

JUDITH BUTLER

Senses of the Subject

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Judith Butler, Berkeley, 2014

To Sense What Is Living in the Other

Hegel's Early Love

There are not many manifest reasons to think about Hegel and love together. First of all, Hegel is hardly lovable to most people; many readers do not want to take the time to sort out those sentences. Second, the language of love is usually understood to be a direct proclamation or a lyrical expression of some kind. Third, love has a relation to images and motions, to what we imagine time and again or, rather, to a form of imagining and moving that seems to take us up into its repetitions and elaborations. So the topic of love seems an odd way to approach Hegel, whose language is dense, who explicitly devalues nonlinguistic forms of art, and for whom direct address and lyrical style seem equally remote. And yet it was a topic to which he turned in his early work, where “love” is the name for what animates and what deadens, and his views have clear implications for thinking about the senses and aesthetics more generally. In the years prior to writing *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), for example, Hegel wrote a short essay called “Love” (1797–98), a fragment of which remains.¹ And we find further

remarks in a small piece now called "Fragment of a System" (1800).² Later, it seems, love falls away, or is pushed away, or becomes silently absorbed into his writing on spirit.

How do we read Hegel reading love? Is there love in his language? His early writing pushes forward with declarative sentences. This is not simply because he knows the truth and declares it with great confidence, but because the declarative sentence is a way of pushing forward and pushing off. One sentence lays the groundwork for the next, and an idea is probed or developed without precisely being derived in a sequential way. In fact, although we could try, as readers of Hegel surely have, to extract the propositions from his writings, organize them into arguments that rely on primary and secondary premises and logically derived conclusions, I want to suggest that something else is happening here. When a sentence is declared or arrives in the form of a declaration, something is being shown, a particular way of looking at the world is instated, a certain way of taking a stance is enacted. We might say that a point of view is enacted in the sentence form. So when the next sentence follows, it is not always an amplification of that same point of view. Sometimes it is another point of view that critically comments on the first or shows us an unexpected consequence of the first. Sometimes that can happen over the course of a few sentences, or even a paragraph or two, and we remain pondering within the terms of that framework being enacted for that time. But then a certain turn takes place—sometimes it is within a subordinate clause, or sometimes it takes place through a shift in tone or modulation of voice. At such a point, we see that the original point of view that was confidently declared within a single or short series of propositions has slowly been called into question. For that particular claim to be called into question is not quite the same as exposing a basic corrosion within the propositional or the declarative sequence, and yet something of the confidence of the initial sequence is rattled by what comes next. And what has come next actually seems to follow from what came before, which means that the seeds of unrest—what Hegel time and again called

Unruhe—were there from the start; they were simply unseen or set aside at the beginning of the exposition. So this unsettling happens, but neither as the sudden outbreak of nihilism nor as the violent renunciation of what came before. In the midst of the development of the exposition, the declarative form has lost its confidence. This can happen simply by a repetition of the declarative form in a similarly confident mode, at which point the reader is confronted by two competing claims articulated with equal confidence. At such junctures, we might ask, does the authorial voice retain control over its material? Or is there something about the material itself, its very elaboration, that involves a reversal? The voice has reversed itself without exactly vilifying itself and without exactly repudiating what has come before. What, we might ask, do such convolutions have to do with love?

Hegel enacts a reversal in his exposition of love that belongs as much to the topic as to its exposition. We might say that now we understand that something in the nature of love is reversible or reverses itself, and we have to find a mode of writing that acknowledges or explains that reversibility. The mode of presentation has to conform to the demands of what is presented; what “is” requires its presentation in order to be at all. In other words, the presentation of love is a development or temporal elaboration of the object of love, so we cannot rightly distinguish love itself as an object, theme, or problem from its presentation (which does not mean that the object is reducible to how it is presented, only that the object becomes available only through that presentation). Love cannot remain a mute and internal feeling, but requires the presentation of love in some way. I do not mean that all love must be confessed or declared to qualify as love, but only that the declarative mode is not simply an idiosyncratic way of approaching the problem of love for the Hegel of 1797. Love has to develop in time; it has to take on a certain shape or form that cannot be restricted to a single proposition. There has to be something like a chain of sentences, declarative and interrogative, that not only records a growing confidence and its undoing, but initiates unexpected modes of arrival,

all as ways of enacting those movements as part of the phenomenon itself. After all, the phenomenon of love, no matter how mute or vociferous, no matter how inward or outward, has something of its own logic—one that unfolds or develops in time and that, as we will see, never actually blossoms into final form, but remains defined by its indefinite openness.

