

HEGEL **and  
the**

F R E E D O M

**of** M O D E R N S

DOMENICO LOSURDO

## **HEGEL AND THE FREEDOM OF MODERNS**

Post-Contemporary Interventions

Series editors

Stanley Fish and Fredric Jameson

**H E G E L   A N D**

Domenico Losurdo

**T H E   F R E E D O M**

*Translated from the Italian by Marella and Jon Morris*

**O F   M O D E R N S**

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To the  
Istituto Italiano per gli  
Studi Filosofici  
and to its president,  
Gerardo Marotta



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## TRANSLATORS' NOTE

Professor Losurdo most often cites texts directly from their original language, occasionally modifying the Italian translations. For this reason, we have translated the majority of the non-English citations directly from the Italian, though at times the standard translations have been used, consulted, or altered.

Several of Hegel's English language translators have appended useful glossaries to the works we consulted: among them *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Trans. H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; *The Encyclopedia of Logic*. Trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991; and *The Philosophy of History*. Trans. J. Sibree. New York: Dover, 1956. Michael Inwood's *A Hegel Dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992 has also been helpful.

Many of the numerous texts cited by Professor Losurdo are now available online in the original English or in English translation. Two useful websites have proved to be [www.constitution.org](http://www.constitution.org) and [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org).

Full references can be found in the Bibliography.

Finally, we would like to thank Professor Losurdo for his constant assistance and cooperation, which has been greatly appreciated.



## HEGEL SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

- A* Anmerkung. (Annotation)  
*AL* Vorlesungsnotizen. (Lesson Notes)  
*B* Briefe von und an Hegel. Ed. J. Hoffmeister and F. Nicolin (Hamburg, 1969–81)  
*B.Schr.* Berliner Schriften. Ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg, 1956)  
*H.B.* Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen. Ed. F. Nicolin (Hamburg, 1970)  
*mat.* Materialien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie. Ed. M. Riedel (Frankfurt, 1975)  
*ph.g.* Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte. Ed. G. Lason (Leipzig, 1930)  
*rph.I* Die Philosophie des Rechts: Die Mitschriften Wannemann (Heidelberg 1817–18) and Homeyer (Berlin 1818–19). Ed. K.-H. Ilting (Stuttgart, 1983); and Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft. Ed. C. Becker et al. (Hamburg: Hegel-Archiv, 1983)  
*rph.III* Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819–20 in einer Nachschrift. Ed. D. Henrich (Frankfurt: n. p. 1983)  
*v.g.* Die Vernunft in der Geschichte. Ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg, 1955)  
*v.rph.* Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie. Ed. K.-H. Ilting (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1973–74)  
*W* Werke in zwanzig Bänden. Ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt, 1969–79)  
*z* Zusatz. (Addition)



## PREFACE TO THE ITALIAN EDITION

The editions of Hegel's works most frequently cited are abbreviated as follows: *W* = *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, edited by E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: n. p., 1969–79); *ph.g.* = *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, edited by G. Lasson (Leipzig: n. p., 1930); *v.g.* = *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, edited by J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: n. p., 1955); *B.schr.* = *Berliner Schriften*, edited by J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: n. p., 1956); *B* = *Briefe von und an Hegel*, edited by J. Hoffmeister and F. Nicolin (Hamburg: n. p., 1969–81); *v.rph.* = *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie*, edited by K.-H. Ilting (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: n. p., 1973–74); *rph.III* = *Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819–20 in einer Nachschrift*, edited by D. Henrich (Frankfurt: n. p., 1983). As for the lecture course on the philosophy of right dated 1817–18, there are two editions: one, published by the Hegel-Archiv: *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, edited by C. Becker et al. (Hamburg, 1983); the other is *Die Philosophie des Rechts: Die Mitschriften Wannemann (Heidelberg 1817–18) und Homeyer (Berlin 1818–19)*, edited by K.-H. Ilting (Stuttgart: n. p., 1983). In these last two works, reference is made directly to the paragraph, preceded by the abbreviation *rph.i*. This is true also for the *Encyclopedia*, abbreviated as *Enc.*; and for the *Lectures on Philosophy of Right*, abbreviated as *rph*. The paragraph is occasionally followed by *A* = *Anmerkung* (Annotation), *Z* = *Zusatz* (Addition), *AL* = *Vorlesungsnotizen* (Lesson Notes). When citing Hegel, we have used two additional abbreviations: *H.B.* = *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, edited by G. Nicolin (Hamburg: n. p., 1970); and *mat.* = *Materialen zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*, edited by M. Riedel (Frankfurt: n. p., 1975).

Other abbreviations for Fichte, Kant, Marx, Engels, Nietzsche, and Rousseau are indicated throughout.

For Hegel, we have freely consulted and used the following Italian

translations: *Lineamenti di filosofia del diritto*. Trans. F. Messineo (the annotated manuscripts, the lesson notes, are edited by A. Plebe) (Bari: n. p., 1954); *Lineamenti di filosofia del diritto*. Trans. G. Marini (Rome-Bari: n. p., 1987); *Fenomenologia dello spirito*. Trans. E. de Negri (Florence: n. p., 1963); *La scienza della logica*. Trans. A. Moni. Ed. C. Cesa (Rome-Bari: n. p., 1974); *Enciclopedia delle scienze filosofiche in compendio*. Trans. B. Croce (Bari: n. p., 1951); and *Enciclopedia delle scienze filosofiche in compendio*. Vol. I. *La scienza della logica*. Ed. V. Verra (Turin: n. p., 1981) (this edition includes also the translation of the *Additions* and prefaces to the different editions of the work); *Lezioni sulla filosofia della storia*. Trans. G. Calogero and C. Fatta (Florence: n. p., 1963); *Lezioni sulla storia della filosofia*. Trans. E. Codignola and G. Sanna (Florence: n. p., 1973); *Scritti politici*. Ed. C. Cesa (Turin: n. p., 1974); *La scuola e l'educazione. Discorsi e relazioni (Norimberga 1808–1816)*. Trans. L. Sichirollo and A. Burgio (Milan: n. p., 1985); *Le filosofie del diritto. Diritto, proprietà, questione sociale*. Ed. D. Losurdo (Milan: n. p., 1989).

