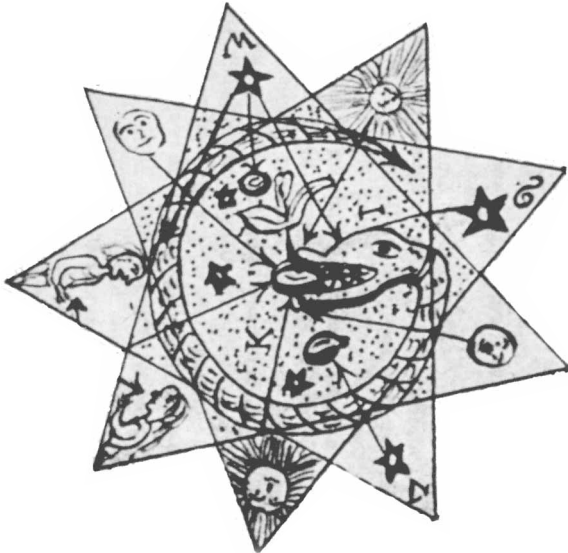


Hegel and Haiti



INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

First Remarks

“HEGEL AND HAITI” was written as a mystery story. The reader is encouraged to begin with it directly, before the introduction provided here. For those already familiar with the plot and its denouement, this new introduction (that can be read as the afterward as well) describes the process of discovery behind the essay and the impact of its first reception. It traces the years of research that led to “Hegel and Haiti,” fleshing out material condensed in the footnotes so that the scholarly implications can be more easily ascertained, and situating the essay within ongoing intellectual debates that have real-world political implications.

The Accidental Project

I did not set out to write about Hegel or Haiti. In the 1990s, I was working on a different project. With the end of the Cold War, neo-liberalism rose to ideological dominance on a global scale. Appeals

to economic laws and market rationality were the legitimating mantra used to justify every kind of practical policy. Just what was this bodiless phantasm, “the economy,” that was the object of such fetishistic reverence? When and why was it discovered, and more perplexing given its invisible hand, how? Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment were the logical place to look, not just for the arguments of these philosophers but also for the context in which their ideas took hold.

Most surprising was how much intellectual excitement theories of political economy stirred up throughout Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century. By the time Marx studied economics two generations later, it was described as the “dismal science”; today’s philosophers seldom show interest. Even if a few basic phrases have become staples of everyday thought (supply and demand; profit motive; competition), just how the economy works remains inscrutable to today’s general public; it is knowledge reserved for a priesthood of experts who have inordinate power to determine our lives. No one reads economics journals for fun. So, what accounts for the enormous excitement with which the 1776 publication of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* was received?

Hegel’s early writings proved useful for this inquiry.¹ His Jena texts are a striking record of the impact of reading *Wealth of Nations* in 1803.² His philosophical attention was caught by Smith’s description of the radically transforming effects of a deceptively simple innovation in manufacture: the division of labor. Using the mundane example of pin making, Smith argued that dividing production into

1. The results of this search into the origin of the economy, its mysterious invisibility, and Hegel’s excited reception of Smith are discussed in Buck-Morss, “Envisioning Capital,” 434–67. The idea that the economy has been an ahistorical constant since Aristotle is as erroneous as the claim that Aristotle was the source of Hegel’s understanding of slavery.

2. Christian Garve produced an extremely good German translation (1784–96), but Hegel seems to have used the original English edition. Both versions, Smith’s original and Garve’s translation, were ultimately in Hegel’s permanent library.

small, specialized tasks had an exponentially multiplying effect on both worker productivity and consumer need, hugely increasing the scope and degree of human interdependency.³ Hegel was fascinated, perhaps terrified by the vision of limitless masses of pins being heaped upon the world, as well as the deadening effect that the repetitive, segmented actions of labor had upon the workers. He recognized that this new economy as a “system of need” had the power to alter the form of collective life.⁴ His description was dramatic: “need and labor” create “a monstrous system of mutual dependency” that “moves about blindly, like the elements, and like a wild beast, requires steady and harsh taming and control.”⁵ By 1805–6, he was using the new economy in place of the traditional concept of “bourgeois” or “civil” society (*die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) as

3. Hegel cites Smith’s pin making example on multiple occasions—nearly every time making a new numerical mistake! Not the details of the new science intrigued him but, rather, Smith’s innovative conceptualization (see Buck-Morss, “Envisioning Capital,” 458n57). See Waszek, *Scottish Enlightenment*, for details on Hegel’s reading of Adam Smith, including his poor mathematics regarding pin production, and indications that he was using Smith’s original English text: “The recently discovered 1817/18 set of notes, taken by P. Wannenmann, is most interesting, because it documents the only time that Hegel reproduces Smith’s calculation correctly” (*Scottish Enlightenment*, 131).

