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Philosophical Fragments from August Ludwig Hülsen's Literary Estate

(1813)

August Ludwig Hülsen

Translated, introduced, and annotated by Marlene Oeffinger*

The following text is part of August Ludwig Hülsen's literary estate, his so-called *Philosophical Fragments*, which were first published posthumously in their entirety in the *Allgemeine Zeitschrift von Deutschen für Deutsche* in 1813, accompanied by a preface by Hülsen's former student and friend, Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouqué, and an afterword by Friedrich Schelling, to whom Hulsen was introduced by Fichte in 1797.[1]

Hülsen published only a small number of texts during his lifetime[2], ending his literary life—and all correspondence with the Jena Romantic Circle— in late 1803.[3] He nevertheless remained avidly and actively engaged

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1 The fragments were initially published in 1813 by F. Schlegel and F. Baron de la Motte Fouqué, however, the actual date of their conception remains unknown. Cf. Ulrich Krämer, *"… meine Philosophie ist kein Buch". August Ludwig Hülsen (1765-1809)* (Frankfurt a. Main: P. Lang, 2001), 351-354.

2 Hülsen published one book, the *Preisschrift*, three essays, and one philosophical letter between 1796 and 1800.

3 Hülsen communicated his retreat from literary life in letters to August W. Schlegel and Sophie Bernardi in December 1803 (see Krämer, 278). Hülsen's retreat from literature was also noted by Friedrich Schlegel in his journal *Europa* as regrettable and "a loss for philosophy" ["*ein Verlust für die Philosophie*"]. See Friedrich Schlegel, *Europa* 1.1 (1803): 49. Krämer, among others, sees Hülsen's retreat from the literary life and philosophical circles as deliberate as he became increasingly critical of the Jena circle members' interest in medievalism (see Krämer, 278-280; and Ezequiel Posesorski, *Between Reinhold and Fichte: August Ludwig Hülsen's Contributions to the Emergence of German Idealism* (Karlsruhe:

in philosophy and the natural sciences while living at his farm estate in Wagersrott.[4] During this time, Hülsen became particularly interested in the romantic-speculative natural sciences, conducting and discussing experiments with his friend Erich von Berger[5], and it has been suggested that the *Philosophical Fragments* may have originated during this period.[6] Yet some uncertainties regarding the history of their composition still remain, and it has also been hypothesized that the text may instead represent fragments of earlier works intermingled with the writings of a "mature Hülsen."[7]

While fragmentary both in their conception and structure, Hülsen's *Philosophical Fragments* do not follow the style of the Romantic fragment as conceived by Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel insofar as the fragments within each part are not independent splinters of thought, but logically linked passages connected by demonstrative pronouns and conjunctions, which can be read as a continuous, coherent text following specific expositions. The following fragments, which comprise part B of the *Philosophical Fragments*, take up Hülsen's arguments as set out in his *Preisschrift*[8], his only book, and his essay "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", published in the *Athenaeum* in 1799.[9]

Addressing the ongoing debate between Kantian and anti-Kantian philosophers on the significance of Kant's achievement, Hülsen, who had enrolled at the University of Kiel in 1794 to study under Reinhold in order to deepen his knowledge of both Kant's and Reinhold's philosophies,

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KIT Scientific Publishing, 2012), 201). Hülsen moreover held the belief that no printed text or letter could express true philosophical knowledge (*ibid.*, 16-17; 172).

4 Hülsen moved to the farm estate in Schleswig-Holstein, which was purchased for him by some friends including Berger, in May 1804 and lived there, leading a life as a farmer, until March 1809, when he moved to Stechow. See. Krämer, 261-263; Posesorski, 201.

5 The Norwegian philosopher Henrik Steffens (1773-1845) visited Hülsen in 1807 and reported that Hülsen and von Berger had become deeply interested in the new natural sciences and conducted several physical experiments. (See Krämer, 276-277)

6 Cf. Posesorski, 202.

7 Cf. Martin Oesch, "Hülsens idealistische Romantik", in: *Romantische Utopie - Utopische Romantik* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1979), 117. Krämer, drawing on Oesch, notes that there is "no indication of the date of origin of the individual texts or the reason for their creation" [..] "or that they all originate from the same time" [..] "since they [the three parts] seem to be relatively disparate entities." ("Keinerlei Hinweis auf die Entstehungszeit der einzelnen texte oder auf den Anlass ihrer Entstehung" [..] "oder dass sie alle aus der gleichen Zeit stammen" [..] "da sie relativ disparate Gebilde zu sein scheinen."); see Krämer, 352.

8 A.L. Hülsen, *Prüfung der von der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin aufgestellten Preisfrage: Was hat die Metaphysik seit Leibniz und Wolff für Progressen gemacht?* (Altona: J.F. Hammerich, 1796).

9 For an English translation, see A.L. Hülsen, "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", *Symphilosophie: International Journal of Philosophical Romanticism* 5 (2023): 391-410.

contended in the *Preisschrift* that only a reconstruction of the systematic possibility of consciousness would solve the philosophical controversies—namely a system of knowledge through the self-conscious and self-reflective determination of self-identity that is produced and articulated in time, creating a universal history of reason and a spiritual [*geistig*]-historical determination [*Bestimmung*] of the human being and human consciousness.[10] Part B of the *Philosophical Fragments* lays out a dialectic for Hülsen's system of self-reflective positing.