From time to time the translations of Hegel and other authors have been modified without indication. For all of the texts cited, the use of italics has been maintained, eliminated, or modified in order to emphasize various points.

Finally, some clarification of the arrangement and composition of the present work.

The first ten chapters consist of reworked, expanded, and rearranged texts that have appeared in other books, collections, or journals. In particular, chapters I through VI are taken from *Hegel, Marx e la tradizione liberale: Libertà, uguaglianza, Stato*, published by Editori Riuniti in 1988. Chapters VII through X are reworkings of essays previously published in the following:

“Diritto e violenza: Hegel, il Notrecht e la tradizione liberale.” *Hermeuticologica* 4 (1985): 111–36.

“Zwischen Rousseau und Constant: Hegel und die Freiheit der Modernen.” In *Rousseau, die Revolution und der junge Hegel*. Ed. H. F. Fulda and R. P. Horstmann (Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 1991), 302–30.

“Scuola, Stato e professione in Hegel.” In G. W. F. Hegel, *La scuola e l'educazione: Discorsi e relazioni*. Ed. L. Sichirollo and A. Burgio (Milan: Angeli, 1985).

“Moralisches Motiv und Primat der Politik.” In K. O. Apel and R. Pozzo, eds. *Zur Rekonstruktion der praktischen Philosophie. Gedenkschrift für Karl-Heinz Ilting* (Stuttgart: Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 1990). This appeared also, in an ex-

panded version, with the title of "Tension morale et primauté de la politique," *Actuel Marx* 10 (1991).

The three final chapters have never been previously published, even though chapter XIII has borrowed in part from an essay entitled "Libéralisme, conservatisme et philosophie classique allemande (1789–1848)." In *Les trois idéologies*. Ed. E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein (Paris: in press).

I would like to thank the editors and publishers for kindly granting permission to republish the above essays.



# **ONE**

A Liberal, Secret Hegel?



# I

## Searching for the “Authentic” Hegel

### 1. Censorship and Self-Censorship

In 1766, Immanuel Kant confessed in a letter: “Indeed I believe, with the firmest conviction and the utmost satisfaction, many things that I will never have the courage to say, but I will never say anything I do not believe.” At the time, Kant’s native Prussia was ruled by Friedrich II, an interlocutor and at times even a friend of the major representatives of the French Enlightenment, a king who flaunted his tolerance, at least with regard to religion and that which did not pose a threat to the governmental machine. Almost thirty years later, in 1794, the times are much more dramatic: Friedrich II has died, the restlessness caused by the French Revolution even on this side of the Rhine has made Prussian censorship particularly severe, and the authorities have become intolerant even on religious matters. On this occasion, Kant writes another letter to express his feelings and thoughts: yes, authorities can forbid him from “fully revealing his principles,” but that is—he declares—“what I have been doing thus far (and I do not regret it in the least).”<sup>1</sup>

We do not have such explicit letters from Hegel. Yet, we do have several meaningful testimonies, elements, and facts. It is after the publication of the “complete edition of his works, especially his lectures” that Hegel has “an enormous impact:” this remark, by a young Friedrich Engels, is not unique.<sup>2</sup> Two years earlier, commenting on the publication of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Johann K. F. Rosenkranz foresees that they will end up reinforcing the “hatred against Hegel’s philosophy.”<sup>3</sup> While Hegel was still alive, his contemporaries noticed that in the *Lectures* he used a particularly bold and spirited language, and for this reason they went to great lengths to obtain them, even after they had been collected and printed in a volume. Sometimes they would go so far as to contact

Hegel himself, who was very accessible and open about it, and who did not disclaim in any way the paternity of the lectures which his students transcribed and circulated even outside academia and sometimes even outside Germany.<sup>4</sup> Reading one of those transcriptions, we stumble upon a revealing passage: "From France, the Enlightenment moved to Germany, where it gave birth to a new world of ideas. Its principles were interpreted more deeply. Yet, these new notions were not so often distinguished publicly from dogma; rather, sacrifices and distortions were made in order to maintain at least the appearance of the recognition of religion, something which is done, after all, even nowadays" (*ph. G.*, 916–17).

Which author or authors is Hegel referring to in this last statement? Or is it to be interpreted as a confession? One thing is certain: the techniques he describes are those of dissimulation and self-censorship, and the use of these techniques, as Hegel emphasizes, has been ongoing and has lasted through to the present. The above-cited passage is not the only one in which Hegel reveals his full awareness that the objective situation demands a careful and cautious style; even Johann Georg Hamann, he points out, was forced to "hide his satire from the royal authorities" (*w*, xi, 334).

And yet, resistance to facing this issue is still strong. One of Hegel's most authoritative scholars, Claudio Cesa, does not seem willing to attribute much importance to the problems of censorship and self-censorship: "German intellectuals and academics could express themselves quite freely, within reason, of course."<sup>5</sup> In reality, even one of Hegel's "moderate" disciples mentions, referring to the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, his own "first struggle against censorship."<sup>6</sup> In a letter to his publisher, written in 1840 (and thus in circumstances that were undoubtedly less threatening than those in Prussia after the Karlsbad resolutions), Heinrich Heine writes: "As I said to you before, in writing this book I kept in mind your problems with censorship, and I have carried out a very conscientious self-censorship."<sup>7</sup> But why go so far, after all?