4. The term “system of need,” referring to the satisfaction of need in general, first appears in Hegel, *System der Sittlichkeit* (1803), 80–84, and is cited from the 1967 edition, ed. Georg Lasson. “The satisfaction of needs is a general dependency of all upon each other” is his description in Fragment 22 of the 1803–4 manuscript that is referred to by Hoffmeister’s standard edition of Hegel’s works as *Jenenser Realphilosophie I*, and that is cited here from the more recent edition: Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe I: Das System der spekulativen Philosophie*, eds. Klaus Düsing and Heinz Kimmerle (1986), 229 (323). This is the paperback, working version of volume 6 of the historical-critical edition of Hegel’s *Gesammelten Werken*; I have added the pagination of volume 6 in parentheses as an aid to scholars.

I have made my own translations from the German. However, both of these Jena texts have been translated as Hegel, *System of Ethical Life* (1802/3) and *First Philosophy of Spirit* (Part III of the *System of Speculative Philosophy* 1803/4), ed. and trans. H. S. Harris and T. M. Knox (1979). This edition includes for the second text the pagination of volume 6 of the critical-historical edition, allowing the reader to compare my translation with theirs. For the 1802/3 text, my citations from the German include in parentheses the pagination of the 1923 edition of Georg Lasson (1913) that is noted in the Knox-Harris translation.

5. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe I*, 230 (324).

the basis of a philosophy of political constitutions that calls on the state to step forward as the force (*Gewalt*) of taming this wild and voracious animal.⁶ His economic reworking of the concept of civil society has been described as “epoch-making.”⁷

Bourgeois Society

Hegel was an acute observer of the rupture in social life that we now call modernity. The Jena lecture notes are full of its evidence. His lifelong project was to grasp this transformation in terms of its philosophical significance. Hegel’s philosophical system may climb to abstract levels (a student who heard his early lectures at Jena claimed he “could make absolutely nothing of them, had no idea what was being discussed, ducks or geese”⁸), but his texts are full of the kind of historically concrete detail that theorists with a materialist bent like myself find particularly appealing: pin manufacturing, coffee drinking, poorhouses, men’s frockcoats, corkscrews, and candlewick cutters. Even the most abstract terms of Hegel’s con-

6. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 222–42 (242–65). This is the paperback, working version of volume 8 of the historical-critical edition (see note 4 above).

7. Riedel, *Between Tradition and Revolution*, 44. It was Christian Garve (A. Smith’s translator) who observed the differentiation that had evolved in modern times within the term *die bürgerliche Gesellschaft* between the “citizen” (*citoyen*), a political concept within the traditional meaning of “civil society,” and the “burger” (*bourgeois*), a nonpolitical, private person, the town-dwelling middle class (*Stand*) of traders and artisans, whose social relations are embedded in economic exchange. The increasing distinction in meaning, not registered in the English translation “civil society,” has led to confusions. Hegel recognized the dual and, in his interpretation, dialectical unity of modern man as a public and a private person in *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 238 (261). For an excellent essay that traces these complications, see Riedel, “Bürger,” 672–725.

8. Cited in Petry, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, 1:xvi. The situation did not improve with Hegel’s advancing career. Petry cites a young Estonian nobleman who, when he arrived at the University of Heidelberg in 1817, went “to the first good bookshop, bought those of Hegel’s works available, and that evening settled comfortably on the sofa, intending to read them through . . . But the more I read, the more strenuously I applied myself to what I was reading, the less I understood, and after I had struggled in vain for a couple of hours with one of the sentences, I was quite out of temper, and put the book aside. Out of curiosity, I later attended the lectures, but I must confess that I was unable to understand the notes I had taken” (*Hegel’s Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, 1:xvi).