While Kant considered positing as an *a priori* existential proposition identical with the concept of being[11], Hülsen thought this state to be a proto-conscious moment, "a formal mode of observation" when the human being "and his world [*i.e.,* matter] are absolutely separated": as the human being observes the world as an "object and consequently real", the spirit, as subject and the ideal, "made itself absolute through contemplation." But this is not the metaphysics of a thinking subject (*i.e.,* self-positing) as it was for Fichte[12]; rather, Hülsen contends that as "we posit something as *being* [*Seyend*] in general by its relation to itself, namely A=A", it becomes an absolute contradiction, absolute opposites, which can only exist in harmony, otherwise it would be empty. As subject and object (*i.e.,* spirit and matter) are absolute opposites, existent only through and with another, they are so in harmony and thus as one in intuition: "the subject is only itself as an object, and the object is only in the subject." Yet while the spirit is an "eternal idea as absolute being", matter is "of finite time," and, for Hülsen, it is this interplay of "intuition in time" and the "intuition of the idea" that enables "self-intuition of the spirit", *i.e.,* positing, and spirit transfiguring matter into itself.[13] This departing and returning of the spirit into itself amounts to what

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10 Cf. Posesorski, 101-186; Krämer, 287-319.

11 "The concept of position or positing is completely simple and identical with the concept of being." ["Der Begriff der Position oder Setzung ist völlig einfach, und mit dem vom Sein überhaupt einerlei."] (see Immanuel Kant, *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes* (Frankfurt: Meiner (2011): 14; and Immanuel Kant "Transcendental Logic: Transcendental Dialectic" (A598 / B626), *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 503.

12 Fichte considered positing a metaphysical act and hence absolute and infinite, and self-positing as a self's pure a priori activity (see Johan Gottlieb Fichte, *Sämmtliche Werke*, hg. von Immanuel Hermann Fichte (Berlin, 1965) [Nachdruck der Ausgabe 1845, Band 1, 96]

13 In his essay "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", Hülsen also writes: "But we also comprehend Man only in so far as he comprehends himself [..]; in order to get to the true content of a concept, it cannot be considered as a priori given, but instead we must go back to its initial object and let it arise before our eyes through actual intuition; then, it appears as the result of repeated contemplation and is in itself nothing other than

Hülsen has called 'free acts'[14], or "multiple and different moments of time"[15], conceptually similar to Kant's inner intuition.[16] Yet abandoning a pure *a priori,* they transform Hülsen's human being into an evolutionary agent of a logical-historical character. "[T]he human being's striving for unity with himself" develops then into the content of history, and, in Hülsen's view, the combined striving of the whole of humankind for the highest good into a synthesis of moral virtue and happiness—not unlike Kant's categorical imperative.

Irrespective of whether the *Philosophical Fragments* represent writings of only Hülsen's later years, or his notes over a span of time, together with his published works, they will nonetheless contribute to a better understanding of Hülsen's philosophical position within German idealism.

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the free and steadfast gaze with which we regard our own acts." (see A.L. Hülsen, "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", *Symphilosophie* 5 (2023): 396.

[14] Hülsen drew on the Fichtean *Tathandlung* ('act') as an inner cognitive act that is not empirical but rather underpinned a person's consciousness and moral agency. He considered any such act, including positing, as reflexive self-knowledge insofar as it denoted an acting agent as well as a product of a non-self-conscious practical act of self-positing. See A.L. Hülsen, "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", *Symphilosophie* 5 (2023): 391-410; D. W. Wood, "Fichte's Absolute I and the Forgotten Tradition of *Tathandlung*", in: *Das Selbst und die Welt: Beiträge zu Kant und der nachkantischen Philosophie* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2019), 167-192.

[15] See A.L. Hülsen, "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", *Symphilosophie* 5 (2023): 393.

[16] Kant's form of inner intuition as temporally ordered states of the mind (see "Transcendental Aesthetics, Section II: Of Time" (A22 / B37, A33 / B49-50) in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 157, 161. In "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", Hülsen further writes: "It is hence the mere nature of our spirit that makes the condition of time necessary (see A.L. Hülsen, "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", *Symphilosophie* 5 (2023): 399.

Philosophical Fragments from August Ludwig Hülsen's Literary Estate[1]

1813

August Ludwig Hülsen

Preface

By presenting the literary legacy of my friend Hülsen to the public in the following pages, I am fulfilling the wish expressed to me by some of the first writers of our fatherland; and in doing so, I am also fulfilling a service to many other excellent men in a way that is likely unknown to me. These few fragments are, in fact, the entire literary legacy of a richly flourishing mind, if we want to take that expression at its truest sense. Hülsen sought to experience life much more than to write [about it], and what he wrote, he addressed much more often to one or the other like-minded friend than to a broader audience.[2] Yes, I would dare say that it was precisely in such letters that his whole being expressed itself much more purely, powerfully, and precisely than in any of his writings intended for print. Without claiming that Hülsen, with his often-expressed preference for the ancient philosophers, and especially for Socrates, ever really found or could have found in them the complete satisfaction that his mind required, he resembled them at least insofar that it was not in the lecture halls but the arcades of an academy where teachings [*Lehre*] in conversational form flowed most divinely from his mouth. Anyone who has ever heard him speak about the oscillations of a pendulum and their profound meaning will remember with wholehearted joy

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1 The original German version of this text is entitled "Philosophische Fragmente aus dem Nachlaß August Ludwig Hülsen's" and was initially published in the *Allgemeine Zeitschrift von Deutschen für Deutsche* 1.1 (1813): 264-302, edited by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, following Hülsen's death in 1809, with a preface by Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouqué, and an afterword by Friedrich Schelling. Parts A and B were later published in German in *Fragmente der Frühromantik: Edition und Kommentar*, edited by Friedrich Strack and Martina Eicheldinger (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), 257-267.

