To be an “I” means to be solitary. He who says “I” establishes a distance and draws a circle around himself. The task of solitude is the task of the “I”. Only where there are individuals can there be solitude. Where there are individuals there are, however, both: the pleasure in individuality, and thus the impulse towards solitude, and the suffering of individuality, and thus the impulse away from solitude. In this process it does not matter whether one is an individual, but rather whether one feels like one and knows it.

Insofar as the human being is a social being—which is true for all of us to a significant extent, especially since for every human form of existence its social form of being is temporally and empirically primary—he is not conscious of his particularity and is not solitary as an individual. If he is being expelled from the primitive form of social existence, which is felt to be absolute, if he is stripped of rights like an outlaw, he does not feel like an individual and does not feel solitary in our sense. In this situation he continues to live in that union to which he is no longer allowed to belong but for which he yearns. He feels bereft of his material and spiritual nourishing ground, perhaps even dead, but not as a solitary individual. Individual life and social life are the same here. Understanding happens reciprocally without problems and with complete certainty. Outside this sphere, in which understanding is quite simply present, there is nothing.
Solitude only exists once a human being confronts his social existence as a self-conscious individual who is in some sense autonomous and responsible for himself. It only comes about once this individual at the same time consciously confronts contents, demands, truths, and efforts (the world of the objective). Solitude only exists when the individual, in contrast to his previous plant-like, rooted, non-dynamic, fully determined being, enters a process of animal flexibility to confront the varied possibilities of existence: on the one hand the desired, heroic solitude of that human being who achieves and realizes his fate in spite of society and in spite of the world of material demands, in spite of “God” and, on the other hand, there is the suffered, involuntary solitude out of which the human being seeks to escape. His escape can either be directed backwards to a merely social existence at the price of giving up his individuality. This process entails a self-deforming and unconditional sacrifice by way of joining firmly established organizations, churches, and such communities. Alternatively, he forces himself into communication with other humans, with other individuals. He understands his existence as being in line with the impulse to sustain individuality and at the same time to escape solitude. (While the relationship between solitude and individuality initially seemed to be a tautology, here we see a task whose fulfillment would dissolve this tautology).

A human being thus enters into a necessary and infinitely dialectical movement: he dissolves his isolation as an “I” through communication with others, but thereby the “I” itself undergoes a transformation process, a consequence of which is that the new “I” is solitary again—“only he who is transforming himself remains related to me”\(^2\) — this gives rise to a new reaching out to others, out of this new solitude of the “I” and so forth without halt. At the end of this infinite movement there might be the idea of a totality of the “I”, of a self-contained “I”
[eines abgeschlossenen Ich] within perfected communication. However, once this path has been entered upon, solitude can in reality never again be overcome for more than moments.

It is possible to circumscribe a significant part of the problem that concerns us here using such formulas. We only approach the problems themselves, however, once we attempt to slowly capture them in a more concrete manner. We need to conceptualize this, until now abstractly formulated, movement by focusing on individual moments. Only then will it be possible to capture the potentialities of solitude and its overcoming [Aufhebung] within communication. It might be helpful to focus on two reciprocally correlated viewpoints in order to allow us to understand the individual instance:

1) With regard to the level of concrete facticity [konkreten Tatsächlichkeit], we can ask: which “I” is solitary? When we try to clarify what we mean when we say “I” and “thou”, when we ask ourselves: what is “I”? , who is “I”? , we look into an abyss: soon we realize that as “I”’s we always have in mind a schema, a conception of ourselves, a part, a type. We think, albeit perhaps completely falsely: if we abstract from the formal properties of self-consciousness [Ichbewusstsein] (of the “I” in contrast to what is outside of it, i.e. activity, identity and continuity, simplicity), our substantive self-consciousness is oscillating. Often it is a collection of different Egos, which one can classify into groups such as “social I,” “momentary I,” “impressional I,” “performative I,” “embodied I,” “sexual I,” and so forth. Whenever we wish, do, or achieve something for our Ego, we do it for one or many of these perceptual schemata of our Ego. We don’t know whether an “I” exists in itself. Even if it exists, we don’t know it, only its surface lying over the different Egos, which—to the detriment of the authentic “I”—interest us more than does our “I”. We would thus also have to get to know the types of “I”’s in order to
thus grasp the concrete forms of solitude. This signals a way which is only meaningful when analyzing concrete instances.

2) We can ask: in which sphere of objects does communication take place? For example, in the intellectual, the erotic, or the ethical sphere, etc.? Because communication takes place only within the medium of shared objects, the attempt to establish a direct community—which again and again draws on arbitrarily discovered objects—dissolves into nothing. Therefore there is, for example, a contradiction between the solitude of intellectual-contemplative creators and the solitude of one who is active. The former can be alone. He creates his work alone. This work is valid as such and he reassures himself in this validity, even if there is no resonance (Spinoza). The active person depends on reactions and support of other humans in order even to initiate an action. He is absolutely solitary without resonance. He is incapable of creation and cannot accomplish an assessment of the validity of his deeds (unless he resorts to delusions).