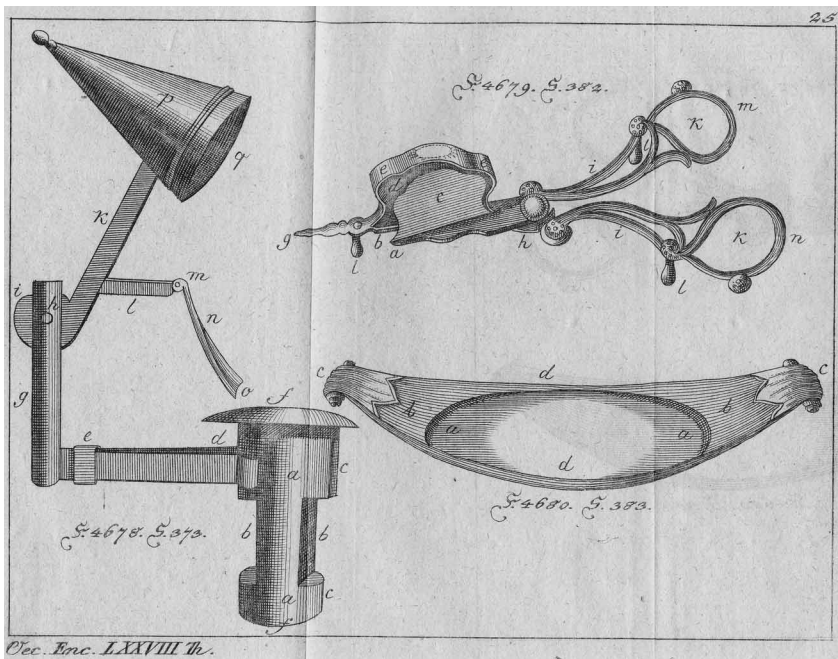


FIGURE I. Lichtputze (Candlewick Cutter).

ceptual vocabulary are derived from everyday experience. In the Jena writings, the central Hegelian term “objectification” (*Entäußerung*) has, as its referent, mundane human labor; “negation” is Hegelian for the desire of consumption; and historically created needs, as opposed to natural necessity, are exemplified in the social imitation of fashion.

The system of need is the social connection among strangers who neither know nor care about each other. The “insatiable desire” of consumers, combined with the “inexhaustible and illimitable production” of “what the English call ‘comfort,’” produces “the movement of things” that has no discernable limits.⁹ Hegel is in fact

9. Cited in Waszek, *Scottish Enlightenment*, 150, 152, and Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 208 [227]; it is the interdependency of the division of labor that gives desire “the right to appear” (*Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 208 [227]).

describing the deterritorialized, world market of the European colonial system, and he is the first philosopher to do so.¹⁰ This accidental, blind dependency no longer refers, as in the tradition of civic humanism, to the contractual relationships among property holders as public citizens that provide the basis for shared consent to the laws of government. It is society created by political economy as Adam Smith conceived it—still urban or “bourgeois” (*bürgerliche*) society, to be sure, but transformed by the modern realities of colonial trade. The new merchant class (*Handelsstand*) is comprised of long-distance traders. Their interest is less (as Hobbes understood) to secure their property, than to secure the terms of its “alienation” (*Entfremdung*), their right to buy and sell. Hegel recognizes that whereas the things exchanged are equal in value, the paradoxical social consequence is inequality, “the antithesis of great wealth and great poverty”: “to him who has, more is given.”¹¹ Commercial exchange creates a continually self-reproducing network of relations between persons—“‘society’ in the modern sense of the word.”¹²

The new society is not an ethnic group or kin-based clan (*Stamm*). It is the dissolution of the *Volk* as traditionally conceived.¹³ Compared

10. Hegel’s understanding of the role of colonies in producing this “system of need” (*System der Sittlichkeit*, 77–80 [485–88]), the instabilities caused by consumer dependency on products from “abroad” (*System der Sittlichkeit*, 83 [491]), as well as the dehumanizing, exploitation of labor that undergirds competitive, global trade, distinguishes his discussion from the benign anticipation, more common among Enlightenment philosophers, that increasing commerce would bring about international peace and mutual understanding. While Kant and others had a strong moral criticism of the “injustices” of colonialism, this does not amount to a philosophical comprehension of the new society. See Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, for an informed and sympathetic discussion of Kant, Diderot, and Herder (that appears unaware, hence unwarrantedly dismissive of Hegel).

11. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 223 (244); see also Buck-Morss, “Envisioning Capital,” 458. The remarkable degree to which Hegel’s understanding of bourgeois society in these early writings dovetails with that of Marx is the theme of Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*; and Lukács, *Der junge Hegel*.