Let us compare § 127 in the achronatic text to that in the printed text of *Philosophy of Right*. In the former we read: "A man who is starving to death has the absolute right to violate the property of another; he is violating the property of another only in a limited fashion. The right of extreme need (*Notrecht*) does not imply violating the right of another as such: the interest is directed exclusively to a little piece of bread; one does not treat another as a person without rights" (*v.rph.*, IV, 341). In the printed text the figure of the starving man essentially disappears, and there remains only an allusion to the fact that the right of necessity can come "in collision with the rightful property of another," while theft becomes "an injury only to a singular and limited aspect of freedom" (in the printed text Hegel

chooses not to mention at all the “absolute right” that the starving man has to this theft). The effort at self-censorship is evident.

More examples could be produced.<sup>8</sup> Here, however, it might be more useful to clarify the methods of censorship by means of a contrast between the text of the essay *Reformbill*, published in the *Preußische Staatszeitung*, and the text of Hegel’s manuscript. Thanks to the Hoffmeister edition we are able to examine the variations that have taken place: at least in appearance, the discourse centers exclusively upon England; and yet, unlike the original manuscript, the printed text is characterized by a constant effort to tone down the harshness of the criticism. Thus, the “greed” (*Habsucht*) of the dominant British classes and clergy in their oppression of the Irish people becomes mere “selfishness” (*Eigennutz*; *B.schr.*, 478). This term is not only milder, but more importantly, it has abandoned its political significance in favor of a tone that would be better suited to a moral lecture. The “aridity” of the principles that preside over England’s political and social order becomes mere “shallowness” (*wenig Tiefe*; *B.schr.*, 484), and the reference to its “most bizarre, most awkward” aspects (*B.schr.*, 463) disappears. In the same context, “absurdity” becomes “anomaly,” while the “depravity” (*Verdorbenheit*) that characterizes elections and that involves both the active and passive organs of corruption becomes once again “selfishness” (*B.schr.*, 466). If Hegel denounces the “presumptuousness” that British people have about their freedom, the State Gazette is decidedly more anglophile (something which is worth reflecting upon and which will be discussed later) and opts for the term “pride” (*Stolz*) (*B.schr.*, 482). We can even cite a more titillating example: the manuscript denounces the plague of Church tithes in England, titles which serve to finance the parasitical, dissolute life of a clergy that remains irremovable despite the gravity of the scandals it is often involved in. Even a priest who used to stroll “around the streets and on the bridges of his city with two whores from a public brothel, one on each arm” manages to keep his position and his prebend. The State Gazette merely mentions the fact that the priest was accompanied by “an utterly inappropriate party.” Analogously, the “details” pitilessly exposed by Hegel about the odd “relations” of this priest “with his own wife and with one of her lovers, who lived in his house” become the details of the “domestic relations of the man” in question (*B.schr.*, 475).

It is unlikely that these changes were suggested by mere prudishness. At any rate, in other cases the political preoccupation is more evident: the State Gazette completely eliminates the “coarse ignorance of fox hunters and agrarian nobility” denounced in the manuscript (*B.schr.*, 482). It is true that, apparently, the target of the accusation is only England, but the

attack could well be applied to other countries, all the more so since the term used to indicate agrarian nobility, *Landjunker*, was actually more reminiscent of Prussia than of England. And here is yet another statement that the State Gazette completely dismisses: "The prejudice according to which a person is automatically endowed with the necessary intelligence to fulfill a position to which he had been appointed to by birth or through wealth is more rooted and unshakable in England than in any other place" (*B.schr.*, 482). England is cited here as the most sensational—though not as the only—example of the prejudice and arrogance of the nobility, vices from which Prussia itself was not exempt, as Hegel and the State censors knew very well.

At this point, however, there emerges a more general problem, which had already been raised by one of Hegel's disciples: the essay *Reformbill*—Arnold Ruge writes in 1841—"is very truthful and instructive with regard to England," but what is not very clear (partly because Hegel writes in the State Gazette, and behaves like a "diplomat") is whether "British feudal wretchedness" is contrasted to Germany's or the "continent's" (and therefore to "the products of the French Revolution").<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the essay *Reformbill* is permeated by a calculated ambiguity. What is certain is that, when the "positive" that dominates England is contrasted to the "general principles" which "generated the codes and political institutions of the continent" (*B.schr.*, 469), one allusion, if not the first allusion, is clearly to France, though the latter remains unmentioned, concealed within the generic category of "continent" (*B.schr.*, 469). Hegel strongly condemns the ideology centered upon the celebration of the positive and that which is historically handed down, the celebration of what rests upon the "wisdom of ancestors" (*Weisheit der Vorfahren*; *B.schr.*, 466–67). The essay *Reformbill* formulates this condemnation with exclusive reference to England, but Hegel could hardly ignore the fact that such ideology was also present and deeply rooted in Germany and Prussia, as is demonstrated by his harsh criticism of Gustav Hugo and Friedrich Karl von Savigny.

About fifteen years later, Friedrich Wilhelm IV himself will contrast the French model, with its "patched-up and negotiated constitutions," to the British model, whose constitution "is the result not of a piece of paper, but of centuries of work, and an inherited wisdom that has no match" (*infra*, ch. XIII, 2). The *Weisheit der Vorfahren* denounced in the essay *Reformbill* becomes here the *Erbweisheit* (inherited wisdom) celebrated by the King of Prussia. It is true that fifteen years elapse between the two texts. Yet, during the years in which he was still a crown prince shielded from arbitrariness and from the violence of external legislative interventions, Friedrich Wilhelm IV learned to support the idea of historical continuity from Savigny, who on other occasions had been a target of Hegel's attacks,

though Hegel himself, in the *Preußische Staatszeitung*, is careful not to refer to Prussia's current historical school of thought or to its ideology and ideologists.