One perhaps expects a totalizing system from Hegel, but that error has outlived its time. In the *Phenomenology*, he establishes this openness in his analysis of how indexicals work.³ In relation to the “now,” that most immediate moment, it turned out that the “now” was always past by the time we referred to it. We lost the “now”—or saw it vanish—at the moment of pointing to it, which means that acts of reference do not precisely capture their referent. Indeed, the temporal problem that emerges when anyone tries to point to the “now” establishes a belatedness that affects all referentiality. The problem was not that pointing to the “now” pushed it back into the “then,” but that the act of pointing, the act of indicating, was always belated and that only when the “now” becomes “then” can it become reflected on as a “now.” A temporal lag separates the language that seeks to indicate the “now” from the moment indicated, and so there is a difference between the time of the indication and the time of what is indicated. In this way, language always misses its mark, and has to, in order to refer to that time at all. In this sense, the “now” is invariably “then” by the time it becomes available to us in language (which is, by the way, the only way it becomes available, since there is no unmediated relation to the “now”). Hegel is no vitalist; neither does he believe that the immediate is available to us without mediation, even though time and again he will consider those experiences that seem to us to be most immediate, most clearly without mediation. “Mediation” has at least two different meanings here: first, whatever becomes available to us within experience has been rendered external and has been reflected back to us by some external medium; second, whatever becomes available to us, in passing through or being reflected back to us by what is external, is

always at a distance from its original location and its original time. In other words, a certain displacement in time and space constitutes the condition of knowing, what Hegel often refers to as a “return” of the object. The object must leave, become something other, over and against me, and it must also return, become something indissociable from me, however foreign. How it returns is invariably different from how it leaves, so it never quite returns to the same place, which means that its “return” is something of a misnomer.

As we think about the “now,” there is always some operation of time that exceeds what we call the “now” and without which we would not be able to name the “now” at all. The same is true of whatever we might call the “end” of a process—indeed, by the time we name the end, it is already over, which means that the time of naming passes beyond that end into another register of time; the end, if nameable, if indicated, turns out to be not quite so final. What name we give to this time that exceeds the end is unclear. Perhaps if there is a linguistic way to indicate this time, it will be one that operates within a sense of the belated. And if we think that this is a problem of mournfulness, a kind of mournfulness implied by the indicative, we may be right. How might we return to love from this understanding? Is there some persistence of time that opens up at the end, or beyond the end, or even a strange poetic function of the end? How do love and loss enter the formulation? Is there some way to avert mournfulness implied by Hegel’s view, or does mourning turn out to precede love itself?

Hegel’s fragment on love begins with the question, how do those who participate in religion negotiate between their individuality and belonging to a community? Interestingly, from the start, one cannot ask about whether the individual is separated from the community or whether the individual is in some ways unified with the community without understanding the relation of the individual to property, or to what Hegel calls the “object” or “object world.”⁴ If religion involves either the collective ownership of objects or their sacrifice, then individuals give up all rights of possession to them. Under conditions in

which an individual's value is derived from his possession, he loses his value for himself when he vacates all forms of possessive individualism; indeed, in Hegel's words, when the individual loses all of what he possesses, he comes to despise himself—or so it would appear under conditions in which objects give the person his value and where objects are possessed as property.

Self-hatred has entered the picture rather suddenly here, as have the requirements of communal existence. Religion is first formulated as a form of community membership that requires the negation or sacrifice of individual property and, as a corollary, the individual's negation of himself—one that takes the affective form of self-hatred. How, we might ask, will self-hatred find its way into love? And within this economy, does self-love follow only from the possession of property?

The second problem that Hegel engages is somewhat surprising, since it would seem that he is inquiring into the conditions for a living relationship between the individual and his world. For the moment, the community and community membership are set aside, and a new point of departure is introduced. There is a second implication of the individual's separation from his object world. The first was self-hatred, since the individual seeks to give up possession of himself, but is not fully successful. The second implication is equally alarming: the object itself has become dead. Alas, one hates oneself, and the object world is dead under conditions in which property confers value. And yet Hegel seeks to counter these conclusions by asking after the possibility of a living union of individuals and objects: Is this an alternative conception of religion, and is it one that requires love or is in some sense composed of love? When he writes, "The object is dead," we are compelled to ask, how did the object die?⁵ Is this the general form of the object and, in that sense, all objects? Is it dead for all time?

There are two forms by which objects die: sacrifice and property. At first it seems that Hegel cautions us against giving up property, if that means giving up all material things, all materiality. And then it seems he is trying to find a way to affirm matter and the object world

without letting them be reduced to property. The text first asks us to imagine and enter into that configuration of the world in which an individual, one who has not fully given up his individuality, is confronted by a world of dead objects, surrounded by that world that has been established through the actions by which all personal property is sacrificed for the communal good. Under these conditions, in which individuals are deprived of all property, they are also deprived of a living relation to objects—objects become dead. And what affective life becomes possible for individuals under such conditions? They come to love what is dead. They remain living and loving in relation to an object, or set of objects, or indeed an object world, that is dead, and in this sense they remain in a vital relation to what is dead. Indeed, dead objects constitute the other term in a love relationship. And so under these conditions, love loves a matter that is indifferent to the one who loves. This relationship is precisely not a living union. When Hegel begins, then, to make remarks about “love’s essence at this level” (in seiner innersten Natur),⁶ he is not telling us about love’s essence for all time, but only how the essence of love is constituted under conditions of compelled sacrifice, that is, where religion requires individuals to separate from their objects as a stipulation of community membership.⁷