12. Riedel, *Between Tradition and Revolution*, 45.

13. “The absolute bond of the people, namely the ethical (*das Sittliche*), has vanished, and the people (*Volk*) is dissolved” (Hegel, *System der Sittlichkeit*, 84.) The new society produces a different form of ethics. *Sittlichkeit* is translated as “ethical life,” but it

with civil society in the old sense, bourgeois society is unpatriotic, driven to push beyond national limits in trade. Commerce is borderless; its place is the sea. Strictly speaking, the economy and the nation are incompatible (Smith saw the colonial economy as distorting the national polity¹⁴). The economy is infinitely expansive; the nation constrains and sets bounds. Hegel ultimately resolves this opposition between the force of society and the force of the state, which produces the Janus-faced individual as *bourgeois/citizen*, by the introduction of a political constitution as a different form of interdependency, providing an ethical corrective to social inequalities through laws so that each aspect, civil society and the state, enables the other through their mutual opposition.¹⁵

In his reading of Adam Smith, Hegel saw a description of society that challenged the British and French enlightenment tradition on its most sacred ground: the state of nature. Far from a historical invariant and in stark opposition to natural law theory, this is a historically specific anthropology of mutual dependency. Whereas contract theory from Hobbes, to Locke, to Rousseau posited the independent and free individual possessed of natural liberties as the starting point of philosophical speculation, determining the

is not misleading for us to understand it in terms of “culture” in its anthropological senses (whereas the Hegelian word *Bildung*, translated as “culture,” means educated or “cultivated”). The new *Sittlichkeit* refers to the culture, not of an ethnic people, but of a social form. Hegel believes, for example, that *Bildung* has become the new ethos in modern society: the education of individuals to reason, or self-consciousness, replaces the form of ethical life based in the family, which is collective, customary, and largely unreflected. It is this understanding of *Sittlichkeit*, I am arguing, that allows him to imagine African-born slaves adopting the self-conscious ethos of modern political life.

14. This is a constant theme in his writings. Merchant capital is, for example, inherently unpatriotic: “A merchant, it has been said very properly, is not necessarily the citizen of any particular country” (Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 519).

15. This theme, anticipated in the final section, “Constitution,” of Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 238 (261) (see also above, note 7), is elaborated in the *Philosophy of Right* (1821). Many themes from the Jena lectures reappear in lectures on the philosophy of right that Hegel gave almost yearly from 1817/18 to 1825/26 (student notes taken from these have survived).

terms for entering into societal and contractual agreements, Hegel's modern subject is *already* in a web of social dependencies because of commodity exchange. But how does Hegel move from the economy to the state? Riedel observes only that the state appears as a *deus ex machina* to rescue the new society from limitlessness and assert control.¹⁶ And here is where things get interesting.

“*Robinson Crusoe and Friday*”¹⁷

As Hegel is describing the new society in the various Jena lectures, exploring the theme of “mutual recognition” as “recognition through exchange” (*Anerkanntsein im Tausch*), he speaks for the first time of the relationship between “master” and “slave.”¹⁸ The reader cannot help but be struck by the fact that this theme pops up alongside the description of the system of need in all of the texts. We are compelled to ask: what is the connection between the master–slave relationship and the new global economy? What, following the experts, would lead us to believe that he is appealing here to Aristotle? And if he is using slavery allegorically to describe only the domestic side of the French Revolution, then what does that have to do with the simultaneous discussion of commodity trade?

In the 1805–6 Jena texts, Hegel moves in rapid succession among economic themes (pin making, the movement of things in exchange, the dehumanization of the worker) and the political themes of master and slave and the “struggle of life and death,” wherein “mutual recognition” appears “in its extreme form” (adding the marginal notation: “violence, domination and submission”).¹⁹ Conceptually, the revolutionary struggle of slaves, who overthrow

16. Riedel, *Between Tradition and Revolution*, 125.

17. See “Hegel and Haiti,” 61n114.

18. The details of these are spelled out in the text and footnotes of “Hegel and Haiti,” section 8, beginning on page 52.

19. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, 203 (222).