It could be objected that such a dissolution of the “I” into individual Egos and into communication within individual spheres makes it possible for someone to have all of his Egos within all spheres in a relationship to other individuals, and yet he would still be subjectively and objectively solitary. In contrast, there is the subjective experience understood as something which is momentarily alive and which may even potentially return, accompanying life. In this subjective experience the totality of “I” and thou is included and a communication beyond any topics [Gegenständlichkeit] is at least subjectively experienced. Such experiences are real [faktisch]: they are characterized through the captivation of humans by their repercussions and their lasting impact as governed through profound forces of the soul. Goethe’s verses to Frau von Stein express these forces, whose character is in every moment absolutely self-evident, but
which on retrospective reflection proves uncanny: “You were, after all, my sister or my wife in times past.” Whether such things happen outside of sexual love is questionable.

An objective, metaphysical interpretation would see such experiences as proof of the existence of an “I in itself.” It would see in such acts of communication of these “I’s” behind all of the Egos of the everyday, perhaps metaphysical processes. Such interpretations, when taken to be more than a casual expression of what has been experienced in the form of the “as if,” do not contribute anything relevant to our understanding. He who is experiencing does not require such formulas and doctrines of faith. An investigation, which remains within the domain of those concrete forms accessible to us, would search for the conditions of possibility of those experiences and discover, in any case, that as a basis, communication on substantive matters is already there. It would discover that, at least as a point of departure, many of the superficial Egos entered as well into relationships with each other. The mystery of such experiences [Erlebnisse] is thus of course not unveiled, in contrast to other modes, as in all psychic experiences. Such experiences cannot be reached by willing. On the contrary: any reflective stance, any intervention would essentially destroy them. They are also not recognizable and identifiable in concrete, individual cases. They are matters of fate similar to mystical experiences. Anything concrete, when subjected to analysis, is hardly understandable as such an experience. It only bears subjective, certainly not rational, not to mention reflective, evidence and objectively certifiable characteristics. These experiences might be defined as liminal cases and their factual existence is subject to doubt.

It is more or less the case that all experiences, including the experiences of relationships between souls, have something involuntary about them, something that can be disrupted by the will. They can be interrupted through the will. However, in the case of all other experiences, our
active impulses, our conscious control and decisions are at least contributing at a structural level. Thus there are all kinds of possible conscious measures one can take to escape from solitude: confession, speaking out, justifying oneself or, conversely, to persist in solitude, to remain silent, to deceive, to wear a mask etc.—

The motives driving an individual into or out of solitude, the presuppositions or motives for such activities should initially be limited to specific possibilities by pursuing the question concerning the kind of Ego (or which schema of self-conception) as well as the question concerning the sphere or spheres of communication. The forces, which stand behind the motives, can perhaps be grasped according to the categories of the understanding, as the essential basis of power and love.

1) In terms of its degree and breadth, understanding is a very special human capacity. It enables one to immediately cohabit with the other, so that he always knows instinctively without reflection what kinds of feelings, motifs, needs, and conflicts emerge in the other. Thus he can, without further ado, as though he were the other himself, affect, intervene, affirm, negate, support, inhibit, in such a way that he is always steering the soul machine and not just ineffectually handling peripheral parts. The other human being is not an object for me in such understanding processes, but there is a reciprocal communication of so immediate a kind that the person understanding, when asked to provide information in objective [gegenständlichen] formulas, does not know what he could say about himself or about the other. Such understanding is practical. It is not objectifying [gegenständlich]. This kind of objectifying understanding relates to the understanding, in which another human being becomes an object for me, the way instinctive juggling or billiards playing relate to the physical calculation and analysis of mechanical conditions and possibilities. Instinctive understanding implies immediate
communication. Objectifying understanding establishes a distance between the other and me. It even cancels out communication, though it can become a means for later communication. In neither of these cases is understanding complete, but always concretely directional [richtungsbestimmtes]. Instinctive understanding can be the basis of power or love instincts. It can be at the service of momentary, practical needs; e.g., in the case of the experienced tailor who unreflectively senses the needs of his client, or the waiter who senses the guest’s taste, what he is potentially willing to pay, what he demands and the tip, etc. Understanding—be it instinctive or objective—is the basis and medium for the powers of intersubjective relationships. It is a precondition, which, depending on its course, influences everything that follows. Understanding is no solitary force.