Hegel is now trying to occupy the point of view of one who has complied with the obligation to lose the object world, to live in a world of dead objects, and to live out the consequences of this particular mode of love in which one loves only objects that are dead. It is, of course, interesting that love itself is not nullified under these conditions. Rather, love takes on a new form; one might even say, love takes on a specifically historical form. The one who lives within such a configuration has not only lost the object world, but continues to love what has become dead to him; at the same time, he remains confident that his loss will be compensated, that some eternity or infinity will be gained, and then he will be free of all matter. And yet, if within such a scheme matter must be refused or lost, if matter must become dead

matter, then even the individual's own bodily matter will become dead for him. In other words, if the individual loses and continues to love that matter that has become dead for him, and he himself has become dead matter, then the individual now loses and loves his lost materiality. Dead to himself, he lives on—melancholically. He loses what he can never fully lose. And what is dead to him is also the condition of his living.

Under such circumstances, what reason can the individual give for his own material existence? The problem is not only that he is surrounded by dead objects, but that as a body that must be separated from a pure spirit, he has become a dead object for himself. And within this experience, an experience conditioned by a set of very specific religious stipulations, a reversal takes place: "the individual cannot bear to think of himself as this nullity" (*nur das dürre Nichts*).⁸ Again, Hegel has entered into, has started to enact, the reversal and paradox that will turn out to define the sacrifice of personal property for the religious community; it now turns out that the individual who complies with these stipulations, or rather lives within the world structured by these stipulations, is precisely unable to bear loving dead objects and becoming for himself a lost and dead object to which he remains ineluctably attached. The individual does not quite reach infinity, but now articulates a new region of the unbearable ("in diesem sich zu denken kann freilich der Mensch nicht ertragen").⁹ Hegel implies here that there are limits to what is bearable; we are being asked to consider the requirements that establish what will be bearable within human love. The individual who thinks of himself as a dead object is not bearable to himself, but why? First, because there is a consciousness of what is unbearable—unbearability is the form that this consciousness takes, and insofar as it takes place, emerges, it shows or enacts that some form of consciousness has already or has still transcended the dead matter that the existing individual is supposed to be. But the problem is not only epistemological or even logical. Rather, the individual suffers a deformation of love in which he now loves himself as

a dead thing. If all matter must become dead (sacrificed, devalued), and he is himself a material being, he must become dead. To accomplish this task within life, however, he himself must be alive, which means that he must remain alive, dedicated to the unbearable fate of becoming dead while alive. His fate becomes anguish.

It may seem odd that Hegel then proffers the remark “nothing carries the root of its own being in itself” (*keines trägt die Wurzel seines Wesens in sich*), underscoring that all determinate existence comes from somewhere or something that is not itself.¹⁰ Within such a configuration, or under those particular requirements of religion, it turned out that the individual could have only contempt for his determinate specificity, his own status as a material being, and for the material dimension of the object world. They were excluded from the spiritual and so became a dead part of life, absolutely differentiated from the spiritual and so absolutely dead. And in this way, they assumed an absolute status as nonliving and nonspiritual. Such a view, however, failed to give an account within religious terms of why and how material objects come into being. Hence, Hegel shows not only that the original formulation he offered of religion is partial and impossible—it unwittingly makes dead matter absolute, it makes the individual dead to himself or plunges him into the practice of self-hatred that could be escaped only through his own nullification as a living being, a condition that proves to be unbearable—but also that it fails to understand the religious significance of why and how the material world comes into being. Material existence arrives from elsewhere. In this sense, at least for now, this is what is meant by “nothing carries the root of its own being in itself.”

Another set of declarations follows, and it would seem that now Hegel is showing his cards. He starts to say what true love actually is, and at least in this version (and we have to be mindful that it is a version, that something might happen to this version to unsettle the declarative confidence of its presentation), that true love is a living union and that it seems to happen between persons who are alike in power