FIGURE 2. Frontispiece to the 1785 edition of Daniel Defoe's 1719 novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, vol. 1. Illustrated by Mather Brown, engraved by Robert Pollard. From Blewett, *Illustrations of Robinson Crusoe*.

their own servitude and establish a constitutional state, provides the theoretical hinge that takes Hegel's analysis out of the limitlessly expanding colonial economy and onto the plane of world history, which he defines as the realization of freedom—a theoretical solution that was taking place in practice in Haiti at that very moment. The connection seems obvious, so obvious that the burden of proof would seem to fall on those who wish to argue otherwise. The interpretation supports Ritter's generally accepted thesis that with Hegel, "philosophy becomes the theory of its age,"²⁰ and it eliminates what bothered Riedel, the apparent arbitrariness of introducing the state as a *deus ex machina*. Mutual recognition among equals emerges with logical necessity out of the contradictions of slavery, not the least of which is trading human slaves as, legally, "things," when they show themselves capable of becoming the active agents of history by struggling against slavery in a "battle of recognition" under the banner, "Liberty or Death!"²¹ What, then, would account for two centuries of historical oblivion?

This is the puzzle that launched the writing of "Hegel and Haiti." It led in unexpected directions, tugging me into a whole web of related evidence that shifted the focus toward Haiti, to be sure, but even more toward the issue of scholarship, and how the construction of an object of research over time can hide as much as it illuminates. Ultimately, "Hegel and Haiti" is about the connection, the "and" that links these two historical phenomena in silence. What drove me, and in fact angered me in the course of this research was an increasing awareness of the limits that scholarship places upon our imagination, so that the phenomenon called Hegel and the phenomenon called Haiti, porously interconnected at the time of their

20. "Just as the people had raised it as their banner, so Hegel takes up the idea of freedom and makes it the 'basic element' and 'sole matter' of his philosophy....Hegel in this way makes philosophy the theory of the age" (Ritter, *Hegel and the French Revolution*, 48).

21. Riedel, *Between Tradition and Revolution*, 125. See also "Hegel and Haiti," 54n93.

origins (as newspapers and journals clearly document) had become severed by the history of their transmission. To evoke the specter of Eurocentrism at this point is easy, of course, but it begs the question of how Eurocentrism itself was constructed historically, and what role Haiti might have played in that process.

Shifts in historical interpretation are not the invention of one person. The work of unrelated scholars builds upon each other. The Hegel scholars have been meticulous in their documentation, and precisely because of their thoroughness, it is possible to locate the holes in our knowledge that more careless research would have obscured. These holes reveal the fragments of another story behind the official one, and in trying to put parts of it together, I discovered writers from diverse disciplines whose scholarship is some of the most exciting and original of our time. The Haitian Revolution lies at the crossroads of multiple discourses as a defining moment in world history. It is impossible to swallow Samuel Huntington's glib dismissal of Haiti as fully marginal to the history of civilizations, a "lone country" that "lacks cultural commonality with other societies,"²² after reading Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History and the Gods*, Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Michel-Rolf Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, and the many essays by David P. Geggus, not to speak of the classics: C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (1938), Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (1975), Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery* (1988), and Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (1992).

"Hegel and Haiti" supports a shift in knowledge away from traditional hierarchies of significance. It insists that facts are important not as data with fixed meanings, but as connective pathways that can continue to surprise us. Facts should inspire imagination

22. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 136.

rather than tying it down. The less they are subsumed under the fiction of secure knowledge, marshaled as proof of a predetermined and authoritative thesis, the more truth they are capable of revealing. Instead of defending a notion of intellectual turf, the point of scholarly debate should be to extend the horizon of historical imagination. There is a politics to such collective scholarship. Its goal is to produce knowledge for a global public sphere worthy of the name, where defining boundaries are not determined in advance as a consequence of monopoly control over knowledge by history's winners.

Hegel knew, but does it matter?

For raising the question of whether Hegel was indeed inspired by events in Saint-Domingue, credit must go to Pierre-Franklin Tavarès. Drawing on French, rather than German sources and relying on his own sound intuitions, Tavarès wrote a series of brief, speculative articles in the early 1990s that made bold claims: Hegel was “preoccupied” from the earliest years with the contemporary issue of slavery; criticisms of slavery can be detected even when camouflaged in the garb of the ancients; the young Hegel, reader of the Abbé Raynal’s history of the Indies, was better informed about Caribbean slavery than he let it appear; indeed, Hegel remained a “Raynalist” throughout his life.²³

Since the publication of “Hegel and Haiti,” Nick Nesbitt has initiated a reading of Hegel’s mature work, the *Philosophy of Right* (1821), from the perspective of the Saint-Domingue slaves, con-