I am now looking for formulas to elucidate two of these forces, the will to power and to love. Based on these formulas, the contradictory types of an unconditional drive away from solitude, and that towards solitude, become understandable. It needs to be taken into account, though, that solitude as such is only a formal relationship and that the object of the drive is not solitude or communication, but substantively the human being, the task, creation, the other.

2) Power establishes an uneven hierarchy between human beings in communication. When I keep slaves as cattle and use them as tools, I do not stand in this power relationship, but in the fully internal non-relationality of sheer violence. I stand within this power relationship, though, whenever I somehow address spiritual forces [seelische Kräfte] in the other. There is, for example, a form of communication which suspends solitude in some sense in the act of kindness towards an inferior, just as there is in the act of humility towards a superior. In this case, both escape solitude: the one escapes his individuality by way of establishing a relationship of dependence between this individuality and an authority, a sovereign, and thereby vanishes. He
preserves individuality at the margins while having eradicated it at its root. The instincts are analogous whether he subjects himself to a leader, a master, the Catholic Church or to a tyrant. Ultimately, he doesn’t want to be an individual anymore, but a part. His conscience [Gesinnung] distinguishes him from the human being who primarily wants to remain who he is or wants to become—though this self were but a grain of sand compared to a rock—a disposition, which must seem to the former as proud arrogance and as a form of radical evil. The superior, in contrast, escapes solitude by assimilating all others, by subjecting them as parts to himself, but also by tolerating them.

He escapes solitude by expanding his self into a giant organism in which all others are but parts of him, by way of increasing his solitude into world solitude, outside of which nothing remains.

Neither form can ever reach this end. The one who subjects himself necessarily learns that the superior does not last forever and is not indispensable in his superiority. He learns that the superior does not possess the qualities he had expected from him, or that the superior cannot let him be as an assimilated part, but instead destroys him. Therefore the inferior subjects himself to a God rather than a human being or a human institution, derived from this God. His solitude culminates in the religious. He thus resigns himself to the penury of being in a state of subjugation—which he affirms as a state of subjugation—in this world.

The person of power and violence does not gain mastery over everything. In the assimilation of human beings he senses the direction in which his solitude could be ended. What stands in the way is not loneliness but the existence of others who have not been assimilated. He thus surrounds himself with a desert in which assimilation becomes impossible. If humanly possible, he is at last still chivalrous as a savior who wants to somehow tolerate the one who has
been overpowered in his kingdom in order to keep him as someone overpowered, as a virtual part of himself. He has to rely on himself alone and defies even God with whom he wants nothing to do. If, however, solitude does enter into the consciousness of such a type, a solitude which he intends to expand to the level of world solitude [Welteinsamkeit] by enlarging himself—whereby the original solitude is superseded insofar as everything becomes a part of him—, he can, in the most extreme case, achieve what has been characterized in the Holofernes: he longs for an enemy who is equal to him and he feels it is tragic that he has to destroy what he is also capable of respecting.

Here, the need for the other who is on a par with him is present in the paradoxical form of desire for an enemy. This need for the other at eye level is a constitutive characteristic of love:

3) Love is a relationship between humans who reciprocally raise each other to the same level through love. It is an overcoming of solitude without destruction, but rather through the development of individuality. Lovers must be equal with regard to power relations, but unequal as individuals. Understanding is a precondition here, as in the case of the power relationship, albeit in a totally different way. Reciprocity is a universal condition everywhere. That the person can understand what is not himself, is a condition for the possibility of love. That this understanding urges [us] towards totality [Totalität] provides love with a further characteristic. Here understanding is directed at totality.

What has been said would, with some alterations, correspond to what Kierkegaard writes (6, 23 ff.): “it is only in love, therefore, that what is different becomes the same. Understanding is present only in equality or in unity.”—“Misfortune thus does not consist in the fact that lovers cannot have each other, but in their inability to understand each other. ... This misfortune rips into the heart and injures for eternity.” “For love rejoices when it unites what is equal, it
triumphs when it creates equality in love out of what has been unequal before.” Think of the story of the king and the maid: “in his solitude he was deeply worried whether the maid would become happy now, whether she would possess sufficient candour [Freimütigkeit]— never to recall precisely what the king wanted forgotten: that he was king and she only a poor maid. ... Because even if the maid would be rather happy in becoming nothing, the king could not accept this, because he loved her and because it would be more difficult for him to be her benefactor than to lose her ... because only that love is truly unfathomable which does not satisfy itself with what the object of love, in its foolishness, would perhaps praise as his bliss.”

Love is the only suspension [Aufhebung] of solitude among integral individualities. However, usually this constructed type does not exist in reality. Judging from the essence of love it needs to be understood that the lover does not tolerate adoration, up-lifting or worship. Though it is likely that love would then revert to goodness and chivalry, power instincts—rather than fighting instincts—would then come to the fore and love would thereby be suspended or thrust aside.

