</sup> If his interest is "practical" in the Kantian sense, it is wholly impractical from the Marxian point of view. His perspective is moral, but his estimate of Christianity is, so far, overwhelmingly negative.

IV. In "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" (1799<sup>?</sup>), the last long essay of the so-called "theological" writings, we encounter the first great turning point in Hegel's development; but even here he becomes neither theological nor romantic. He begins with an account of what he considers the spirit of Judaism, and a certain similarity with Julius Streicher makes it the more remarkable that Hegel later, in his *Philosophy of Right*, insisted on equal rights for the Jews.

It is in his discussion of Jesus that Hegel turns against Kant and enters a new phase.

A man who wished to restore the human being again in its totality could not possibly choose such a path which only adds a rigidly minded conceit to the human being's division against himself. Acting in the spirit of the laws could not mean for him acting from respect for duty and in contradiction to the inclinations; for both parts of the spirit (of this division of the mind against itself one cannot speak in any other way) would in that case no longer act *in* the spirit, but against the spirit, of the laws . . . [p. 266].

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<sup>5</sup> Such differences are underestimated in G. Lukács, *Der junge Hegel: Über die Beziehungen von Dialektik und Oekonomie* (1948). This work is most erudite but constantly cites Marx, Engels, and Lenin as authoritative dogma. Lukács realizes that Hegel's early theological phase is a fiction, but substitutes invective for demonstration and supplants this legend with a myth of his own—as when he contends that the conception of Hegel's early theological period is "eine Geschichtslegende reaktionärer Apologeten des Imperialismus" (p. 45).

Kant's distinction between reason and inclination is thus no longer accepted as adequate; it characterizes merely one phase in man's development. Kant was a man divided against himself, and morality for him consisted in obedience to law. And according to Hegel, the Jewish religion represents the same type, though less nobly so. But any such division within the spirit makes man a slave of the law, even if it is a law he gives himself. Morality, so understood, is a stage of the spirit which must be surpassed. "Jesus' spirit, which was sublimely above morality, shows itself turned directly against the law in the Sermon on the Mount" (p. 266).

What Hegel turns against, however, is not all morality, but only one type of it, which he calls, both here and later, *Moralität*. And what Jesus represents is a higher type of morality, which Hegel later called *Sittlichkeit*. There is nothing particularly romantic about this, nor can I agree with Kroner that Hegel here becomes "a Christian mystic", or that "it is of profound significance that he discovered his own soul by discovering the soul of Jesus" (pp. 8 f.). The young Hegel drew his inspiration from Schiller's and Goethe's conception of classical Greece, probably especially from Goethe's *Iphigenie*. Even as he had previously put Kant's *Moralität* into the mouth of Jesus, he now makes Jesus the prophet of Iphigenie's *Sittlichkeit*.

It is to German classicism, not to the romantic protest against it, that Hegel here owes his greatest debt. While his close friend, the poet Hölderlin, pined away with longing for ancient Greece, Hegel found in Goethe a present embodiment of what he admired in the past. Goethe saved him from Kant and presented him, in the flesh as well as in his works, with the superior type of humanity which Hegel now exalts above mere *Moralität*. Here was the whole man whom Nietzsche still celebrated almost a century later: "Goethe— . . . what he wanted was *totality*; he fought the mutual extraneousness of reason, sense, feeling, and will (preached . . . by Kant, the antipodes of Goethe)" (*Götzen-Dämmerung*).

In his discussion of the Sermon on the Mount, Hegel writes: "The agreement of inclination with the law is of such a nature that law and inclination are no longer different; and the expression 'agreement of inclination and law' therefore becomes quite unsuitable" (p. 268). When Hegel calls the state of mind which

characterizes the undivided man "love," it is easy to see how this would remind a Christian theologian of Paul or Christian mysticism; but Hegel's position is crucially different, and agrees with *Iphigenie*, for he has no place at all in his scheme for a transcendent faith.

He speaks of faith, to be sure, but is yet much closer to Goethe than he is to Luther. In those who had faith, Jesus "recognized kindred spirits," for "with such complete trust in another human being, with such devotion to him, with such love which holds back nothing, only a pure or purified soul can throw itself into the arms of one equally pure." And again: "Faith is the spirit's recognition of spirit; and only equal spirits can recognize and understand each other" (p. 289). Hegel understands faith not as the recognition of one's own impotence, not as the response to the wholly other, not as throwing oneself on the mercy of an omnipotent God whom one cannot hope to please by any works, but—and it would be hard to stray further from Luther—as the love and trust which pertains between two free spirits. It is the Socratic or Platonic Eros of which he speaks—the essentially humanistic faith which finds expression, not only in *Iphigenie*, but also in Goethe's later poem, "Wär' nicht das Auge sonnenhaft":

Were not the eye so like the sun,  
The sun it never could behold;  
If the god's own power did not lie in us,  
How could that which is godly delight us?

In Hegel's words: "Faith in what is godly is possible only because the person who has faith contains in himself what is godly—and what recognizes in that in which it has faith, itself, its very own nature. . . . The faith in what is godly is derived from the godliness of one's own nature" (p. 313). These positive statements are best rounded out by a reference to what Hegel repudiates: "Miracles represent what is least godly because they are least natural and contain the harshest opposition of spirit and body in its full, overwhelming brutality. Godly activity is the re-establishment and representation of unity; miracles the deepest rent" (p. 339). From here Hegel proceeds to a final unfavorable contrast of Christianity with classical Greece, and on the last page he once more names both the Catholic and the Protestant Church as falling below his

standard: "It is their destiny that church and state, divine service and life, piety and virtue, spiritual and mundane activity can never be fused into one." That is how the essay ends.