It is well known that the publication of the second part of Hegel's article *Reformbill* was vetoed by an authoritative intervention that came from on high. Even if one accepts the official motivation that attributes the veto to considerations of opportunity on the level of international politics, there still remains the fact that Hegel was not allowed to express himself freely. And even less freedom of expression was allowed to Eduard Gans, who complained about the fact that the obituary written for his dead teacher and published in the *Preußische Staatszeitung* had been so thoroughly "whitewashed with censorship" that it had become unrecognizable (*H.B.*, 502).

One could add, only partially in jest, that if Hegel had ever admitted that Prussian intellectuals were given "considerable freedom" of expression, it would have been regarded as definitive proof of his enslavement to the Restoration. This goes to show how uncertain understanding of Prussia is at the time: its characteristics are redefined over and over and with little coherence, depending upon whether the goal is to condemn or to defend Hegel. What emerges is the need for a more precise and articulated view of the historical period and milieu. At any rate, the presence of censorship is a fact, as Claudio Cesa acknowledges elsewhere: "In 1847, Bruno Bauer wrote a three-volume work about the "struggles among parties" in Germany between 1842 and 1846. In the chapter dedicated to the *Rheinische Zeitung* he amuses himself by showing how, throughout 1842, when the newspaper had been directed first by Moses Hess and then by Karl Marx, no chance was missed to express faith in the good intention of the Prussian government. Bauer was revealing only half of the truth: we know, and he could not ignore the fact that the editors of the newspaper were fighting an exhausting battle against both censorship and the threat of suppression; expressions of faith in the government had the function of counterbalancing unpleasant news, or critical judgments, and the same can be said about most of the political articles written at the time, at least those that were printed within the boundaries of the German confederation."<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the problem of eluding the watchful eye of the censor was real and present even before 1842, a more urgent situation, when the repressive system was already starting to come undone at the seams. In addition, if one were to take Cesa's statements literally, "the expressions of faith in the government" would constitute a case not so much of self-censorship (the author does not deny his own convictions; rather, he limits himself to formulating them in an obscure and convoluted manner; if anything, he decides against a full expression of his thoughts), but of

authentic double-dealing (the author makes statements that do not correspond in the least to his thoughts, but function only to confuse the censors, and in this way smuggle out content that is not so loyal to the powers that be). Needless to say, this double-dealing would force us to face even more difficult problems, since it would not be enough to decode an obscure or cryptic text, but would require one to separate, on the basis of extremely problematic criteria, the authentic from the spurious.

Paradoxically, despite the overt intention to drastically reduce or even eliminate Hegel's "secret" or "different" dimension, Cesa ends up proposing a methodology that is essentially similar to that of Karl-Heinz Ilting. If the latter ultimately considers the printed text of *Philosophy of Right* as inauthentic and spurious, the former considers as ultimately inauthentic many articles in the *Rheinische Zeitung*. Marx, on the contrary, seems to draw a completely different balance of this journalistic experience. "It is a shame—he writes in a letter to Ruge—that one has to put on a servile attitude, even though it is for the sake of freedom, fighting with pins rather than with clubs." Practicing self-censorship is certainly a painful task: one is forced to "adapt, bend, twist oneself, chisel one's own words."<sup>11</sup> Some of these terms are reminiscent of those used by Hegel to indicate the methods of the German Enlightenment, which strove to conceal disagreements with regard to the dominant religion. Particularly instructive are Marx's and Heine's confessions-descriptions, which suggest a precise interpretation. The point is to decode a text which is inevitably cryptic, not to choose between spurious and authentic material. The category to be used is that of "self-censorship" (explicitly indicated by Heine), not that of double-dealing.

In other words, this favorable recognition of the Prussian Government corresponded in part to the views, if not of Marx himself, then of some on the editorial staff of the *Rheinische Zeitung*. After all, in October 1842, Engels praises Prussia as a "bureaucratic, rationalist State that has become almost pagan," a State that had attacked, "between 1807 and 1812, the vestiges of the Middle Ages," and whose legislation had nevertheless remained "under the influence of the Enlightenment." Certainly, as he writes such things from Switzerland, this young revolutionary does not deny the fact that the Prussia he talks about has by now been defeated by the Christian-feudal Prussia of the "Historical School of Law."<sup>12</sup> It might be interesting to compare this text to a similar one, published only a few months earlier in the *Rheinische Zeitung*. The themes are fundamentally the same: "Our past lies buried under the ruins of pre-Jena Prussia"; "we no longer have to drag the ball-and-chain of the Middle Ages that prevents some States from moving on." Up to this point, the recognition of Prussia is no different from what appears in the uncensored text. Criticism also is

present in the article published in the *Rheinische Zeitung*. To renounce the heritage of Prussia's antifeudal reforms that followed the Jena defeat, to renounce this heritage in the name of the theories supported by the Historical School of Law "would be the most shameful retreat ever carried out," since it "would repudiate in an infamous way the most glorious years of Prussian history"; and if this happened "we would betray our most sacred heritage, we would assassinate our own vital force," etc.<sup>13</sup>