The struggle for power aims at submission and assimilation. It draws on all means without hesitation, including deception and insidiousness. The formal result is what is most important. It does not matter what practical affair [Sachlichkeit] is accomplished. Violence is what matters most.

The struggle in love does not draw on all means. Its morality consists in letting the subject matter and the individual speak for him or herself. It does not subject them, but awakens. It does not use violence, but assessment, not deception and stratagems, but openness, truth and authenticity [Echtheit].
These constructed types are still quite far from reality. They are completely one-sided and pushed to the extreme. Furthermore, they lack concrete exemplification because they have always been talked about as if the active and intended “I” would be total and absolute. However, I do think that the typical characteristics we arrived at are helpful in grasping the concrete phenomena more quickly and with greater precision.

Therefore let us now turn directly to our immediate experiences. We find in all of life a dignity of solitude, a valuation in favour of solitude and, by the same token, a passionate or desperate drive away from solitude.

The dignity of solitude has, in its entirety, a double source: it is the last reflection of a softened, heroic type of human being inside of us. The dignity of solitude becomes a scar, but partially experienced as an expression of our power and egoistic instinct [Eigenwillen-Instinktes]: in it there is a distancing, a moving away from, a defiant being for oneself in opposition to other humans whom we cannot assimilate. It is a miniature defiance, which might be similar to the larger defiance that the superior harbours towards God. Within such a state of defiance one remains silent, because one wants to prove to oneself and to others that one is noble (Nietzsche). Inside oneself one enjoys superiority by remaining silent when no superiority is possible in the external world. To promote silence in this sense, which is often grounded on motives both aesthetic and of propriety, means to promote nobility in the sense of the spirit of power and of being superior. This gesture of noble silence saves one from obtrusions, undignified situations, disgrace, obvious and externally concealed developments of one’s own soul, friction and trials of the self, inferiority, etc. In fact, it saves one from all of these in a relatively cheap kind of way, through not doing anything, for which one is rewarded with the pleasant, uplifting feeling of achievement, of counting for more. Even if the discipline of
remaining silent is often extremely strenuous, it becomes relatively easy precisely because power instincts are being satisfied. And if it should become necessary to remain silent for other reasons, the power instincts easily seize the opportunity and are thus again satisfied.

Another source of perpetuated solitude is the intention not to lower oneself: human beings are only willing to give up solitude, to speak, to allow for, and endure complete openness and to tolerate, if the relationship of love can come to life, if the situation, the other human being, the content of the conversation are sufficiently serious and pressing. The communication between human beings shall not become vulgar through fabrications or inauthentic and pretended relationships. They do not have an impact and are not lasting. Solitude is preferred, here, out of a consciousness of the value and dignity of love and the stages of communication whenever the alternative would be a deformed and false satisfaction. But this disposition [Gesinnung] puts out feelers, so to speak, wherever human souls might meet each other. It risks debacle by throwing itself at somebody out of false enthusiasm, only to feel ashamed afterwards. It ventures to appear undignified at times.

And there is a thin line, which is all too easily crossed in the mode of experience, separating solitude as the will to sincere communication in love, from solitude as self-gratification based on power instincts. There is a similarly thin line separating love and goodness, as well as chivalry. And an equally thin line separates the risk of the one who exclusively desires communication from the activity of throwing oneself away by prostituting and exposing oneself out of an undisciplined drive to escape solitude whatever it takes, even for the price of being cheated on and of actively engaging in cheating.

This drive away from solitude is rarely a symptom of a pure desire for love and for communication on the same level. This is especially true when the content of the authentic
recedes, leaving room for the merely formal will: the most heterogeneous impulses seize the means of communication. Because one in no way feels like a substance, one wants to first find oneself in the other. If this does not happen in the process of love, which instinctively in communication permits an experience of the only true substance, the following happens: instead of existing, one aims for one’s imagined existence in the form of an image in the heads of others. Instead of living one’s own life, one aspires to a life before spectators. One wants oneself as an object, one wants to be on top of things and an issue; one wants to live an existence as a problematic character at the centre of attention in the environment, instead of living one’s own life by engaging in substantive activity [sachlicher Aktivität]. One grasps the essence of love and authentic communication with the goal of realizing it impatiently and assiduously right away, instead of letting it grow. One tries to enjoy it at the same time reflectively, instead of living it and allowing it to have an impact as an element of life. One draws on solemn forms, strong vibrations, deep transformations and, ultimately, one enjoys altogether inauthentic elaborations of the uninhibited, shameless outpourings of old and fantasized experiences. All of these are forms of an intensified restructuring of one’s own spiritual reality by way of exposing this reality in front of the other who becomes invisible in this process. What takes place is but a quite one-sided and unreal communication. Alternatively, one tries simply to flee oneself because one cannot bear being with oneself, because one hates oneself. Somehow one is trying to sink either into self-sacrifice or abstraction. Or one wants to feel oneself more clearly and searches for communication for the sake of response. The other does not enter into a relationship with oneself in the category of love, but becomes a mere means. One merely tries many people out, reacting here and there, ultimately to feel and to know clearly, in continual solitude, who and what one is. One is looking for a confirmation of one’s own value if one does not possess an inner self-
confidence. And one chooses how and with whom one enters into communication and what one is willing to entrust. One chooses what are the most comfortable existential conditions, namely conditions in which one feels one’s own positive value the most.