Much of the last part of the essay deals rather opaquely with fate and its conciliation through love, is strikingly similar to certain sections in the *Phenomenology*, and seems an elaboration of the motto which Goethe later gave his *Iphigenie*:

Every failing that is human  
Pure humanity atones.

For the central idea of Goethe's drama is that Orestes can be reconciled with fate and liberated from the furies of his conscience without any *deus ex machina*, by the loving humanity of his sister. Goethe's drama, finally, is also an important source for Hegel's strange exaltation (in the *Phenomenology*) of the relationship between brother and sister. Hegel had in mind Sophocles' *Antigone*, too, but his development was decisively determined by the fact that he found in his own age a drama of comparable stature, and a poet and human being like Goethe.

V. In the end, Hegel turns against the Enlightenment in one important respect. Consider these lines from his discussion of the spirit of Judaism—surely applicable to the writers of the Enlightenment no less than to the ancient Hebrews. "An image of a god was for them mere stone or wood—it does not see nor hear, etc. With this litany they consider themselves marvelously wise . . . and have no conception of the deification of such images in the vision of love and the enjoyment of beauty" (p. 250). Does it not follow that any approach to history which depicts it merely as the record of superstition and stupidity is superficial, and that one ought to penetrate the state of mind which finds expression in each stage? This is precisely the consequence which Hegel drew a year later when, in 1800, he tried to rewrite his essay on "The Positivity of the Christian Religion." He did not get beyond the introduction from which I now quote:

The following essay does not have the purpose of inquiring whether there are positive doctrines and commandments in the Christian religion. . . . The horrible blabbering in this vein with its endless extent and inward emptiness has become too boring and has altogether lost

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interest—so much so that it would rather be a need of the time to hear the proof of the opposite of this enlightening application of universal concepts. Of course, the proof of the opposite must not be conducted with the principles and methods . . . [of] the old dogmatics; but one would have to deduce this now repudiated dogmatics out of what we now consider the needs of human nature and thus show its naturalness and its necessity. Such an attempt would presuppose the faith that the convictions of many centuries, that which the millions who, during these centuries, lived by them and died for them considered their duty and holy truth—that this was not bare nonsense or even immorality . . . [p. 143].

In this fragment of 1800 we encounter the transition from “The Positivity” to the *Phenomenology*, though this cannot be shown here in any detail. Suffice it to add that the chronological confusion of the illustrations in the *Phenomenology*, which has disturbed readers at least since the time of Rudolf Haym, is due to the fact that, as we have seen, in Hegel’s mind the features of the Jews’ attitude toward their law and Kant’s toward the moral law blend at one point; and the same is true of the ancient Greeks and Goethe. This would not introduce any difficulty into a simple typology; but Hegel does not envisage these types in a spatial arrangement, next to each other, but in a temporal sequence, as growing out of each other. A single human being, developing gradually toward the most comprehensive and mature form of integrated totality, would have to pass through one type after another.

Again, one thinks of Goethe. And a quotation from his *Wilhelm Meister* (VII. 9) gives us yet another clue to a better understanding of the *Phenomenology*:

Not to keep from error, is the duty of the educator of men, but to guide the erring one, even to let him swill his error out of full cups—that is the wisdom of teachers. Whoever merely tastes of his error, will keep house with it for a long time and be glad of it as of a rare good fortune; but whoever drains it completely will have to get to know it, unless he be insane.

Those who merely nibble at a philosophic position may “keep house with it for a long time,” while those who take it even more seriously than its creator did and push it to its final consequences will get to know it and pass through it to a more mature position, propelled

higher and higher by their very seriousness. This is the sense in which the dialectic of the *Phenomenology* is a logic of passion. Far from pitting reason against passion, or academic pedantry against deep experience, Hegel charges the romantics, whom he attacks in the preface of the *Phenomenology*, with an ultimate lack of seriousness. As Goethe did, too, he considered them essentially weak spirits who tried to hide their lack of disciplined strength in a mist of emotion—or perhaps nibbling connoisseurs—certainly not men capable of serious and thorough analysis.

Thus Hegel's early writings facilitate the understanding of his later work. And his puzzling faith in the essential rationality of tradition, his assumption that the philosophies of the past are all partially true, his obstinate attempt to comprehend, and his contempt for those who would merely either accept or criticize—these basic ingredients of Hegel's dialectic are themselves to be understood dialectically. Hegel did not always have this outlook but developed it after having gone through the very opposite attitude, even after having swilled it out of full cups. He started, not as a romantic, but as a zealous devotee of the Enlightenment. He always remained faithful to some elements of this heritage, such as the belief in unalienable human rights and the faith in human reason, but he reacted violently against other aspects. Where he had previously condemned Christianity for its irrationality, he later defended its essential rationality and came to celebrate Christian dogmas as ultimate philosophic truths in religious form. Even this attitude toward Christianity, however, was quite different from that of the later romantics. Instead of atoning for his earlier opposition by submitting in the end, he subordinates Christianity to his own philosophy—as an admirable, if not entirely adequate, anticipation of his philosophy on a subphilosophic level. Thus Hegel always remains the heir of the Enlightenment, and opposed to romanticism and theology alike, by maintaining until the end that there is one pursuit which is far superior even to art and to religion, namely, philosophy.

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