2 During his life Hülsen published one philosophical letter entitled "Philosophische Briefe an Hrn. v. Briest in Nennhausen, Erster Brief, Über Popularität in der Philosophie", published in German in the *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teuscher Gelehrten* 7.1 (1797): 71-103, edited by Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer.

the light that shone forth from his eyes, while the words, as if breathed into him by the World Spirit, sprang clearly and delightfully from his lips. Even the wholly non-scientifically minded and unprepared listened in silent and joyful reverence, and a deep presentiment of his profound thoughts spread through their expanded chests.—How much of this is reflected in the fragments that follow, I cannot exactly determine, being too intimately acquainted with Hülsen's manner and the memory of his oral discourse. But here, too, this divine element can be found.—Who could read the conclusion to the first fragment[3] without being moved!

> And, as it is the divine essence [*Wesen*] of spirit [*Geistes*], it is at times in itself with blessed intuition, all knowing, recognizing everything![4]

And considering that the gap is filled by deeds, that before continuing to write, Hülsen truly went even deeper into blessed contemplation; through the painful gateways of sickness and death - who did not feel a deep, rousing melancholy running through his inner being!

The sharing of these pages is an enquiry as to whether an audience to whom Hülsen—announced and recommended early on by Fichte and Friedrich Schlegel—had begun to emerge as an important phenomenon, still retained enough love for him, despite the later literary taciturnity of this noble spirit, to provide a friendly reception to a small volume collected with humility from his letters and other essays. If so, the strongest and most tender rays of this light, which is as mild as it is serious, would at last reach general circulation.

I will contribute to such an enterprise to the best of my ability, but the main part would remain reserved for Erich von Berger[5], the author of

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[3] The Romantic fragment, as conceived by Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, sought to dissolve established delimitations of philosophical writing, which, in their view, restrained thinking. Instead, the fragment form, as individual 'splinters' of text, was intended to both mimic and initiate thought and allowing to reflect freely. Unlike Novalis' and Schlegel's fragments, Hülsen's fragments are not independent splinters of thought but rather individual passages that are logically linked in writing and thought, so that they could be read as a continuous, coherent text.

[4] While Fouqué refers to these lines as "the conclusion to the first fragment", these are the concluding lines of fragment 31 at the end of part A of Hülsen's "Philosophische Fragmente".

[5] Johann Erich von Berger (1772-1833) was a Danish-German philosopher and close friend of Hülsen after they met at the University of Kiel in 1794. In 1795, when studying at the University of Jena, both became members of the *Gesellschaft der freien Männer* (Society of Free Men). In April 1796, Berger and Hülsen travelled together from Jena to Switzerland, where they lived until the fall of 1797, and in 1803 Berger invited Hülsen to join an agricultural community in Holstein (see Henning Ratjen, 'Berger, Johann Erich von'. In: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (ADB). Band 2 (Leipzig: Duncker &

Philosophische Darstellung der Harmonien des Weltalls [*Philosophical Representation of the Harmonies of the Universe*] and other interesting writings, since I —although already a pupil of Hülsen as a young boy—have travelled along completely different paths; for my idealistic friend thought so little of strict discipleship that in his teachings the seed of independent thought and action was powerfully sown. And so, I have become a completely different person, one whose views and convictions are not necessarily presented in the following pages, while Berger's much later friendship with Hülsen flourished in mutual pure freedom and independence to the most perfect accord; for between them, there was a pure providential harmony of minds and aspirations. But in fullest agreement with both of them, I, too, have never ceased to be understood by them and to understand them, so that I may confidently join Berger in laying a hand on this representation of Hülsen, hopefully contributing from my point of view to a more all-rounded completion of the picture. It will now be up to you, German compatriots, whether you wish to show yourselves favorable and conducive to such an undertaking through a friendly reception of the following pages.

Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouqué[6]

Humblot, 1875), 376-75; Guido Naschert, "August Ludwig Hülsens erster Beitrag zur philosophischen Frühromantik", *Athenäum* 8 (1998), 111-135; and Manfred Frank, *"Unendliche Annäherung." Die Anfänge der Philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt a. M., 1997), 900.

6 Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843) was a Romantic German writer. He first met Hülsen when the latter became Fouqué's private tutor from 1789-1794.

Philosophical Fragments[1]

August Ludwig Hülsen

B.

32[2]. What the human being [*der Mensch*] beholds [*anschaut*], he calls his world. If it stands opposite him like an object to a subject, then his view is a formal mode of observation, and he and his world are absolutely separated. He himself is the antithesis [*Gegensatz*] in this contradiction [*Widerspruche*]. As such, he cannot resolve it, and thus he can never penetrate into his world, nor the world into him.