He whose needs are not being seen and respected wants to assert himself. He who suffers wants to alleviate his distress without keeping his dignity, but at least still sensing that he has some power. He uses the pity of others to do so or wants to create advantages for himself (in contrast to the one following his power instinct, concealing distress in order to evade the sense of superiority of others who empathize with him). One suffers because one does not see other humans and, as a consequence, does not see oneself. One longs to learn to see other humans in order to see oneself. One is rootless, without charisma, and always lives inside a dream. As a reaction to it, one strives for solemn spirituality, meaningful phrases, and deep moments. Forces such as family, the homeland, race, etc. have provided measure and security. If one cuts these roots off by, so to say, firing impulsive shots in all spiritual directions, if one becomes hyper-spiritual as a reaction in order to find and grasp something, one becomes soulful out of soullessness; here the seemingly strangest features converge: dispassionate conviviality [Geselligkeit im Sachlichen]. If, for example, someone new joins the conversation, the person can inquire: could you provide me with the three basic bullet points discussed? There is no grasp of the complete intellectual poverty of the very atmosphere, of the long, deliberate conversations about nothing; there is no grasp of the mood of this atmosphere, for the germinal and the solitude-transcending [Einsamkeitsüberwindende] that lies in it. Instead, the rich, spiritual means, which the reception of the nowadays rather easily accessible treasures of the human mind provides, are capable—if nothing real interferes—of bringing about a deceptive illusion of communication in the forms of sociability. The entire situation is then intellectually grasped and
since there is nothing that could not be imitated, simplicity, authenticity, spiritual poverty, and atmosphere are finally created and desired. Consequently, an inauthentic authenticity emerges and it becomes almost impossible to orient oneself in the net of illusory and frequently self-refuting spectacles. Since the most elementary needs for material self-preservation as well as the other egoistic interests sustain themselves the longest, it is possible to witness the most solemn community next to complete lovelessness in one human being. In this case the drive away from solitude takes on the polymorphism of the inauthentic, which is almost impossible to constrain.

It is thus the most heterogeneous forces which usurp the communicative impulse—just as previously it was the drive to solitude: sexuality, the need for power, the need for intoxication, etc.. As always in the case of spiritual issues the question will come up: what lies behind it? Almost always there is something behind it.

Within the domain of love there is a formal characteristic to indicate whether communication is experienced and intended. It needs to be seen whether it is or is not practiced on a level of equality. In case it is not, communication can primarily be in one’s own interest or in that of another. It can be egocentric or altero-centric. Most forces that falsely draw on forms of communication are egocentric. However, one can also allow for the unconcealment [selbstentschleierung] of self from the side of the other, without repaying like for like. The priest, the psychologist [Nervenarzt], as well as prominent and conspicuous personalities, who present themselves as if advertising themselves, are in this situation. People flock to such human beings to unilaterally expose themselves while not even expecting the same from them in return. People would even be embarrassed and surprised if it were attempted, if even to a limited extent. These people search for stability and a yardstick. They search for advice. They strive to overcome solitude; not on a level of equality but with regard to authority. This is why this search is not
directed at humans, but at an institution: the Church, medical institutions (doctors and patients have quietly made an agreement that all needs of the heart and all riddles are to be addressed under the banner of what is medically relevant). When advice, or the clarification of an issue or the communication of matters of business are sought, there is no stepping outside of solitude. However, such a stepping out is subjectively experienced strongly during confession, when declaring oneself to the psychologist in whom the patient has, for one reason or another, vested trust. Let us focus on the example of the psychologist. The psychologist and the patient stand in an opposed situation: the patient is an egocentric type. For the most part he is, as one tends to put it nowadays, introverted, autoerotic, etc. The psychologist who—with all the difficulties connected to his profession—preserves a level of integrity, transforms himself into an object of psychological analysis during each consultation session in which he can react very differently. He is in a paradoxical situation: his activity falls into the category of love. This category demands reciprocity. If reciprocity fails to come about, the instincts of enjoying power appear almost automatically. The psychologist who enjoys and indulges in the power attached to his position does not confront any difficulties. However, he who feels these power instincts and rejects them as illegitimate, reacts to them with the desire for reciprocity. He can only save himself from following up on that desire through the clear understanding of its purposelessness: it would always be un-asked-for by the patient. His goal would be defeated and reciprocity would be almost unachievable due to the fact of too much inequality. Thus, he needs to attempt to reach the intended effects in the spirit of love of humanity but without reciprocity, and in the form of contexts of power. The ultimate goal is overcoming the need for such a situation for the patient.
Two different types can take on the role of the psychologist just as in all analogous inter-human relationships. Historically, we find in Socrates and Jesus the two most radical embodiments of these types. (It is not accidental that both of them can likewise be found as caricatures among contemporary psychologists. Nor is it accidental that patients believe that they find so many Christ-like figures among their psychologists and counselors of all stripes.)