(and so a principle of equality is entered into the formulation) and where neither is dead to the other. Love involves not being dead for the other, and the other not being dead for one. The scene is dyadic, and thus we might well wonder what happened to the community. Did community collapse into coupledness? And what happened to the object world? Are objects still there, in nascent form, or have we suddenly entered into a couple form shorn of both community and property? This love, we are told, is neither understanding nor reason, but is rather a feeling (*"Sie ist ein Gefühl"*). Or at least he defines it at first as a single feeling, before promptly beginning a set of revisions. We are, as readers, to start from the claim that love is a feeling, only to learn rather rapidly, within the very next phrase, that it is "yet not a single feeling" (*aber nicht ein einzelnes Gefühl*).¹¹ OK, it is a feeling and yet not a single feeling, but with the second claim, Hegel is not exactly negating the first; he is accumulating propositions; the one trips over the next, and something of a chain begins to take shape. Although love is always singular, it cannot be restricted to the singular instance or its presentation or declaration. It takes a singular form, and yet must always also take more than a singular form. If we ask, what is that more than singular form that love takes? we are told that a singular feeling is "only a part and not the whole of life" (*es nur ein Teilleben, nicht das ganze Leben ist*).¹² So here we return to the problem of life, or rather to what is living, its synecdochal animation, and we recur to the notion that love must be living if it is to be actual and true love. And yet this living feeling, the one that is singular and nonsingular, connects to a greater sense of what is living or to a set of living processes that exceed the single feeling of aliveness that any of us might have. This connection is not exactly identity and not exactly not.

We have been following the presentation from the point of view of the individual subject and its singular and living feeling of love—one that excludes all oppositions and so seems to be all-embracing. We then leave the perspective of the living to take the point of view, as it were, of life itself. Now we are to understand something more

about that life than the singular feeling of life in love. The singular feeling of life suddenly gives rise to "Life" as the subject of the sentence that follows, and we are told what Life does through a personification that animates or gives life to the concept of life itself. Life is said to "drive on"; it "disperses itself" in a manifold of feelings "with a view to finding itself in the entirety of this manifold" (*drängt sich das Leben durch Auflösung zur Zerstreung in der Mannigfaltigkeit der Gefühle und um sich in diesem Ganzen der Mannigfaltigkeit zu finden*).¹³ So life is personified here, given agency, not simply as a rhetorical device that somehow falsifies or embellishes what it really is. The reversal as well as the displaced agency is meant to show that the development of the phenomenon of love involves a displacement of that purely subjective point of view—some dispossession of the self takes place in love. Internal to the singular and living feeling of love is an operation of life that exceeds and disorients the perspective of the individual. That operation of life has to be followed as a process or development that is instantiated in the absolute singularity of the perspective that it also exceeds.

The couple form does not survive this insight very well. That feeling of life, that is, the process of life that pervades all feeling, and not just the singular one, will determine and exceed its instances. Indeed, even though we are starting to understand that love must be living to be love, it will turn out that life itself can never be contained or exhausted by love. Life takes on a certain form in love, what Hegel calls a "duplicate."¹⁴ It is embodied by a figure, the human form of the one whom one loves. But it would be an error to say that the one whom one loves is life itself. Of course, we do sometimes make mad proclamations of this kind. But even so, it is but one of the erroneous rhetorical forms that belong to love, an error, an overanimation, that bespeaks some truth and some untruth. The other is not life itself, because the other is a bounded being, determinate and material and so having come into living existence, bound to pass out of it, as well; whatever union is achieved in love is not an absolute overcoming of

difference, the finitude by which two individuals are separated, but also the finitude that implies mortality. The couple does not dissolve into life itself without dying, since each would have to relinquish its determinate living form. And yet as separate and persisting forms, each is understood "to sense what is living in the other."¹⁵ This is an important formulation, since for Hegel, there is something living in love, and has to be, even though love can never be the whole of life.

What we have been calling the determinateness of the human form, its bodily matter, establishes the one who loves as a living being who senses what is living in the other.¹⁶ Sense or sensing thus emerges precisely on the condition of separateness; the one is not the life of the other, and the other is not the life of the one. And yet this sensing of the life of the other is possible only on the condition that both are living beings. It will be interesting to know whether that sensing of the life of the other is possible only on the condition of equality, something that Hegel introduced at the beginning of the lecture. Is inequality a mode of deadness? If the other is unequal, is the other also in some sense dead, or only partially alive? Is treating the other as unequal a way of deadening that other or becoming dead to the other and / or oneself?

So when Hegel makes a claim such as "In the lovers there is no matter" (*An Liebenden ist keine Materie*), does he accept that as true?¹⁷ What purpose does this declaration serve in the presentation he is offering? Has he not already told us that it won't work for lovers to overcome their matter? If their "living union" implies that they must come together without matter, then their love is not a bodily love. Can there be, then, no living matter in Hegel, or, at least, no living matter at this moment of love? The text seems to open this very question, seems, in fact, to circle around this question as its most fundamental and reiterated longing. Is he at this moment simply telling us that disembodied love is yet another erroneous way of configuring love? As his discussion continues, he makes clear that lovers seek to overcome this problem of matter in their quest to be immortal. And sure enough,