33. Spirit and matter were the two great objects of this contemplation. Once this illusion took root, they revealed themselves to him in a necessary manner. Matter, as the object and consequently real; spirit, as the subject, ideal. Both could not exist as exclusive absolutes. But as the subject, the spirit made itself absolute through contemplation, in accordance with the true principle: as certain as anything is, it can only be so through the absolute. Thus, logical [*konsequente*] thinkers sacrificed matter as the object, in the denotation [*Bedeutung*] of the real, and what remained to them as the only all-encompassing world was merely the subjective mode of representation [*Vorstellungsweise*] – idealism.

34. In this idealism, spirit is figuratively the light, matter the darkness. And as darkness is only the boundary [*Begrenzung*] of light, so the matter is the mere boundary of spirit. This shadow of reality was retained, so that the light of spirit did not penetrate all the world but could reflect itself in the dark and return grounded in universal understanding [*verständig*]. Thus, the struggle with darkness remained the old contradiction of the ideal and the real[3], which

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1 This English translation contains only part B of the original text, which includes fragments 32 to 60.

2 Hülsen did not number the fragments in the original German version of this text which was posthumously published in German in the *Allgemeine Zeitschrift von Deutschen für Deutsche*; Fragments of parts A and B were later numbered in *Fragmente der Frühromantik*, 257-267.

3 With the phrase "the old contradiction of the ideal and the real", Hülsen points to an ongoing discussion in the Jena Romantic circle about Fichte's definition of his *Wissenschaftslehre* as "Real-Idealismus" or "Ideal-Realismus" ("The *Wissenschaftslehre* holds the centre between both systems and is a critical idealism, which could also be called a real-idealism or an ideal-realism." [Die Wissenschaftslehre hält zwischen beiden

was not settled peacefully, but after all vain efforts was itself pushed into the darkness.

35. The contemplation of matter as a boundary of spirit is the *finite* contemplation. As fact, it is, at the same time, the most general imagination of a spirit-less time lost in matter. As such, it could be of salutary significance.

36. The absolute is only *One* [*Eines*], and therefore all-encompassing; it is not a subject with the exclusion of the object, or vice versa. But if it [the absolute] is at all, it is necessarily in itself also the one and the other, and consequently as the one simultaneously the other.

37. Considered in this unity of absolute being, the spirit is the subject, the ideal; the idea the object, the real; both part of the identity of the one and the other.

38. The spirit in relation to itself, taken as pure ideal [*ideel*], is the unbounded original living light emerging from out of itself. The idea in relation to itself, and consequently taken purely as object or real, is the unbounded original eternal matter. In the absolute unity of spirit and idea, spirit is the eternal light in matter–its transparency[4]; idea is the eternal matter in light–its vitality. Spirit and matter are eternally near one another in light and clarity.

39. We posit something as *being* [*Seyend*] in general by its relation to itself, and there is absolutely nothing without this relation, namely A = A.[5] A

Systemen bestimmt die Mitte, und ist ein kritischer Idealismus, den man auch einen Real-Idealismus, oder einen Ideal-Realismus nennen könnte.], see Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Sämmtliche Werke* (SW), Band I, hg. von Immanuel Hermann Fichte, Berlin 1965 (Nachdruck der Ausgabe 1845), 281), which was also a topic of investigation in various fragments and letters by Schlegel, Novalis, and Schleiermacher.

4 Compare also Goethe's theory of the origin of dioptrical colors: "Colours are called dioptrical when a colourless medium is necessary to produce them; the medium must be such that light and darkness can act through it either on the eye or on opposite surfaces. It is thus required that the medium should be transparent, or at least capable, to a certain degree, of transmitting light. Transparency itself [..] is already the first degree of the opposite state" (see Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Part II, Physical Colours" in *Theory of Colors*. Translated by Charles Lock Eastlake (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1970), 59, 61.

5 See also Novalis's "Remarks on the *Wissenschaftslehre*", in *Fichte Studies*, Fragment 553: "a is a – seems to me to be nothing but a repetition of the bringing forth of the a to being. It can express a strengthening. No connotations are involved, and it qualifies therefore as a logical copula. Often such an identity judgment expresses a sharpened distinction – a sharp attention to the peculiar character of that which is in danger of being confused with something else. The sphere a is determined through the sphere a. a is the name of

contradiction, therefore, 'is' a *contradiction*, insofar as it cannot *be* at all. If it nevertheless 'is', it is only because it is not, that is, only as harmony.

40. An absolute contradiction in relation to itself contradicts itself in the absolute, *i.e.*, it is absolute harmony precisely as contradiction, and in that [harmony] once again absolute contradiction; consequently, the one is as absolute as it is the other, and the one precisely through the other.

41. Absolute opposites are absolute. Thus, they *are* only absolute in opposition, and, consequently, absolutely *one* and the opposite simultaneously, and *one* only through the other and with the other at the same time.

42. So are subject and object. Their opposition is precisely their absolute being [*Seyn*], which subsists only in their opposition. But their being as unity is *intuition* [*Anschauung*]. The subject is the intuiting aspect in both, but it looks at itself as the *object*. Thus, the subject is only itself as an object, and the object is only in the subject. The intuition is therefore being itself [*das Seyn selbst*] and being intuition.