Jesus takes himself to be a role model and thus as an authority for others. Everyone may flock to him. He presents the only way for everybody. He allows himself the task of helping the other unconditionally, taking from [nehmen] him the value of an independent, individual being or, rather, taking away from him this burden. He identifies himself as a prophet. He loves his neighbour as he loves himself. This means that he loves everyone, or rather every neighbour, irrespective of his or her individuality. Love is a simple unconditional sacrifice. It consists in the disappearance of the individual. We have used the concept of love in the sense (the question is whether there is such a sense and whether it is legitimate) in which love overcomes solitude while sustaining reciprocity on the same level and while preserving and cultivating the individual. The ultimate experience is that of the individual, which does not require and does not profit from expression, as if the individual were and became something substantial. For Jesus, love is the opposite of this. It is located within the sphere of power; namely, in the most extreme poles: as the power of the role model and prophet assimilating everything and as humility (of the reversed power instinct), which gives everything away in self-sacrificing love.

Socrates refuses to be identified as a prophet. Neither does he have students who are followers and parroters. He refuses to be a role model. He says, “Stand on your own two feet,” when he applies the maieutic method of awakening the other. This method does not transmit something from himself to the others, it only aims to awaken the seeds and forces in them: “I
know that I don’t know. Stand on your own feet!” That is his answer to those yearning for authority, those who want to follow him. Socrates knows how to communicate, question, and examine. He does not want to subject others or himself. His pedagogy is directed at full individual responsibility, just as Jesus taught calm security under a role model. Jesus is the most extreme intensification of one kind of potential. Socrates embodies the most extreme modesty. Jesus is a power-intoxicated prophet and he is humble. Socrates is driven neither by power nor by humility. He is rather an individual who is self-confident and who does not overstep his limits. He does not enter into relationships of dependency, not even with God, and he does not make others depend on him. The Jesus-type believes himself to be capable of changing human beings by overcoming their solitude. The Socrates-type only believes himself capable of awakening others.

The psychologist, however, who follows the Jesus-type will satisfy his patient. He will say: solitude is overcome by way of a loss of individuality, a condition, which can only be sustained in hypnotic or erotic dependence. At the same time he develops that well-known caricature of Christ in his being and his mind, a caricature that is a product of our time. It is self-evident that it does not correspond to the historical image of Jesus, because it does not seem to be realistic. The psychologist following the Socratic type is in an almost permanently paradoxical situation. He will be able to find only relatively few who would be adequate patients for him. For, every urge for authoritative bonds and one-sided self-revelation, for love without individuality and equality, motivates so many to consult the psychologist instead of the Catholic Church and, should they ever meet a Socratic type, they will not get their money’s worth.

Let us now pursue further the possibilities of communication in the sphere of a love, which allows the preservation of individuality. Let us recall that earlier we stipulated an infinite
passage, which would never reach an end in spite of moments of fulfillment. These moments should not be taken as final realizations which one could rest upon. What is necessary at this point is to call to mind some inevitable features of this kind of communication, which could all lead to a certain form of congealment or emptying out, to a dead-end:

1) Understanding from human to human does not happen directly but through matters at hand [Gegenständlichkeiten]. The harmony [Ineinsschlagen] of souls requires a basis, a precondition and a medium, be it that of action, that of creation, that of contents, or that of impression. Whether it is ethical, contemplative or erotic communion, all of these have, as a precondition, a sphere of objects. The harmony of souls happens in the end as if it were immediate. However, there is no chance of remaining in such a state. Love between human beings grows empty. It dies out if they rob themselves of the sphere of objects and believe themselves able to exist in an immediate relation without anything further in common. It is the reification and the degeneration of love that makes love itself into a direct, immediate phenomenon, into the very content of life. Here we are dealing with exactly the same mechanism as in the case of mystical phenomena: as inspiration they are sometimes fruitful, while they necessarily lead to a lack of cultivation [Kulturlosigkeit], spiritual poverty, and a kind of animality when they are made into the apex and content of life.

