

**G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, 1827***

The absolute, eternal idea is: (1) First, in and for itself, God in his eternity before the creation of the world and outside the world. (2) Second, God creates the world and posits separation. He creates both nature and finite spirit. What is created is at first an other, posited outside of God. But God is essentially the reconciling to himself of what is alien, what is particular, what is posited in separation from him. He must restore to freedom and to his truth what is alien, what has fallen away in the idea's self-diremption. This is the path and process of reconciliation. (3) In the third place, through the process of reconciliation, spirit has reconciled with itself what it distinguished from itself in its act of diremption, of primal division, and thus it is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit [present] in its community.

Specifically, the eternal idea is expressed in terms of the holy Trinity: it is God himself, essentially triune. . . . When we say, "God is love," we are saying something very great and true. But it would be senseless to grasp this saying in a simple-minded way as a simple definition, without analyzing what love is. For love is a distinguishing of two, who nevertheless are absolutely not distinguished for each other. The consciousness or feeling of the identity of the two—to be outside of myself and in the other—this is love. . . . This is love, and without knowing that love is both a distinguishing and the sublation of the distinction, one speaks emptily of it.

When we say "God," we speak of him merely as abstract; or if we say, "God the Father," we speak of him as universal, only abstractly, in accord with his infinitude. His infinitude means precisely that he sublates this form of abstract universality and immediacy, and in this way distinction is posited, but he is precisely the sublating of the distinction. . . . God intuitively himself in what is distinguished, he is united with himself only in his other, and is only present to himself in it; only there does God close with himself and behold himself in the other. . . . God in his eternal universality is the one who distinguishes himself, determines himself, posits an other to himself, and likewise sublates the distinction, thereby remaining present to himself, and is spirit only through this process of being brought forth.

We now consider, therefore, the eternal idea in the second element, in the form of *consciousness* or *representation* in general; in other words, we consider the idea insofar as it emerges out of universality and infinitude into the determinacy of finitude. . . . The act of differentiation is only a movement, a play of love with itself, which does not arrive at the seriousness of other-being, of separation or rupture. . . . It belongs to the absolute freedom of the idea that, in its act of determining and dividing, it releases the other to exist as a free and independent being. The other, released as something free and independent, is *the world* as such.

Speaking generally, this antithesis has now two forms. On the one hand, it is the antithesis of evil as such, the fact that it is humanity itself that is evil: this is the *antithesis vis-à-vis God*. On the other hand, it is the *antithesis vis-à-vis the world*, the fact that humanity exists in a state of rupture from the world: this is unhappiness or misery, the cleavage viewed from the other side. . . . Human beings are inwardly conscious that in their innermost being they are a contradiction, and have therefore an infinite *anguish* concerning themselves. Anguish is present only where there is opposition to what ought to be, to an affirmative.

The deepest need of spirit is that the antithesis within the subject itself should be intensified to its universal, i.e., its most abstract, extreme. This is the cleavage, the anguish that we have considered. . . . What satisfies this need is the consciousness of atonement, of the sublation, the nullification of the antithesis, so that the latter is not the truth. Rather, the truth is the attainment of unity through the negation of the antithesis; this is the peace, the reconciliation, that the need demands.

The other-being, the finitude, the weakness, the frailty of human nature is not to do any harm to that divine unity which forms the substance of reconciliation. That no harm is done has been seen in the divine idea. For the Son is other than the Father, and this other is difference—otherwise it would not be spirit. But the other is [also] God and has the entire fullness of the divine nature within itself. The character of otherness in no way detracts from the fact that this other is the Son of God and therefore God. This otherness is what eternally posits and eternally sublates itself; the self-positing and sublating of otherness is love or spirit.

The substantiality of the unity of divine and human nature comes to consciousness for humanity in such a way that a human being appears to consciousness as God, and God appears to it as a human being. . . . But this humanity in God—and indeed the most abstract form of humanity, the greatest dependence, the ultimate weakness, the utmost fragility—is natural death. “God himself is dead,” it says in a Lutheran hymn, expressing an awareness that the human, the finite, the fragile, the weak, the negative are themselves a moment of the divine, that they are within God himself, that finitude, negativity, otherness are not outside of God and do not, as otherness, hinder unity with God. Otherness, the negative, is known to be a moment of the divine nature itself. This involves the highest idea of spirit.

*God has died, God is dead*—this is the most frightful of all thoughts, that everything eternal and true *is not*, that negation itself is found in God. The deepest anguish, the feeling of complete irretrievability, the annulling of everything that is elevated, are bound up with this thought. However, the process does not come to a halt at this point; rather, a reversal takes place: God, that is to say, maintains himself in this process, and the latter is only the death of death. It is out of infinite love that God has made himself identical with what is alien to him in order to put it to death. This is the meaning of the death of Christ.

For the community, this is the history of the appearance of God. This history is a divine history, whereby the community has come to the certainty of truth. From it develops the consciousness that knows that God is triune. The reconciliation in Christ, in which one believes, makes no sense if God is not known as the triune God, [if it is not recognized] that God *is*, but also is the other, as self-distinguishing, so that this other is God himself, having implicitly the divine nature in it, and that the sublation of this difference, this otherness, and the return of love, are the Spirit.

The vitality of God or of spirit is nothing other than a self-determining, a self-positing in finitude, [which involves] distinction and contradiction, but [is] at the same time the eternal sublating of this contradiction. This is the life, the deed, the activity of God; he is absolute activity, creative energy, and his activity is to posit himself in contradiction, but eternally to resolve and reconcile the contradiction: God himself is the resolving of these contradictions.