43. The subject in its relation as intuiting aspect, taken as pure ideal, is the *spirit*. The object in its relationship as the intuited, pure real, is *matter*. Spirit and matter are therefore absolutely opposed to each other; yet in this opposition *they* are at the same time absolutely *one*.

44. Spirit looks at itself as matter, and hence matter is [spirit] itself in its penetration. The absolute, therefore, in the identity of spirit and matter, is pure absolute spiritual being in intuition. It is only this one being [*dies eine Seyn*], the *universe* in general, and apart from it there is nothing.

45. That the rational mind does not perceive this clarity is to be proven [*zu erweisen*]; yet, that our spirit beholds it in the divine idea cannot be proven.

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an unknown sphere. The first a is a characteristic posited, the second a is an essential posited – the former is presupposed, the latter is posited. The concept a is set in opposition to the a that is available.
Their common sphere, their scene, is the I – the subject. The first a is already available in the I – the other also – They are only connected.
/These reflections on this simple proposition must deliver to us the foundations of all philosophy/
a is a emerges from predication of the simple; simply on account of quantity, quality, relation, modality or their composites." Novalis, *Fichte Studies*. Translated and edited by Jane Kneller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 163, in response to Fichte, SW 1, 92-93.

46. Spirit as spirit, its ideal divine abundance, is absolute *light*. Matter as matter, its real divine abundance, is absolute *gravity* [*Schwere*].[6] In the identity of absolute being, both are absolute *life*: for being [*das Seyn*] is in both its absolute relation as one.

47. As ideal, the spirit is all light; as real, matter is all gravity.

48. Every intuition of a human being is his living light, and thus an intuition of its spirit. The human being himself is wholly this spirit, when he is wholly living light, wholly intuition.

49. Every intuition of our spirit is determined by itself on the one and same object. In this, however, it has a simultaneous, twofold relationship: that of the eternal idea as absolute being, and that of finite time in formal appearance.

50. Every intuition in time is neither the first nor the last. Yet every intuition in the idea [*die Idee*] is eternally both at the same time. The former, therefore, is forever a repetition of the One [*des Einen*]; the latter is always originating in itself, eternally the One [*die Eine*].

51. The intuition in time, as repetition of the One [*des Einen*], is the formal reproduction of the emerging spirit; [while] the intuition in the idea is the self-intuition of spirit. As repetition of the One [*des Einen*], the object is eternally the already known, the past; as original intuition, its object is forever that which has not-yet-been, the new. Both, the known and the new, are eternally together in themselves; primarily, however, in intuition the known is rendered through time as finite, the new, through the idea, as eternally real mode of contemplation [*Betrachtungsweise*]. Both in *one* intuition is the assimilation of time into the eternal idea, whereby spirit transfigures matter into itself [*zu sich selber verklart*], and the formal appearance itself partakes intimately in the eternally transparent life.

52. Towards the outside, the object of our observation is everywhere infinitely multifaceted and manifold, just as our intuition is as infinitely different through particularity [*Eigenthumlichkeit*] on the inside. But the eye

[6] Hülsen considers the concept of Schwere as general modality of all matter (see Adelung, *Grammatisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, Ausgabe letzter Hand, Leipzig 1793–1801).

was provided with only the one aspect, and this intuition is permanent and connects all manifold things through the one eternal gaze.

53. This one abiding object [of intuition] is life, the eternal and omnipotent in the totality of all its relations. If nature provides us with the spectacle of a great, infinitely varied life, then it, too, is the one all-animating mother, and through this it severs its relationship to itself – the contradiction which our intuition of a manifold cannot avoid without a higher unity. Laudably, human beings strove to solve this problem, and in firm view of their objective, they were not afraid to call death into the world of life, that it may take hold of what their intuition could not grasp. Often did this terror seize the whole of nature, with worthy consequence. Other times, it only affected each individual life so that the greater whole would – incomprehensibly – be kept more alive. In the common view of the inconsistent formal philosophy[7], the modest principle, born out of uncertainty, was to live and let live. It left the divine ground [*gottlichen Grund*], whose depth it could for once not reach, to rest on itself, and merely made observations on the usefulness of all life.

54. But whatever explanation we may attempt, we will never succeed in comprehending the roots of life in a finite manner. The temporal change of phenomena, as a beginning and an end, is in relation to life a completely empty concept, both in essence and in form. Therefore, nothing is gained if we destroy the latter and let the essence [*das Wesen*] return and exist in the eternal One. Nor will we be able to save the whole unless each individual, in relation to itself, is unique in form and essence, and thus eternal and unrejuvenated. The divine creating principle, as absolute abundance in itself, is thereby also absolutely undemanding [*unbedürftig*], and cannot request from one what it would like to bestow onto another. It would simply be annihilated itself.