Let us name some common examples: business friendships, the ethical connection between Brutus and Cassius. The contemplative friendship of both tranquil and theological monastic orders, friendship among scholars.

There is the contradiction [Gegensatz] between forms of communication: whether communication proceeds through the subject matter to the soul, or whether the subject matter only becomes interesting because of the soul. In the latter case, assuming it is experienced
consciously, a progressive material poverty manifests itself. In the former case, the process of life often proceeds without understanding. However, if it does lead to the soul, love and understanding become the most secure and lively. It could also be said that it is a misunderstanding that life could merge with understanding. It would then remain empty. Rather, life consists of action, thought, creation, formation—in this way alone is it possible for substance, medium, and content to come into being—all of these, however, serve only as a foundation: what is required beyond them is mutual understanding and love. Otherwise, everything remains soulless and, seen from the perspective of the one feeling solitary, without meaning.

2) A complete openness with regard to oneself and to the other belongs to the preconditions of understanding. One part of this openness is, among other things, the rational apparatus. If it is to reach and sustain understanding, the process needs to continue perpetually through the openness of feelings and emotional nuances, through openness with regard to the unconscious and to a new cultivation of rationality. However, at the same time openness and understanding are often sought self-deceptively, by emphasizing rational openness, not consciously speaking what is untrue but closing off one’s own unconscious. Thus the demand for openness is issued and a half-hearted openness displayed without, however, reaching the goal. This is so much the case that unconscious instincts exploit the openness of the other as a means toward their own unstated goals. One says, in order to understand much and to be open: We want to speak clearly now; we have misunderstood each other, let us again address the subject matter clearly. This is a dead-end and an act of self-deception. Here understanding remains fully bound by logic. It restricts itself to logical contents, limits itself and becomes fixed [erstarrt] in formulas. Instead of understanding and seeing each other mutually in the subject matter, a
dialectical struggle arises, which is, like the logic we underscored, almost always unending. It is a method of winning intellectual power positions, a method of subjecting souls, of evading what is essential and problematic. It is a method of escape. Understanding, on the other hand, is bound to complete emotional devotion. Though it too requires the rational apparatus, it is destroyed by everyday instrumental thinking, which is always directed by interests and not through love.

The fixation on the rational apparatus increases deception by mistaking saying for being. People express how much they like each other, understand each other; they praise the other, like to spend time with the other, etc.. Being expresses itself only infallibly within experience; it has no further need of such abstract words and formulas.

The rational apparatus as such is an indispensable means. Without it there would be no communication whatsoever. However, if one places it at the center, one has entered an impasse wherein understanding and love cease to exist.

3) Understanding and love never become ultimate facts or a lasting and secure possession. Rather, they need to be achieved again and again, if they are to remain alive at all. They are only achieved through struggle, through spiritual struggle, by way of giving oneself over and listening, by grasping for the spiritual root of the other, in the attempt literally to question his existence and in the living reaction to such attempts from the other side. It is not a struggle for power, but a struggle of positive, concrete forces, which come to light only through the practices mentioned and only thereby obtain expression—just as, indeed, thoughts, deeds, and plans may find their ground in such a communication from the depth of souls.

Two people meet. Though they did not know each other before, they understand each other using but few words. They experience a surprisingly quick sense of harmony. Allusions suffice. It is obvious: there is understanding. It feels as if both belonged to each other since birth.
Apart from the fact that it might be an illusion due to an arbitrarily shared concern for concrete contents, such experience only provides a basis on which continuing struggle needs to take place. Non-linguistic understanding is always the result of such struggles and efforts, or it is a lucky starting point. It never turns into final possession. Understanding and love entail an infinite path. They flourish always afresh, starting from the earlier basis of moments of fulfillment. They are begun over and over again. They are never conclusive, however vast and firm their foundation. Through love understanding always grows. Through love the soul grows, the soul in itself \([an\ sich]\), and thereby, conversely, understanding needs new impulses. Reciprocal and ever deepened exploration \([Tieferbohren]\) is an endless task with the goal of further overcoming solitude and of inquiring into the sphere of communication. This exploration is only possible as a reciprocal endeavor and it only happens within the sphere of a concrete objects \([Gegenständlichkeiten]\), which are accessible to both of them together. (Expressed in the language of objective substance, self-knowledge and love of the neighbour go hand in hand).

We introduced the idea that, once individualization has emerged together with solitude, the path of overcoming solitude becomes infinite (the idea of a totally developed individuality with total objectivity and complete communication). Accordingly, a final overcoming of solitude can in fact not be achieved. The moments of passing fulfillment, momentary overcomings of every form of solitude, are simply moments, corresponding to a condition of life, to a level. These moments provide the deepest form of satisfaction that can be experienced by a subject: through them a human being learns what it means not to be solitary. However, in reality he remains somewhere, somehow solitary. He who is in reality in every sense solitary might believe that, given a stroke of luck, solitude could be overcome. The one who has experienced the most intense communication between friends and in love feels particularly strongly that such
communication is only fleeting, that sooner or later other layers of the soul will become an object of experience. These are initially experienced in solitude and so on \textit{ad infinitum}. Human beings can thus be both friends and yet solitary.