If we were to synthesize all of this by means of a grammatical formula, we could say that self-censorship is indicated by use of the conditional tense, emphasized above. In the text published in Switzerland, Prussian degeneration is considered to have ended ("Reaction in the State began during the last years of the previous monarch").<sup>14</sup> Here, instead, it is considered ongoing. Consequently, the target of the criticism is, on the one hand, the Prussian monarchy as such; and on the other hand, it is the reactionary circles that have already prevailed, though this has not yet been officially recognized. Thus, the change of direction and betrayal, which are denounced and conjugated in the indicative in the text published in Switzerland, are denounced and conjugated in the conditional in the text published in Prussia. But the choice of the conditional, while it is certainly and primarily a means of avoiding censorship, is also influenced by the remaining illusions about the role of Prussia, illusions that were largely present in the Hegelian Left up to the time when Friedrich Wilhelm IV became king, or rather, up to his first governmental actions.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Linguistic Self-Censorship and Theoretical Compromise

The real problem is not whether there is any self-censorship in classic German philosophy, but rather its precise configuration and its real content. In his autobiography, Johann K. F. Rosenkranz reports a revealing debate that took place in 1830. During the anniversary of the *Confessio Augustana*, Friedrich E. D. Schleiermacher released a declaration in which he maintained—writes Rosenkranz—"that a clergyman could recite the Creed of a church even if he is not convinced of its truth," since in that case he would act not as an individual, but as one "in charge" of a "community."<sup>16</sup> The split behavior described here is something that should stir the minds of those who still insist that it is violent to attempt to view a text in light of the time when it was written and published, to consider the practices of censorship, the more or less common habit of dissimulation among intellectuals, etc.

In reality, at least with regard to the historical period we are discussing, no text's meaning is either entirely or automatically self-evident. Rosenkranz agrees with Schleiermacher that what is disparagingly defined as

the “theology of the letter” must be rejected: the contrast is limited to the reinterpretation of doctrinal content and the “letter,” which Schleiermacher seems to identify with the “feeling of dependency,” while Rosenkranz seems to identify it with concept and “speculation.”<sup>17</sup> For Hegel’s disciple, “God who generates Himself as His own son, the tale of paradise, of Prometheus, the image of God as a being who becomes infuriated, who repents, etc., are symbols, allegories, metaphors”; even “Father and Son are representations”; and “whether at the marriage at Cana the guests received more or less wine is completely indifferent and accidental:” “with regard to the tangible side of the representation, not only the image, but also the historical element is to be taken symbolically and allegorically.”<sup>18</sup> Despite his radical position, however, Rosenkranz declares himself in perfect agreement with Christianity, and even seems self-righteous, so much so that he paradoxically reproaches the keepers of orthodoxy, or at least Hegel’s critics, by accusing them of somehow being miscreants:

In the religious convictions of our time, it is undeniable that there is a large, almost universal indifference with regard to the doctrinal contents which were once considered essential; even the theologians themselves are indifferent, both the learned ones and those who pass off as the most devout. If one were to urge most of them to say, truthfully, whether they consider faith in the Trinity as absolutely indispensable to eternal bliss, or whether they believe that the absence of faith leads to damnation, the answer would hardly be a surprise. Even eternal bliss and eternal damnation are expressions that people are not allowed to use among respectable society. . . . One will see that, for them, the dogmas have been reduced considerably, they have been decreased.<sup>19</sup>

Are we witnessing a case of “double-dealing”? No, because Rosenkranz, who is set on a moderate, “central” position—which is why we have used him as an example—sincerely flees atheism and the rejection of Christianity. However, one cannot ignore the fact that the categorical claim of perfect conformity to the orthodox “speculative” reinterpretation of Christianity also meets precise pragmatic needs.

The themes we see in Rosenkranz are already present in Hegel; it is indicative that, in his lectures, Hegel expresses himself with a bold language that could never be found in one of his printed texts. For example, in an *Addition* to the *Encyclopedia* where he discusses the biblical passage about original sin, he does not refer to it as “representation,” but more simply and more brutally as “myth,” and he goes so far as to speak jokingly about the “so-called curse that God is supposed to have cast upon

mankind" (§ 24, z). Certainly, therefore, there is an element of "self-censorship" in the printed text, but is it to the point that one might suggest Hegel's "double-dealing"? Hegel himself, in July 1826, writes a letter to a theologian who is not very far from the orthodox position; nevertheless, the letter constitutes a private document, and thus it can hardly be said to have an "amended" language: "I am a Lutheran, and philosophy has fortified me in my Lutheranism" (B, IV b, 61).

On the other hand, Hegel is very careful not to highlight the abyss which separates his Lutheranism from the official, orthodox one. In the case of the philosophy of religion—and this can be said about Hegel as well as about his disciples, like Rosenkranz—self-censorship is not restricted to the external expression of thought, but one could say that it influences the very process of elaboration and development of thought, which is thereby hampered and prevented from reaching extreme conclusions. By being exercised continuously and forcefully, self-censorship has become somehow interiorized. But the two levels presented here must be kept separate: one thing is the "act of writing," the technical strategy that leads one to tone down some expressions that might sound too irritating to the dominant ideology and power;<sup>20</sup> another thing, in the example of Hegel's philosophy of religion, is the development of a vision according to which the substantial rejection of the doctrinal, "representational" content of Christianity results not in the denunciation of that religion, but in the convinced, sincere adherence to a "speculatively" reinterpreted Christianity.

Linguistic self-censorship is a conscious method that involves only the external formulation of thought; theoretical compromise is, instead, inherent in the development process, and indistinguishable from it. It is true that linguistic self-censorship, too, brings about a compromise with the dominant power and ideology (the toning down, the mitigation, the choice not to emphasize the boldest ideas, all of these objectively constitute a real concession to power, which no longer sees itself confronted by an open or declared opposition), but it is a pragmatic compromise that only pertains to the techniques of thought-expression, not the very theoretical categories and the conceptual apparatus.