55. If we now consider life in an eternal manner, we include its temporal relations themselves into the idea, as absolute time, and as such, time, as an alternation of coming into being [*Entstehen*] and passing away [*Vergehen*], has completely ceased to exist for it. Once in relation to itself, as life, it is also

[7] This is a possible reference to Fichte's *Formular-Philosoph* ("The formal philosopher thinks this and that, observes himself in this thinking, and then presents the whole series of what he could think as truth, for the mere reason that he could think it. The object of his observation is he himself." [Der Formular-Philosoph denkt sich dies und jenes, beobachtet sich selbst in diesem Denken, und nun stellt er die ganze Reihe dessen, was er sich denken konnte, als Wahrheit hin, aus dem Grunde, weil er es denken konnte. Das Object seiner Beobachtung ist er selbst]; see Fichte, SW III, 5.

completely united in essence and form, and in both, therefore, autonomous and eternal [*unvergänglich*]. One cannot separate oneself from absolute intuition in order to explain something in a finite way, for it is nothing but the absolute, and all life must be revealed in it in an eternal manner. It is true that we cannot behold an infinitely manifold life for itself in an eternal manner, however, nature, through its relationship to itself, solves this contradiction for us as its life is united in an eternal manner—timeless, absolute, and as such eternally inseparable and simply whole in itself. In nature, the great manifold life is finally its own eternal creation, and since it, as eternal, is indestructible in its inherent peculiarity, so in each individual nature prevails, as one and undivided, and in each individual life its peculiarity; the relation [of life] to itself is simultaneously the relation in the *one* nature, and it is, for that very reason, autonomous. One with it [nature], and eternally itself a whole.

56. That way, nature also created the human being in a primordial and eternal manner, as a whole. In him, however, nature wanted to perfect its great, glorious creation as a transfiguration of itself, of its deepest, innermost being, in the light of his intuition. Nature is therefore this whole entity in the abundance of his consciousness and the totality of all his relations. By virtue of this divine nature residing within him, the human being hence strives for unity with himself, as a unity in the eternal harmony of nature. If it is nature's divine power and its own eternal perfection, then it also resides inside the human being in an eternal capacity; however, he achieved this perfect oneness of himself as harmony in nature only during the early life of unconscious innocence, the deep blissful peace of the childlike age of the world[8], which

[8] Hülsen refers to this "the childlike age of the world" also in his essay "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", as "a legend of an original Golden Age of the world: a state of most intimate harmony and love, where the disturbance of reality, inequality rooted in varying relations within a society, did not yet exist; a beautiful and harmonious springtime of life, when an innocent mankind was happy and content, and only peaceful deities walked among them [..] which had been passed down to the descendants of those fortunate ones and has always been held sacred, was intimately connected with the belief in a future in which heavenly peace would again return to mankind, and joy and harmony would dwell among us undisturbed once more." He notes, however, that it is not merely enough to dwell on this idle play of imagination, creating a necessity for reason, to "seek reason in ourselves and our actions alone". (See A.L. Hülsen, "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", *Symphilosophie* 5 (2023): 398-99. Similarly, the *Athenaeum* Fragment 243 notes: "The mirage of a former golden age is one of the greatest obstacles to approximating the golden age that still lies in the future. If there once was a golden age, then it wasn't really golden. Gold can't rust or decompose: it emerges victoriously genuine from all attempts to alloy or decompose it. If the golden age won't last always and forever, then it might as well never begin, since it will only be good for composing

has come to us only as a sacred legend, pre-dating history. But the unconscious innocence of this early child-like life is not the perfect creation of nature. It is only the divine, perfect model for a new day's labor, which the human being is to begin and accomplish in the power of nature. In acquired freedom—blissfully contemplating the harmony of the one life, the whole in light and clarity—and never-changing and eternal: this is how nature wanted to reveal itself in the human being, so the human being was to recognize himself as nature. The epoch of this new creation as a continued striving towards perfect unity, the self-intuition of nature, is time in general[9], its content [is] history. Where, in the transfiguration of his spirit, the human being has succeeded in imbuing the life of time with the eternal idea and, with it, eternal love, time has run its course and, although he dies, he will forever lead a blissful, harmonious and immortal life without change and death.[10] Such divine moments were for many the price of an arduous life, and, every time one sank back into the struggle of time, his soul longed so fervently for redemption that he breathed a sigh of renewed courage into the blessed heaven of life.

57. The human being's striving for unity with himself is at the same time the combined striving of the whole of humankind. It is only outwardly that the one life of nature is separated by the opposition of the lineages [*Geschlechter*], and only seemingly so through the infinite repetition of their separate [*individuellen*] being [*seyn*] in the individual beings of humanity. Inwardly—in nature itself—there is no separation. In itself, therefore, as the *one* life of nature, human beings are connected with one another in an *eternal manner.* Nature has also reproduced this inner sacred unity externally through the union in the State.[11] In it [the State] there lies a profound divine meaning,

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elegies about its loss. [AW]." Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, translated by Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 51-52.

9 Hülsen's self-intuition of nature and the human being is conceptually linked to Immanuel Kant's form of inner intuition as temporally ordered states of the mind (see "Transcendental Aesthetics, Section II Of Time" (A22 / B37, A33 / B49-50), in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 157, 161. In "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", Hülsen further writes: "It is hence the mere nature of our spirit that makes the condition of time necessary", *Symphilosophie* 5 (2023): 399.

10 Strack and Eicheldinger link this passage to John 11, 25-26: "[H]e that believed in me, although he be dead, shall live: And everyone that liveth, and believeth in me, shall not die for ever." Holy Bible, Douay-Rheims Version; however, it is unknown if Hülsen intended this as a reference to scripture; see Strack & Eicheldinger, 408, n. 56; 265,25.

11 In his essay "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", Hülsen describes the State as social circumstance in which the human being's natural condition as social being comes to bear insofar as individuals are all equivalent parts of a whole who "mutually inter-act with one another and re-act to each other, and only through their difference produce

which undignifiedly has often been explained as an external compulsion, a declaration which did not even touch the outside of life, much less the inner spirit of it.