23. Thanks to Pierre-Franklin Tavarès, and to Henry Robert Jolibois of the Haitian Ministry of Culture, for making available to me these articles, that grew out of Tavarès’ work on a doctoral dissertation (Tavarès, “Hegel, critique de l’Afrique”). See “La Conception de l’Afrique de Hegel,” 153–66; “Hegel et l’abbé Grégoire,” 155–73; “Hegel et Haiti,” 113–31; “Hegel, philosophe anti-esclavagiste.” Tavarès currently writes on the contemporary crisis in the Ivory Coast, as official in charge of Franco-African affairs in the office of the Mayor of Epinay-sur-Seine.

cluding that this “progressive” text moves further than the abstractions of the more “timid” *Phenomenology*, providing “the first great analysis of the Haitian Revolution” in its “explication and radical defense of the right of slaves to revolt.”²⁴ While we may differ in our emphasis and disagree on details, Tavarès and Nesbitt, focusing on different texts, concur as to the obviousness of the connection.²⁵ As far as Haitian scholars are concerned, they were not surprised by my presentation of “Hegel and Haiti” in Port-au-Prince in 2005 (they already knew of Tavarès’s articles).²⁶

It is curious that Tavarès’s speculations have not been more widely debated, and I regret having come upon his articles so late in my own research. But before rushing too quickly to see this scholar, an African, as victim of Euro-American academic hegemony (Tavarès, a French citizen, studied in Paris; the Hegel establishment has shown no great interest in my own work), we need to consider not only Hegel’s Haiti, but Haiti’s Hegel, that is, the Afro-Caribbean reception of Hegel that claims him as their own. Nesbitt has traced this legacy through the work of Aimé Césaire, whose influential conception of *negritude*, referring to the African diaspora’s self-understanding based on “a common experience of subjugation and enslavement,” considers the slave’s self-liberation in the Haitian Revolution as “emblematic.”²⁷ Césaire recalled to Nesbitt personally his youthful excitement in discovering Hyppolite’s new translation

24. Nesbitt, “Troping Toussaint, Reading Revolution,” 18–33.

25. Nesbitt has the most radical reading of Hegel. Tavarès’ reading, through the French sources, tones down Hegel’s politics, suggesting that Hegel was always a gradualist, believing that slaves through the discipline of work earned their freedom, whereas the too rapid liberation of the slaves declared by Toussaint marked their “second defeat” (Tavarès, “Hegel, philosophe anti-esclavagiste,” 27).

26. *Chemins Critiques*, the journal in which several of Tavarès’ articles appeared, is a Haitian publication. Thanks to Marie-Lucie Vendryes, director general of the Musée Pantheon National Haitien, Republic of Haiti, for her comments on my presentation.

27. Cited in Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory*, 21. Nesbitt discusses Hegel’s *Phenomenology* with Césaire’s 1963 play *La Tragédie du roi Christophe*, as putting together Yoruba/Vodou and Hegelian philosophies of history (*Voicing Memory*, 143).

of Hegel's *Phenomenology* (1941): "When the French translation of the *Phenomenology* first came out, I showed it to Senghor, and said to him 'Listen to what Hegel says, Léopold: to arrive at the Universal, one must immerse oneself in the Particular!'"²⁸ Césaire understood that the truly productive, "universal" experience of reading Hegel is not through a summary of the total and totalizing system, but through the liberation that one's own imagination can achieve by encountering dialectical thinking in its most concrete exemplification.

If the question of Hegel's sources were all that was at stake, the results might be incorporated into present disciplinary structures, contested or not among Hegel scholars as a source of influence or explanation of context, but not essential to the meaning of the famous dialectic of master and slave. The history of philosophic scholarship is an example of how the colonial experience has been excluded from the stories Western thought tells about itself. As a certain professor of philosophy told me frankly, "even if Hegel were writing with Haiti in mind, it would not change the way that I teach Hegel"—a remarkable statement that from a certain perspective is justified, of course, but it was precisely this perspective that I was hoping to unsettle, placing emphasis on the linking conjunction, the "and," to the point where we cannot think Hegel *without* Haiti. Scholars of modern philosophies of freedom are hobbled in attempting to do their work in ignorance of Haitian history. Historical context permeates modern philosophy—that was indeed Hegel's modernist, self-conscious intent. But the reverse is true as well. Because of his own insistence on the necessary interconnection between history and truth, Hegel's philosophy cannot be divorced from the repressions through which the referent that we call Hegel has come to be historically known.

28. Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory*, 120.