Even though it is not easy to determine the line of demarcation, the distinction between the two must always be kept in mind. For this reason we disagree with those who contrast Hegel's problem regarding censorship to the—no matter how legitimate—need to search for an "amended" language intrinsic to the very process of theoretical development.<sup>21</sup> It is not fruitful to contrast these two aspects of the problem.

Certainly, this contrast is favored by the fact that not even Ilting manages to keep the two aspects separated. In fact, after he has distinguished between 1) the "fundamental concept" that seems to result from the lec-

tures and that is truly the authentic one, and 2) the concept pragmatically adapted to the political constellation of the time, Ilting adds that not even the “fundamental concept” . . . is free from concessions,” as would seem to emerge from the anticontractual controversy in which Hegel is constantly embroiled. And such “concessions” would be inevitable, given that even Hegel’s philosophy is but “his time, learned through his thought.”<sup>22</sup> For the moment we shall not introduce the anticontractual controversy, which we will later interpret in a completely different way. For now, we will discuss the most strictly methodological aspect, since we believe it involves a double error.

First of all, the term *Konzessionen* (*v.Rph.*, I, 105) seems to confuse and conflate two phenomena which are qualitatively different: on the one hand, the theoretical compromise dealing with the “authenticity” of the paradigm, and on the other, the pragmatic compromise dictated by the immediate considerations of a specific political situation. Secondly, this pragmatic compromise, as we shall see later, is interpreted not as a translation of the “fundamental concept” (*Grundkonzeption*) into a more or less coded, allusive language, but rather as a rejection of the *Grundkonzeption* itself. Consequently, the “concept” that emerges in the printed text would necessarily be different from that of the *Lectures*, and would not correspond to Hegel’s authentic thought. What is considered to have a “double authenticity” as a result of being a “non-inessential adjustment to the politics of the Restoration” is one of Hegel’s fundamental works: *Philosophy of Right!*<sup>23</sup> If this is a spurious text, why was it written and published? As we have seen, Kant confessed to hiding part of his thought, but he also claimed that he would never say something he did not believe. Did Hegel behave differently? In the letter we mentioned earlier, in which Heine assures his publisher that he has already carried out a scrupulous self-censorship, he also adds: “Rather than have people accuse me of being servile, I would give up writing books altogether.” Hegel, on the other hand, would appear to have made the opposite choice by publishing *Philosophy of Right*, though it did not correspond to his ideas, and though it was even marred by conscious “servility.” Faced with the accusations brought up by Hegel’s liberal critics, sometimes Ilting seems to play the role of a defense attorney, but his defense has actually turned into a most implacable accusation.

Yet, this is not the main point. It may be useful to consider the debate that develops soon after Hegel’s death. On the one hand, young Hegelian scholars accuse their teacher of denying his truest, deepest thought because of a pragmatic need to “adjust” to the powers that be. On the other hand, Marx maintains that Hegel is “incoherent *within his very philoso-*

phy."<sup>24</sup> Even if Hegel had actually resorted "to an adjustment, his disciples need to explain, *beginning with his essential and deepest conscience (Bewußtsein)*, what for Hegel himself has taken the shape of *exoteric conscience*." The young Hegelian scholars who were attributing certain theses to Hegel's opportunistic double-dealing had personally accepted those same theses, and with no double-dealing at all.<sup>25</sup> Thus, thanks to the category of double-dealing, Hegel ended up embodying two successive moments in his disciples' development, as well as two successive moments of interpretation, which his disciples gave to his philosophy. Let us now apply these notions to the current debate on Hegel: even if certain elements and his explicit confession were to prove that he considered *Philosophy of Right* to be a mere pragmatic adjustment to the powers that be, carried out to avoid repression—even in that case we should look for the deepest motives for this not simply in the cowardice of a private man, but first of all in his philosophy itself.

Yet, we must not misunderstand the meaning of Marx's criticism of the young Hegelian scholars: Marx opposes the thesis of a theoretical compromise to that of a "double-dealing," one dictated by moral cowardice and pragmatic considerations; he does not oppose it to the thesis of self-censorship as such. As we have seen, Marx was intimately familiar with the techniques of self-censorship and could describe them with great precision. The attempts, on the part of a sometimes lazy academic culture, to exorcise the disturbing image of a "secret" and "different" Hegel have obscured the considerable differences that exist between Jacques D'Hondt's approaches and those of Ilting. True, D'Hondt, too, seems to dismiss the printed text: "When a thinker cannot publish everything he thinks, it is necessary to search for his true ideas elsewhere, and not in his publications." In the situation Prussia was going through at the time, Hegel "was forced to express his real thoughts with means other than printed texts."<sup>26</sup> From this point of view, it would appear that, while Ilting likens the printed text to the *Lectures*, D'Hondt likens it to the letters, or to private lectures and "hidden sources."<sup>27</sup> And yet, D'Hondt seems to enunciate a completely different methodological criterion when he observes that "his [Hegel's] friends and bright disciples read between the lines of the published text, supplying it with the oral indications which Hegel gives at the same time."<sup>28</sup> Therefore, while Ilting considers the printed text of *Philosophy of Right* to be fundamentally inauthentic, D'Hondt, instead, anticipates the discovery of the various philosophies of right, and seems to be affirming here its essential unity. According to this approach, one should try and read *Philosophy of Right* alongside Eduard Gans' *Additions* (which we now know were gathered from transcriptions of the lec-

tures), and use the achronomatic text, which is relatively freer and uninhibited, not in order to reject the printed text, but in order to offer a more appropriate reinterpretation of it, by reading “between the lines.”