this matter persists—indeed, I would suggest that a certain obstinate materialism runs throughout Hegel—and the lovers are unable fully to negate the difference between them. We might say that their bodies get in the way of their union, and there is no way of getting around this fact except, we might conjecture, through some sort of murder or suicide (or a social practice for which murder or suicide has been made into the structuring principle). Interestingly, Hegel does not say that one consciousness becomes indignant when it learns that it cannot fully negate the difference, the dead matter, that is the other. In his language, love itself is described as indignant. So this is an indignation that belongs properly to love, an indignation without which love itself cannot be thought. As readers, we are asked to shift perspectives here, even to give up on our own identifications; a displacement or de-centering happens, but not one that simply leaves us there, confused and defeated. We are going somewhere, and this reversal is part of that passage, but to where precisely? The reversal is our reversal, to be sure, but it is also one that belongs to love, so even though we have lost our orientation, we are now onto something about love itself. My reversal and the one that characterizes love are not parallel experiences or analogies. They are not simply like one another. They are two dimensions of the same phenomenon, and so the text solicits us to think them together, to gather them as they accumulate, in the midst of our not yet knowing. There is no one perspective by which the phenomenon of love can be described. If it can be described, it is only through the shift of perspective and through some way of grasping or gathering those various shifts. They imply one another, and it is only by undergoing these shifts and displacements that we can hope to enact and thus to know love itself.

But let us return to indignation, since it seems to indicate that the union toward which love strives is incomplete, and necessarily so. Hegel refers to that “separable element” (*das Trennbare*) on which love stumbles, or “a still subsisting independence” (*noch vorhandenen Selbständigkeit*).¹⁸ There is some “part of the individual that is held back as a

private property" or even "severed" ("jene fühlt sich durch diese gehindert—die Liebe ist unwillig über das noch Getrennte, über ein Eigentum").¹⁹ It would seem that in the face of this obdurate separateness there is a "raging of love" (Zürnen der Liebe)—Hegel's term. And linked to this raging is a form of shame ("seine Scham wird zum Zorn").²⁰ On the one hand, the individuality of the other precludes the union, and yet to rage against that individuality is to strike at the other whom one loves. It is apparently the consciousness of raging or striking against the other that turns to shame, because, according to Hegel, "the hostility in a loveless assault does injury to the loving heart itself" (bei einem Angriff ohne Liebe wird ein liebevolles Gemüt durch diese Feindseligkeit selbst beleidigt).²¹ The formulation leaves unclear whether the injury is done to the loving heart of the one who rages and strikes, or if it is the one raged against and struck who is injured. Perhaps the ambiguous reference implies that it is necessarily both, since at that moment, the loving heart ceases to be loving; it becomes a deadening force, even the guardian of what is dead, namely, private property and the right to that property. So the one who is loved becomes the one to whom one has a right of private property, which means that the living other has become dead, since, as we know, property was already described as a form of deadness.

In the midst of this reflection on love, Hegel oddly remarks that shame is "most characteristic of tyrants, or of girls" ("so müßte man von den Tyrannen sagen, sie haben am meisten Scham, so wie von Mädchen"), and it makes sense to pause for a moment here.²² Why does shame enter here? Shame is clearly a difficult and uneasy way of being "reflected back" to oneself. One sees oneself through the eyes of the other, and so shame is a form of being linked to the visual perspective of the other. But who is experiencing shame in the scenes that Hegel describes? And is shame itself a form of love, or one of its deformations? Is it the girls he has in mind who are said to feel shame when they yield their bodies for money—prostitutes, or those whose work is sex? Are these women included in that group he conjectures

as “vain women” (*den eitlen*)?²³ Are they the same as or different from those women who have as their sole aim the desire to fascinate, which seems, in Hegel’s view, to be something distinct from loving or being loved? Tyrants are not much described here, but they are gathered together with sex workers, seemingly part of an increasing crowd of loveless figures, and we have to ask why. Is it that the women are tyrannical because they sell their bodies or use them for the purposes of fascination? Or are the women figured as subject to a tyrannical force? A tyrant imposes his will absolutely, treats others as subordinates, chattel, or private property. Are they mentioned here because Hegel is pointing to a tyrannical possibility within love itself, the risk of tyrannizing or being tyrannized? It would be odd to think of those fascinating girls as exercising a tyrannical force, unless someone felt tyrannized by their fascinating forces, or indeed to think of both tyrants and sex workers as equally prone to a similar shame. Yet it seems that for Hegel, shame is what is associated with such institutions in which bodies are instrumentalized for the will of another, perhaps as well that when love takes on the form of inequality and subordination, shame follows—even if it is only Hegel’s shame at the thought. This seems to apply equally to the use of the sexual body for the purposes of making money and the use of others’ bodies as personal property or slave labor. The shame seems to be part of the practice, but it also seems to follow from an aggressive, subordinating, and/or instrumentalizing dimension of love itself.