58. In the union of the State, the human being appears first and foremost as individual, as a complementary part, namely to a whole. Precisely for this reason and as a result of it, it is also his idea which—in the most perfect union through an unchanging attitude, in the formation of the same through a law—unites the parts into an equal inner unity, so that in all of them, as in *one* body, only *one* spirit and *one* life prevail. However imperfectly this may have been achieved so far, the *one* life, as the united idea, is nevertheless the necessary relation to each individual human being, and he, therefore, the whole and the one eternal purpose of all unification in the State. Thus, the individuality as a means is once more abolished, and, through sanctification of the law of the eternal idea, every life is sanctified in itself and intended for the perfect unity of nature.

59. Just as the human being's striving for unity with himself—as harmony with nature in its self-intuition [*Selbstanschauung*]—is the sole content of all history, it must particularly express itself in its supreme connections, in the history of sciences. The sciences have always been the repeated attempts to capture the pure inner content of our knowledge, without association [*Relation*] and in an eternal manner. Here, therefore, it is particularly evident how all these endeavors assumed the eternal idea and tried to express it as pure cognition; in them, there has always been a higher unification of minds [*Geister*]. For whatever accidental part the individuality retained, it was nowhere mentioned, and the conflict between the originators [*Urheber*] and cultivators [*Pfleger*] of the sciences always arose only out of the demand for the intrinsic and essential universality of a science. It should also consequently be considered as cognition of *one* spirit, and, for that reason, it is exalted men, worthy of praise, who researched with rigor and did not tire in the struggle to demolish one appearance and to maintain the other. In both, it was the one and eternal idea they kept alive and vigorously encouraged among their own minds [*eigenthümlichen Geistern*]. There are dark times when we find the auditorium [*Schauplatz*] empty. But all of a sudden

and maintain the harmony of the whole", while also existing as wholes in themselves. However, as the actual human being is circumstance of nature, so is the State only an institution in nature whose "conditions mean nothing if their principles are not grounded in nature." See A.L. Hülsen, "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", *Symphilosophie* 5 (2023): 391-410.

God's fire descends once more from the heavens, devours the mortal and in strong characters it establishes the holy flame of life. In it the striving of the sciences has been preserved, and their significance documented in the idea of eternal unity. This unity reveals itself also in the scientific forms. As arrangement into a systematic whole, each one is the idea in which science seeks to complete itself spherically. Nevertheless, even here, we find a divided effort, and we have to wonder how the idea which guided the scientific endeavor did not at the same time lead it towards the unity of all sciences. But when we venture back to the prehistoric time of our life, to the time of living intuition, we discover it to be just that. Living intuition is the immediate unity of the eternal idea and therefore timeless in itself, like everything that happens in an eternal way. It was thus a time when, as in our earliest childhood, the pure nature of our spirit expressed itself without separation from the One wherein, unconsciously or with self-intuition, our life is preserved, eternal, immortal. Every history is preceded by an eternity, which lingers as a sacred legend for a long time to come.[12] In this manner, history preserves for us great monuments of that time, even in the languages of all nations, which, as pure revelations of nature, are alive with the idea and have only come into being in an eternal manner. These monuments fell silent in the finite contemplation of human beings, the actual night of life, but preserved themselves in themselves for the new day, as consecrated signs of divine mysteries.

60. When nature began the history of its great creation, outwardly the finite separated itself from the eternal, the human being from nature, but not nature from the human being. For in it, everything is eternal, and its divine harmony can never be tarnished. In the self-intuition of human beings, however, nature's transfiguration had to be attained as *freedom*; for the eternal necessity in the unity of being is in itself without connection, and, therefore, as generative light it is eternal night for itself. The necessity in itself, however, is the divine freedom of self-intuition as light in light; as such, the human

[12] Both Schelling, in the afterword to these fragments, and Christoph Jamme, have drawn parallels to this phrase as Platonic in thought (see Christoph Jamme, "Geselligkeit und absolutes Sein. Weisen des Anschlusses an Fichte im Umkreis der 'Freien Männer'." In: *Denken unterwegs. Philosophie im Kräftefeld sozialen und politischen Engagements. Festschrift für Heinz Kimmerle zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, Amsterdam 1990, 93). In his essay "On the Natural Equality of Human Beings", Hülsen further notes that a "legend of a Golden Age [..], which had been passed down to the descendants of those fortunate ones and has always been held sacred, was intimately connected with the belief in a future in which heavenly peace would again return to mankind, and joy and harmony would dwell among us undisturbed once more." *Symphilosophie* 5 (2023): 398-99.

being should learn to find himself, himself as unrestricted life in eternal unity with nature. Thus, it was in this provision that life had to first and foremost find itself separated from nature by an absolute antithesis over which a dark fate ruled. Opposite the mother stood the son consigned to himself, while in her innermost life she held him eternally to her bosom and did not allow the divine power to run dry so that one day he may return to her with a clear countenance and to share the blessed life with her. She also lived on in his language, which he had received from her, and revealed to him her spirit in the eternally new stimulation of time.

Afterword to the Preceding Fragments

I was pleased to be able to include these estimable relics of an esteemed mind in this journal; and, since someone else took the liberty of writing the preface, I will add a short afterword.