This method of interpretation can already be found in Hegel and his contemporaries. If the printed text of *Philosophy of Right* defines itself in the subtitle as a support for the lectures, in turn the lectures do not contradict the paragraphs of *Philosophy of Right*: indeed, after quoting them word-for-word and often even in their entirety, they proceed to clarify their meaning by using further explanations and examples. Whether the charge of inauthenticity is referred to the lectures, *Philosophy of Right*, or any of the other printed texts, we are nevertheless dealing with a colossal *corpus philosophicum* which, legitimate or not, cannot be left out of consideration when attempting to trace the history of Hegel’s thought. Hegel’s disciples did not question the authenticity of the *Additions* and the *Lectures*. In the same way, they did not question the authenticity of the printed text. Even after the attack which Rudolf Haym and the national-liberals carry out against the so-called “philosopher of the Restoration,” Rosenkranz, Michelet, and Lassalle (who take for granted the authenticity of the *Additions* and the *Lectures*) frantically and forcefully defend the memory and heritage of their teacher. Never do they contemplate the possibility of redeeming him by absolving him of his responsibility for writing and publishing *Philosophy of Right*. D’Hondt argues for and brilliantly applies the methodology of a consistent reading, but he does not remain faithful to it.<sup>29</sup> He declares, in fact: “Hegel proves to be bolder and more energetic in his actions.”<sup>30</sup> Here again the text, particularly the printed text, runs the risk of being accused of inauthenticity, and oddly enough, the reason for this is the opposite of Ilting’s. According to Ilting, *Philosophy of Right* is inauthentic because it is the product of fear, a fear which the hunt for demagogues has instilled in a fundamentally cowardly man who refuses to come forward and openly express his thought. According to D’Hondt, on the other hand, the printed text and even the achronomatic text are less authentic than Hegel’s behavior, that is to say, than his connections with the opposition. Thus, Ilting redeems the philosopher despite the private man’s bargaining and open agreement to conform to power, whereas D’Hondt is more willing to redeem the private man than the philosopher.

### 3. Private Dimension and Philosophical Dimension

The weakness of D’Hondt’s position is evident: after all, the object of the debate is primarily Hegel’s thought, and the critics who denied the philosophical importance of Hegel’s commitment to save some of his disciples

from the clutches of the police have thus gained a favorable position.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, privileging the “boldness” of the private man in comparison to the philosopher contradicts the testimonies of Hegel’s contemporaries, and upturns a traditional topos which is significantly present in the criticism of both the “left” and the “right.” One of the conservative and reactionary critics, Karl Ernst Schubart, declares that “his [Hegel’s] particular side was better than his doctrine, that is, than his universal side” (*Mat.*, I, 264). The “left-wing” disciples proceed in a similar manner, formulating the distinction, later consecrated by Engels, between “method” and “system” (the latter suffers more from the private man’s adjustment to the powers that be). In both cases, despite the diverse and even antithetical value judgments, what is considered most subversive with regard to the socio-political order of the time is the theoretical aspect. The research on the various connections between Hegel and the anti-Restoration movement is valuable, but its usefulness will emerge only once it is systematically applied to the texts. Only in this way will it be possible to counter the objections made by critics like Cesa. Cesa observes with methodological cautiousness that “the parallels between different historical situations are always debatable,” but in the same breath he compares Hegel’s position to Gentile’s, who tried to protect even antifascist disciples and students, but who nevertheless could not be considered an “opponent of Fascism.”<sup>32</sup> The only acceptable significance of this comparison is the invitation to avoid endowing certain aspects of one’s private life with a philosophical or political importance. Paradoxically, this opinion is also shared by Ilting, who reduces the publication of *Philosophy of Right* to a mere episode in Hegel’s life (the fear and surrender of a cowardly character before a dangerous, or seemingly dangerous, situation). These two critics, whose ideas are undeniably very different, do not in fact share the same view with regard to what should be considered authentic or spurious in Hegel’s philosophy, and yet they agree on keeping Hegel’s private and philosophical sides separate.

Although too generic, the invitation to keep the two dimensions separate is undoubtedly sensible. On the one hand, it is absurd today to insist on expunging a text which was published over one hundred and fifty years ago, and whose authenticity was never questioned by Hegel’s intimate friends or his contemporaries. Such a text cannot simply be labeled as a mere incident in Hegel’s private life. On the other hand, it is quite problematic to deny any connection between the private relationship Hegel had with some disciples who were disliked by those in power, and the overall meaning of a theory which after all inspired and thrilled many disciples whose positions were revolutionary or “subversive.” And all the more so since these disciples followed Hegel’s example not primarily as a

“private” man, but as the author of a philosophical system which they interpreted and adopted as an ideological platform for a political battle promoting opposition and even revolution. Hegel’s intervention on behalf of Friedrich Wilhelm Carové, a militant, or rather, a leader of the student movement, the *Burschenschaften*, could in itself constitute an episode linked exclusively to Hegel’s private life.<sup>33</sup> Yet, when we see that Carové makes use of his teacher’s analyses and keywords, and that he quotes him, even explicitly and repeatedly, not in private conversations, but in public works and speeches, in the midst of the political battle, then it becomes difficult to deny the philosophical and political meanings of Hegel’s intervention on Carové’s behalf.<sup>34</sup>

The cautious comparison made by Cesa between the philosophy professor in Berlin at the time of the Restoration and the influential minister of the Fascist regime, Gentile, could have meaning if it were possible to demonstrate that Hegel too had written something similar to the *Origins and Doctrine of Fascism*, something along the lines of *Origins and Doctrine of the Restoration* (possibly signed by Metternich, in the same way that the former was signed by Benito Mussolini). Hegel, instead, wrote *Philosophy of Right*, which after all legitimates constitutional monarchy, using a category which, at the time, was far from the prevailing ideology, and actually quite suspect. Cesa’s methodological caution aside, the comparison enjoyed a remarkable and utterly undeserved popularity. Such a comparison could have meaning if it were possible to demonstrate that, for example, Gentile’s passion when he spoke about the October Revolution was similar to Hegel’s passion when he spoke about the French Revolution. In other words, the comparison could have meaning only on one condition: one must leave the texts, as well as the different peculiarities of the two situations, out of consideration.