Hegel seems aware, in a fashion nearly Kleinian, that love has within it a hostile element. Shame seems to emerge precisely as a result of being conscious of the hostility in love that keeps love from ever being absolute. But the way he puts it suggests that the body itself keeps that union from being complete: “shame enters only through the recollection of the body, through the presence of an [exclusive] personality or the sensing of an [exclusive] individuality” (*Die Scham tritt nur ein durch die Erinnerung an den Körper, durch persönliche Gegenwart, beim Gefühl der Individualität*).²⁴ The body stands in the way

of union. It is separate; it is mortal; it can be encountered as a fixed barrier. But what is the experience through which that obdurate separateness is overcome? That happens only through an exchange in which giving is enhancing and receiving is a form of giving. Hegel refers to forms of touch and contact in which consciousness of separateness is overcome. This is not a merging into oneness, but a certain suspension of separateness. Predictably, this brief excursus on sexuality produces a child as its result, so the two bodies achieve unity only in what proves to be separate from them, their offspring, something of them and beyond them both. The couple now dissolves through a triangulation that it is compelled to produce.

But the child is not the ultimate problem. Lovers never quite get over what is dead between them. They are in connection with much that is dead, he writes. There seems to be always a question of property, of what they each own, and also whether something in the other is owned or capable of being owned by another. Wherever there are rights to property, so, too, is there some deadness. Some ambiguity persists here: not only do the objects that they own, objects that are external to both of them, become a form of deadness between them, but there is "a dead object in the power of one of the lovers" ("Das unter der Gewalt des Einen befindliche Tote ist beiden entgegengesetzt") that stands over and against them, opposing them both.²⁵ Does the one lover own something that the other does not own? Does the ownership of an external object produce something dead inside the owner, a dead object that somehow resides in or under the power of the owner? And is it something other than its own body? If one has property rights in one's own body, does that not produce deadness in one's love? Even if an object is external and shared, or even if the object is the body itself, regarded as common property, the problem of that deadness is not quite overcome. Hegel gestures near the end of the essay toward the possibility of common property, but does the common overcome the individual, or does it simply make rights of ownership undecidable? He seems to be suggesting that ownership cannot

be rightly reconciled with love. For love, you will remember, is love between equals, and property is always a matter of possession and seems to depend on the primacy of the individual: "everything that men possess has the legal form of property" (weil alles, in dessen Besitz die Menschen sind, die Rechtsform des Eigentums hat).²⁶ To divide property is to divide what is already dead, which means that love, understood as a living and equal exchange, is put out of play. Hegel's fragment ends with no resolution. A question nevertheless emerges from its vacillations: is love reconcilable with marriage, property, even children? And do each of these introduce and sustain some deadness?

In a way, the task for Hegel in this essay and in "Fragment of a System" (1800) is to figure out what keeps alive what is living in love. He strives to understand infinite life, or rather what is infinite in life, and this means discerning a relation that is neither conceptual nor spectatorial. Oddly, "God" becomes the name of all those relations that Hegel will call living relations ("die Beziehungen ohne das Tote").²⁷ As such, God cannot be reduced to a set of laws, since laws are conceptual and thus, in his terms, dead. So when he imagines a form of aliveness that keeps living, he understands its ideal form as one that, unlike the human lover, carries in itself nothing dead.

Not all laws are bad or wrong, and Hegel was no anarchist. And yet he searches time and again for an "animating law" (belebendes Gesetz) that operates in unity with a manifold that is "then itself animated" (als dann ein belebtes).²⁸ We move from a consideration of what is living to what is animated, and rather than staying within the simple opposition of law (lifeless) and love (living), we are led to understand a living law, or animated law, and prompted as well to think about how animation works both as a rhetorical feature of this text and as part of its very definition of spirit. As expected, it turns out that death cannot be radically excluded from life or from spirit. We do not overcome the dead, or what is dead, and we cannot bring all that is dead back to life, and yet this notion of a perpetual, if not infinite, aliveness remains alive within his text. Is it a phantasm, a struc-

turing impossibility, a vanishing point of idealization? If reflecting on life is a way of killing off life to some degree, making life provisionally dead or fixed ("fixiertes"), there is no way around this, since we cannot not reflect on life, if we are philosophers in any sense of the term. Conceptually, we cannot understand the living without understanding something of what is dead, since the contrast first makes that determination possible. Life is broken into parts and segments, which means that the apprehension of life is to some extent bound by perspective and a principle of selection. As a result, one part of life has its aliveness at the expense of another, so there is always, from any given perspective within life, some part that is dead to it—siphoned off, foreclosed. And since the living one who occupies any given perspective has had to deaden some part of the field of the living, some part of life can—even must—be dead to another part and alive to another; it all depends on which perspective is enlivened and engaged. Infinite life cannot become an "object" for thought without becoming finite and thus losing its very character. The true infinite is outside of reason, or so Hegel seems to say. And if love is infinite life, then philosophy is forced to withdraw from love in order to continue engaging in reflection and to fulfill the task of crystallizing life. Whatever crystallization philosophy provides invariably gives a finite and spatial form to the infinite—and in some ways stops its time, entering a deadening element into that process. The true infinite is not a product of reflection, and reflection tends to stop time, to establish a set of definite and finite moments. As a result, a philosopher must cease to be a philosopher if he or she wishes to affirm that infinite life named by "love." One could conclude that for Hegel, philosophers are bad lovers. But his point is rather more precise: one name for the deadening element in love is "philosophy."