Ludwig August Hülsen first became known through a text that sought to address the question put forward by the Berlin Academy: *What Progress has been made in Metaphysics since Leibniz?* in which the question was not answered but was itself subjected to an examination. The author's quiet dialectical gift, more tangible than demonstrative, more inwardly effective than outwardly prominent, was already noticeable in that work; a cheerful irony hovered over the whole, anticipating him as one of the few minds superior to the subject matter, who so rarely stand out in the sciences. The manuscript was followed by contributions to the *Athenaeum*; a treatise on the natural equality of human beings and fragments from a journey to Switzerland.

It will be up to those of his friends who are more familiar with his later life and intellectual development to explain more clearly how it happened that his contribution to the sciences was limited to these few works, and the fragments presented here are in fact the entire literary estate of Hülsen. For apart from the reason that consisted of his personal idiosyncrasy, other, external causes and circumstances, ought to also have played a part. The author of this afterword knows nothing of these; he met the commemorated only once in his life, but never forgot the impression of his remarkable personality. A strong, highly educated being, combining heart-warming mildness of speech and gesture with strength and steadfastness [*gediegener Männlichkeit*][1]; this is how he still appears before the author, as he did in 1797, unexpected but immensely pleasing, the first person in whose company he believed to feel the fresh, strong air of life once more after a devastating illness.

Anyone who had met Hülsen even once had to recognize that whatever he may do, say, or write in public would hardly outweigh his personality. If in others one is only too often aware of the discrepancy between scientific skill and assumed high principles on the one hand, and a poor personality on the other, then Hulsen's personality, in comparison, was so consummate that it was impossible to regard him simply as a scholar. Indeed, it was obvious

[1] In the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Century, the term "gediegene Männlichkeit" referred to an inner quality of constancy that is purely focussed on the essential. See *Goethe-Wörterbuch*, Band 3 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998), and *Goethe-Wörterbuch*, Band 5 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2011).

that if he were to express himself in his entirety, it could hardly be done in a rhetorical and rational scientific form (which still prevails in the presented fragments), but only in a freer form taken from life itself and furnished with life's circumstances. Even if his own circumstances did not permit such an act, we can still experience in what he has left us the wonderful fulfillment of a calm, contented spirit, who, while not contending with subjects, maintains with all the more certainty an inner equanimity to provide a pure image of them.

If we were to represent his mindset by a simile, we would say that the general mood of his writings reminds us of the impression of a slightly overcast sky resting above the surface of a clear lake and its surroundings. The subjects emerge from it unchanged; it provides only a subdued image of them, without a vivid cast of its actual colors; but all of a sudden, the delicate haze parts and a mighty ray of sunlight illuminates and penetrates it, even down to its deepest ground, and the reflected subjects appear in their full force and diversity of their outlines and colors.

Like with all of Hülsen's scientific treatises, these sudden rays of light can also be found in the preceding fragments of which I may cite as an example the passage in which he states that every search for truth already in itself expresses the relationship to a spirit, namely to one who does not necessarily search but rather truly perceives; or how, shortly afterwards, he [Hülsen] describes the appearance (the non-substantial or non-being) surprisingly clear as that which conceals truth insofar as it cannot be perceived, but then explicates its symbolic relation to truth (# 21-23)[2]; or the truly Platonic phrase (# 59)[3]: "Every history is preceded by an eternity, which lingers as a sacred legend for a long time to come."—But in order to experience the effect of such sudden illuminations, one must of course first have situated oneself with him in that state of content tranquility and quiet which allows the highest things merely to approach, yet without seeking to grasp them.

If it were possible, at the sight of such a beautiful and in its own way perfect spirit, to think of what it could still be lacking, and if the whole as it is and as we have once come to love it were not changed by every addition, then one could say that the increasing (potentiating) power through which one is able to renounce any found or felt happiness, to subordinate it, and to treat it as the means of an even higher development, had revealed itself less in him. But since this power certainly lay within him, it can only be said that

[2] This refers to part A, fragments 21, 22 and 23 in Hülsen's "Philosophische Fragmente."
[3] This refers to part B, fragment 59 in Hülsen's "Philosophische Fragmente", and this translation.

it did not reach its full potential, and perhaps only lacked the needed stimulation which is afforded either by the teacher's profession or the contact with like-minded, highly stimulating and striving minds. If, therefore, that grounding in the one may create a semblance of similarity between him and those others who know nothing more to say than that all is one and all is eternal and all is in most perfect harmony, he who would thus compare or even place him in the same line with them, would only grasp the farthest exterior of his essence.

And so we may grant him, whose life's calling did not demand of him the work of scientific completion, those divine moments that, as he himself says, were for some the price of an arduous life, and in which his spirit, clearly seeing through everything, even the particular, without the need to give voice to it, nevertheless rested with blessed contentment, and perhaps acknowledge the earlier completion compared to others, whom a longer design of life and work is provided in these circumstances.

I should be pleased to be able to contribute to the ongoing publication of his written legacy, especially his letters, through which alone a picture of his personality can be painted even for those who did not know him, and, to contribute something, even if only little, to the memory of a friend with whom, as long as he lived, one might wish to be able to live, and with whom, after he has departed, one can look forward to being reunited.

(Schelling)