The root of the religious \textit{das Religiöse} lies in this latter form of solitude. Human beings discover a final overcoming of their solitude in the relation to God. This process has a double, opposed impact on the communication between people: it increases and it overcomes it. The religious increases communication. It is even one of the strongest drives, insofar as it springs from the drive to lose solitude and, since this drive is satisfied concretely and visibly in communicating with people, this communication is experienced as a medium for, as a symbol of, and as derived from religious communication. The religious, however, surpasses \textit{hebt auf} communication, since subjective solitude completely disappears when communicating with God and, in extreme cases, it can coexist especially well with objective solitude. A communism of love and a monastic community are religious possibilities and just as forceful as radical hermitage. Kierkegaard teaches that the religious is an absolutely individual, incommunicable relationship between the individual and God. He himself realized absolute solitude in his life. Solitude with God was, in Calvinism, an inhibition of the spiritual community among humans. It provided for no trust and no faith in the individual personality of the other. The Calvinistic community existed, without love, only in the material world and in the relationship to God. And with this God, the \textit{deus absconditus} or fugitive god, not even a direct relationship was possible. Subjective and objective solitude must have been raised to the extreme in individual instances. The religious can thereby turn into a means by which to intensify solitude just as it serves as a means to protect against the ultimate solitude.
Here, in the religious, things are determined at ever higher levels, whose final position the human being takes up in the question of breadth of vision [Weitanschauungsfrage]. Is there something ultimate in the “I”?, has the absolute been grasped at its root here?, or is the “I” simply a phenomenon which, in the last instance, dissolves? Is the “I” dependent or independent? Correspondingly: does the “I” increase solitude inside of itself to the level of world solitude—be it that of the hero or that of the human who stands in the communication of love? Or is solitude overcome in the destruction of the “I,” in the elimination of the phenomena rather than in the idea of the totality of the individual? Practically speaking, this means that the “I” either looks ahead in order to travel the path of power and love by expanding and intensifying its substance or, in turning backwards, it searches for the way and thereby loses its individuality again, replacing it with authority, subjection, institution, etc.

Once again we have run into the construction of extreme types. To conclude, let us compare some forms of solitude, which we can easily interpret by way of the categories we have acquired:

1) Solitude as a consequence of fate following the deepest understanding. The other might be dead. What was once experienced becomes a yardstick for everything that follows. Only by achieving the same degree is it possible for the human being to get out of his solitude. Otherwise, he would experience this stepping out as a defilement [Befleckung]. Not solitary when reliving the unerasable experience of relationship, he becomes ever more solitary objectively. Subjectively, however, he experiences his life as the only place where solitude is not.

2) Solitude as a consequence of a fateful isolation. The depth of understanding and love has never been found. One avoids compromises and imperfection. Religious communities,
natural understanding, or in any other sphere in which the soul suddenly emerges, will be found to be a meager substitute that stirs or moves [rührend] the observer.

3) Solitude as a hardening due to not wanting to understand, because of the dominance of individual practical interests. (a) Starting as reticence, it is experienced during certain moments with a sense of guilt. (b) As a consequence: a different soul, a different mode of reaction and feeling. A closed-off heart. Lovelessness. (c) Toughness, there is no energy at all, indifferent or depressed. Anxious. Proud and violent. Chaotic. Here one sees clearly: the understanding and the drive to understand constitute authentic inwardness in contrast to an ever so verbose, so genial interaction with the outside, with the external world. One talks about everything, just not about what is essential. One says everything, just never the truth. It is the frozen isolation of the whole human being for the benefit of the practical Ego, whereas the inevitable consequence of understanding is hated like death: the understanding of one’s own irreparable defects, the consciousness of one’s own guilt, guilt consciousness as shock and despair. However, this is also the only way that profound self-cultivation begins. The soul suffers tremendously on this path, but it also blossoms as soul.

4) Finally, let us consider the type of the most extreme solitude. This solitude can no longer wish for anything but the disappearance of all things. We find it embodied in Goethe’s harpist. “I see nothing ahead, nothing behind,” he exclaimed, “than an infinite night in which I am in the most dreadful solitude; the only feeling I have is that of guilt. ... In this night no divine light ray appears to me. ... Nothing seems more horrible than friendship and love; for they alone make me wish that the appearances surrounding me might be real...”
Notes


5 Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister*, Book 7, Ch. 4.