Hegel's Silence

One caveat deserves consideration. If it is indisputable that Hegel knew about Haiti, as did indeed the entire European reading public, why is there not more explicit discussion in his texts? Nesbitt considers the references direct enough for anyone living at the time to understand, and that may be. But the fact that they have been systematically overlooked for several centuries is not only the responsibility of later scholars. To what degree is Hegel himself accountable for the effective silencing of the Haitian Revolution? Tavarès speaks specifically to this point, claiming that *le silence de Hegel* is a consequence of his connections with Freemasonry. Drawing from the work of Jacques d'Hondt, he argues that Hegel's tendency to "dissimulate or keep silent regarding certain of his sources of documentation and information" was typical of members of the secret brotherhood, which particularly in these revolutionary times was under political suspicion.²⁹ D'Hondt insists that this connection makes an esoteric reading of Hegel necessary generally.³⁰

Without doubt, the influence of Freemasonry was profound at the time, fusing contradictory desires for political secrecy and public transparency, enlightenment reason and hermetic mysticism, modernism and eternal knowledge. Freemasonry is a continuous thread in the story of Hegel and Haiti, connecting the slave-trading ports of Bordeaux, the plantations of Saint-Domingue, English antislavery authors, the journalists reporting for *Minerva* from Paris, and book publishers in Germany.³¹ Hegel was part of this vast, communicating network, which he knew to include Garve, Archenholz,

29. Tavarès, "Hegel et Haïti," 119.

30. See d'Hondt, *Hegel Secret*, especially chap. 1, "Minerva," which deals with the journal's coverage of the French Revolution (but not its frequent articles on Saint-Domingue; hence Tavarès's omission of this connection). On d'Hondt, see "Hegel and Haiti," 62n121.

31. See "Hegel and Haiti," section 10, beginning on page 60.

Rainsford, Cotta, and Oelsner (all of whom make an appearance in “Hegel and Haiti”). One cannot help but be struck by the affinities between the politics of Hegel’s early philosophy of spirit, and his reading of the journal *Minerva*, with its Mason-spirited endorsement of Girondin cosmopolitanism committed to the international spread of revolutionary ideals, explicitly including Toussaint L’Overture’s republic, yet critical of what Hegel in the *Phenomenology* called the “abstract negation” of revolutionary terror.

Oelsner’s Historical Letters from Paris, published in *Minerva*, criticized the local Jacobins as “cannibals” (*Menschenfleischfresser*). He deplored their striving for “a wild democracy” that could drive “the most civilized nation into the deepest barbarism.”³² And it was Rainsford, also part of the *Minerva* Freemasonry network, who made the contrary historical movement explicit: while the “assassins and executioners” of Jacobin France were causing “a great and polished nation” to return to “the barbarism of the earliest periods,” the world saw in the “Black Republic,” the rise of “negroes emancipating themselves from the vilest slavery, and at once filling the relations of society, enacting laws, and commanding armies, leaving slavery’s barbarism behind.”³³ (These cosmopolitans were not guilty of the later charge that Europeans failed to recognize the barbarism of their own modernity.³⁴)

32. Cited in Saine, *Black Bread—White Bread*, 292. There were many such comparisons to barbarism and cannibalism at the time, documented by Saine, who gives repeated evidence that the masses were not included in German liberal affirmations of the revolutionary French Republic. *Volk* is simply not a positive category in eighteenth-century German thought. While not mentioning Hegel as one of the readers of *Minerva*, Saine underlines the importance of this journal, and specifically the reports by Oelsner (whom we know Hegel met in Berne): “One must in fact seriously weigh the possibility that it was the lengthy and detailed dispatches by Oelsner and the young ‘Freiheitssoldat’ (an anonymous soldier for freedom) in the *Minerva*—without a doubt the most influential and widely read journal dealing with contemporary affairs—which more than anything else influenced the German liberals’ view of the revolution at this stage [August 1792]” (*Black Bread—White Bread*, 361).

33. Rainsford, *Historical Account*, x–xi. Rainsford is making the contrast too strong, as Haiti clearly had its own Revolutionary Terror.

34. See the discussion of this charge in Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*.

Sibylle Fischer is right to observe that by breaking off his discussion of the master-slave dialectic *before* the slave rebels, Hegel invites readers of the *Phenomenology* (including his own contemporaries) to “fill in the sketchy transition,” and that this invitation has led over the years to “some of the most profound disagreements in the Hegel literature.”³⁵ Silence has the power of eliciting conjecture, and as the figure is Hegel, whose authority is beyond question, we are quick to presume an authorial reason for this silence.³⁶ Yet the simplest answer may be the most adequate.