Or, perhaps, philosophy is just the messenger who brings us the invariably bad news about love. There seems to be no easy way for a living being not to become an object of one sort or another, a site or condition of reflection. The one who loves is a very specific and existing

being who cannot overcome his or her finitude through love. And what is worse is that the one who loves also clings to that finitude in a stubborn and insistent way, a furtive form of self-attachment, understood more generally as a refusal to yield. When Hegel ruminates on why religion can somehow elevate life to its infinity, whereas philosophy cannot, he returns again to that recalcitrant part of the self—stubborn, finite, even dead—that refuses to give way. But this time it is a problem not of yielding to another, but of giving up property in oneself. Indeed, although Hegel seems to be in some ways praising the capacities of religion and lamenting the restrictions imposed by philosophy, his exposition surely takes a critical tone when he argues the following: humans destroy some part of themselves on the altar—they become a form of sacrifice, they destroy what belongs to them by establishing all that they own as common property, and they negate any and all objects because of their finiteness, engaging in excesses of asceticism and self-denial. This, Hegel comes to call an “aimless destruction for destruction’s sake” (“dies zwecklose Vernichten um des Vernichtens willen”), which proves to be the ultimate religious relation to objects.²⁹

But toward the end of this small piece, his tone shifts, as if he has found an alternative. Interestingly enough, it relates to dance. Worship, he tells us, is neither intuitive nor conceptual, but rather “a joyful subjectivity of living beings, of song, or of motions of the body . . . expressions like a solemn oration can become objective and beautiful by rules, namely, dance” (“das Wesen des Gottesdienstes ist . . . vielmehr mit Subjektivität Lebendiger in Freude zu verschmelzen, [vermittels] des Gesanges, der körperlichen Bewegungen, einer Art von subjektiver Äußerung, die, wie die tönende Rede, durch Regel objektiv und schön, zum Tanz werden kann”).³⁰ Dance seems to give concrete meaning to the idea of an animated and animating law. Indeed, dance seems to be singled out grammatically, evincing that moment when bodies come alive in a rule-bound way, but without precisely conforming to any law. When Hegel imagines “happy people” (“glück-

lichen"), they have clearly minimized without relinquishing their separateness.³¹

He is trying to imagine some operation of love that goes beyond the dyad and property. We move again toward that vanishing point of idealization. Through the invocation of the aesthetic domain, this time one that centers on social motions, Hegel starts to imagine those who neither seek to possess others as their property nor hold on to their personhood as property. The problem is whether the human body or any of the objects with which it engages can be thought or lived outside the property form. For property is what deadens, in his view, which means that love cannot survive anyone holding onto oneself or another as property—both self-preservation (understood as obstinacy) and possession have to become less important than an affirmation of what is living in love. What Hegel failed to realize adequately in this early work is that property is itself animated and animating under conditions of capitalist property relations and that this is the meaning and effect of the fetishism of commodities. They are personified and invested, agential and haunting. Yet Hegel is already in the thrall of personification, writing about what Life does, for instance, as if Life were a person, showing how abstractions sometimes require the sacrifice of what is material and finite, but also underscoring the power of property to rob persons of what is most living in them, including or especially the owners.

What Hegel is articulating in those few decades before Marx's analysis of the commodity is the wish to separate what is animated and animating from the world of property. He does not oppose the world of objects, but wants only to keep that world animated—forever. When objects become property, and property law comes to prevail, the effect is to break down those relations among humans and objects that we might call loving. And this seems to be a different modality from any religious effort to lift the finite into the infinite and have it vanquished there. What Hegel seeks through the idea of animating law (or enlivening form) is something close to a dance, the dance of lovers

(not presumptively dyadic), understood as a rhythm between a finite series or sequence, understood as spatially elaborated time, and what cannot be captured within its terms, the infinite. The point is not that nothing or no one dies. The point is only that living and dying punctuate an infinite series that no one can ever comprehend through a single or static idea. Consider his description of the Bacchanalian revel in the preface to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. There he makes the point that what passes away in experience is essential to what is true. "The evanescent itself," he writes, "must, on the contrary, be regarded as essential, not as something fixed."³² Eschewing the idea of "dead truth" that is concerned only with what can be determined as existing, Hegel seeks to establish the domain of appearance where it can be understood that "arising and passing away" does not itself arise and pass away but rather "constitutes the actuality and the movement of the life of truth." He writes that "the True is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose."³³

Hegel lets us know in a separate fragment³⁴ that he seeks a condition in which "the infinite grief and whole gravity of the [spirit's] discord is acknowledged." Discord? Disquiet? Interestingly, the idea of an aesthetic form animated and animating is not one that overcomes negativity. It only works against the "deadening" effects of possession. To lose and to mourn requires giving up what we might think we possessed, which means giving up the fantasy that possession staves off transience. Sometimes mourning the loss of possession is the precondition of love itself, an initial undoing of a phantasm that makes way for something living. This is doubtless also why there may well be something enlivening in grief that is precisely the inverse of what is deadened by property and so has become as dead as property. And though in melancholy, one clings to the lost objects of the lost one, animating the one who is gone or dead, such animating powers indirectly testify to a persistent aliveness in the midst of loss.