In the Jena years, Hegel was feeling anything but the great figure we now take him to be. When he completed the *Phenomenology*, he was only thirty-six, and his life was in shambles. Terry Pinkard’s recent biography describes Hegel’s existential destitution: “With no money, no real paying job, and a child by a woman who was married to someone who had recently abandoned her [Hegel’s landlord!], Hegel’s situation now became completely and totally desperate.”³⁷ Such a man was not likely to include in his first major publication explicit references to Haiti that would be appreciated by neither the

35. Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 28. As a contrast to my own interpretation of Hegel as an admirer of the slave revolution, she refers to Judith Butler’s inquiry into this silence, that concludes Hegel’s resolution of the dialectic was “dystopic,” analogous to Foucault’s view, “according to which subjects cannot, in the strict sense, be liberated from oppression, since they come into existence only as effects of just that oppression” (*Modernity Disavowed*, 28). Butler is not arguing for historical intent; her textual interpretation is consciously mediated by the present—as is mine from a different critical-theoretical perspective. While differing in method, as far as the politics of our work is concerned, Butler and I are not as opposed in our “ideological commitments” (*Modernity Disavowed*, 28) as it might appear.

36. Fischer interprets Hegel’s silence psychoanalytically: “This, it strikes me, is the story of ‘Hegel and Haiti.’ It is a story of deep ambivalence, probably fascination, probably fear, and ultimately disavowal” (*Modernity Disavowed*, 32).

37. Pinkard, *Hegel*, 230. “In 1806, Goethe finally managed to get Hegel a salary of 100 Thalers [an amount made famous by Kant’s example in *The Critique of Pure Reason*!], but this “amounted to little more than an honorarium” (*Hegel*, 223). Hegel, after attaining bourgeois respectability through an acceptable marriage, ultimately took financial responsibility for his illegitimate son, Ludwig, whom he encouraged when a young man to join the Dutch merchant marines. Ludwig died in southeast Asia in 1831, the same year as Hegel.

present German authorities, nor Napoleon who was responsible for Toussaint L'Overture's recent death and was just then invading Hegel's city. The aspiring philosopher, who was staking out as his life's work the task of grasping in philosophy the historical events of the age, was not about to get himself arrested.³⁸

French soldiers in Jena ransacked the house where Hegel was staying: "Knaves have, to be sure, messed up my papers like lottery tickets."³⁹ To leave Jena, he seized the only job opportunity his friends could find him, and moved to Bamberg to edit a daily political newspaper, the *Bamberger Zeitung*, that was sympathetic to Napoleon in its outlook.⁴⁰ There are thus multiple, quite mundane reasons for Hegel's silence, from fear of political repercussions, to the impact of Napoleon's victory, to the hazards of moving and personal uprootings. There is cause to wonder about the fate of missing evidence—the "mere history" that was discarded from the end of the 1803 *System der Sittlichkeit*;⁴¹ the last page(s) of the final fragment 22 that are missing from the 1803–4 Jena System⁴²—as well as the motives of Hegel's posthumous editors in making the official selection of his works.⁴³ But there is no doubt that Hegel and Haiti belong together.

38. He was dazzled to see Napoleon—"this world-soul"—who rode into Jena the day before the battle (October 1806): "It is indeed a wonderful sensation to see such an individual, who, concentrated here at a single point, astride a horse, reaches out over the world and masters it . . . this extraordinary man, whom it is impossible not to admire" (Hegel's letter to Niethammer, cited in Pinkard, *Hegel*, 228). But as Pinkard notes, it is mythical to make too much of this now legendary meeting, as the *Phenomenology* had already been written, and as Hegel also experienced the horrors of the battle: "nobody has imagined war as we have seen it" (cited in Pinkard, *Hegel*, 230)

39. Cited in Pinkard, *Hegel*, 228.

40. Pinkard, *Hegel*, 242–43. Hegel wrote in positive anticipation, "I pursue world events with curiosity"; he hoped to bring the newspaper to the level of the French press, while maintaining the "pedantry and impartiality in news reports that above all the Germans demand."

41. According to its early editor (Rudolf Haym) the lecture manuscript from which this text was published (in 1857), degenerated into "mere history," and it is at least conceivable that this history, ignored by Haym, bore on events in Saint-Domingue. See "Hegel and Haiti," 53n91.

42. See "Hegel and Haiti," 52n90.

43. See "Hegel and Haiti," 49n82.