Infinity, if there is one, is thus found rustling among the abandoned clothes and old stuff accidentally bequeathed by the dead—no one's property anymore—the rags, recycled, that eventually, perhaps, get taken up by some other body, in some other movement, evanescent and alive.

Kierkegaard's Speculative Despair

Every movement of infinity is carried out through passion, and no reflection can produce a movement. This is the continual leap in existence that explains the movement, whereas mediation is a chimera, which in Hegel is supposed to explain everything and which is also the only thing he never has tried to explain.

—Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel concerns primarily the failure of a philosophy of reflection to take account of what exceeds reflection itself: passion, existence, faith. The irony in Kierkegaard's challenge to Hegelianism is, however, minimally twofold. On the one hand, Kierkegaard will ask, where is it that Hegel, the existing individual, stands in relation to the systematic totality that Hegel elucidates? If for Hegel the individual is outside the complete system, then there is an "outside" to that system, which is to say that the system is not as exhaustively descriptive and explanatory as it claims to be. Paradoxically, the very existence of Hegel, the existing philosopher, effectively—one might say *rhetorically*—undermines what appears to be the most important claim in that philosophy, the claim to provide a comprehensive account of knowledge and reality. On the other hand, Kierkegaard's counter to Hegel consists in the valorization of passion and existence over reflection and, finally, language. It is in relation to this criticism that a different sort of irony emerges, one that Kierkegaard appears not to know,

23. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Vintage, 1989), 76.

24. *Ibid.*, 78.

TO SENSE WHAT IS LIVING IN THE OTHER: HEGEL'S EARLY LOVE

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 302–8. That text was translated from Herman Nohl, *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1907), and a fuller and more annotated text is presently available as a section called “Die Liebe” in “Entwürfe über Religion und Liebe,” in *Hegel, Frühe Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 239–54.

2. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 309–20; G. W. F. Hegel, “Systemfragment von 1800,” in *Frühe Schriften*, 419–27.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 58–69; Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 82–92.

4. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 303–4.

5. *Ibid.*, 303.

6. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 303; *Hegel, Frühe Schriften*, 245.

7. Which religion he is talking about is somewhat vague, but he seems to have in mind the historical development of a certain conjunction of Christianity and Judaism in which the living body of Christ serves as a counterpart to the putatively lifeless laws of Judaism.

8. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 303–4; *Hegel, Frühe Schriften*, 245.

9. Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 245.

10. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 304; *Hegel, Frühe Schriften*, 245.

11. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 304; *Hegel, Frühe Schriften*, 246.

12. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 305; *Hegel, Frühe Schriften*, 246.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 305.

15. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 305; *Hegel, Frühe Schriften*, 246.

16. Hegel's exact language is this: “life senses life . . . since love is a sensing of something living, lovers can be distinct only in so far as they are mortal . . . in lovers there is no matter; they are a living whole.” In German: “das Lebendige fühlt das Lebendige. Weil die Liebe ein Gefühl des Lebendigen ist, so

können Liebende sich nur insofern unterscheiden, als sie sterblich sind. . . . An Liebenden ist keine Materie, sie sind ein lebendiges Ganzes." Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 305; Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 246.

17. Ibid.

18. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 306; Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 247.

19. Ibid.

20. Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 247.

21. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 306; Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 247.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 308; Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 249–50.

26. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 308; Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 250.

27. Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 421.

28. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 311; Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 421.

29. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 316; Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 425.

30. Ibid.

31. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 317; Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, 426.

32. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 27.

33. Ibid. In German: "Das Verschwinden ist vielmehr selbst als wesentlich zu betrachten. . . . Die Erscheinung ist das Entstehen und Vergehen, das selbst nicht entsteht und vergeht, sondern an sich ist und die Wirklichkeit und Bewegung des Lebens der Wahrheit ausmacht. Das Wahre ist so der bacchantische Taumel, an dem kein Glied nicht trunken ist; und weil jedes, indem es sich absondert, ebenso unmittelbar (sich) auflöst, ist er ebenso die durchsichtige und einfache Ruhe." Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 46.

34. Quoted in Richard Kroner, "Introduction," in Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 38.

KIERKEGAARD'S SPECULATIVE DESPAIR

1. It would be interesting to compare this claim with Freud's efforts to address the question of "anxiety" through analysis.

2. Søren Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 14.

3. Ibid., 60.

4. Ibid., 13.