#### 4. Hegel . . . a Mason?

Searching for the secret, clandestine connections that are supposed to prove Hegel’s revolutionary or progressive character well beyond his explicit formulations in the philosophical field, D’Hondt comes across some evidence which would seem to link Hegel to the circles and doctrine of the Freemasons. As in many other cases, this research boasts some useful results and suggestions important to the understanding, for example, of the early “poem” *Eleusis*, the title of which is already a reference to the cult of the Eleusinian mysteries characteristic of the Freemasons.<sup>35</sup> To the names and information meticulously provided by D’Hondt, one could perhaps add, without searching through remote or hidden sources, the

explicit title of a public journal which publicly professes loyalty to the Freemasons, and in which Fichte's lectures on the philosophy of Freemasonry are published anonymously.<sup>36</sup> Should we therefore consider Hegel a Mason for all intents and purposes and throughout the development of his thought? It is not our intention to participate in this debate.<sup>37</sup>

It might instead be useful to approach the issue from another perspective: even if we take Hegel's lifelong connection to the Freemasons for granted, we still need to ask ourselves to what extent this can provide a better understanding of his philosophy. Besides Fichte, about whom we have solid evidence, it seems very likely that among the Freemasons were even Schelling, Jacobi, Kotzebue, Schiller, Goethe (just to name a few of Hegel's major contemporaries), that is, authors who, on a cultural and political level, express very different, and sometimes even contrasting, opinions.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the mere fact of belonging to the Freemasons is too vague and generic to provide us with any concrete clarifications on these authors' individual positions. Putting such authors together results in some paradoxical conclusions: D'Hondt, who on another occasion rightly points out that Hegel's condemnation of Kotzebue's murder does not mean that Hegel himself is siding with this "reactionary writer," now describes Hegel's character as liberal and progressive merely because he belonged to the Freemasons, a group which had, among its members, even a "reactionary writer" like Kotzebue.<sup>39</sup> Another example: still on the basis of the fact that they were both Freemasons, we would need to put Hegel and Jacobi on the same level, despite their irreducible contrast on a philosophical plane, and despite Jacobi's good relationship to Fries.<sup>40</sup> Who knows, perhaps if we take this research method to an extreme, we could even come to the conclusion that Fries, too, had connections to the Freemasons, and as a result of that, we could put him side-by-side with his implacable rival, Hegel!

Certainly, the Freemasonry motif serves a polemical function against the old cliché that would label Hegel a philosopher of the Restoration: despite their differences, almost all of the Freemasons—D'Hondt observes—were "reformers"; some in the religious field, some in the political field; not to mention those few "extremists" who were active in both the political and religious fields.<sup>41</sup> Thus, to prove that, even in Berlin, Hegel was a Freemason is to prove that to some extent and manner he was a "reformer." Yet, aside from the extreme vagueness of this claim, in reality the evidence is not convincing because, as D'Hondt himself observes, the Freemasons also inducted Joseph-Marie de Maistre and, in Germany, Karl J. H. Windischmann, who—we wish to point out—had translated de Maistre's work into German, and who still had a good relationship with Hegel, despite the

fact that the latter certainly could not share the position expressed in the *Abendstunden zu St. Petersburg* translated by his friend or acquaintance, de Maistre.<sup>42</sup>

In other words, even if it were possible to prove with incontestable arguments that the mature Hegel was affiliated with the Freemasons, this fact would mean very little or nothing at all to us, unless some concrete historical research was added to this hypothetical affirmation. This research would need to shed light upon the ideological and political orientation of the various lodges and currents; to join one of the Masonic lodges meant—as Fichte observes in Zurich—to become an enemy of all the others.<sup>43</sup> Apparently, German Freemasonry did not have that substantially unitary character that seems to emerge from D'Hondt's pages. On the contrary, a historian, Klaus Epstein, wrote that “the role of Freemasonry in the history of German Conservatism was very ambiguous” (there were some currents that were connected “not only in spirit, but also in their praxis to the conservative defenders of German society”). Epstein also spoke of an “involution of ‘enlightened’ Freemasonry as a result of ‘obscurantism.’”<sup>44</sup> Similar claims could be made also with regard to France, where “an aristocratic Freemasonry, which hid in the shadow of the throne,” was present and “nearly official.” Louis XVI himself was quite probably a Freemason, and at any rate, on the whole Freemasonry was such a varied movement that de Maistre was able to conceive the plan to create, within it, “a secret general staff that would turn Freemasons into a sort of papal army in the service of a universal theocracy.”<sup>45</sup>

The problem we have raised seems to be taken into consideration, though only briefly, by D'Hondt when he observes that the mysteriosophistic attraction of Freemasonry could lure those “who came to seek the revelation of some secret: the demon of thaumaturgism, of magic, of alchemy led them into a society made up also of many enemies of charlatanry. Clearly, however, this remains secondary.”<sup>46</sup> The reference seems to be to the Rosicrucians, at the center of which were precisely the practices mentioned above. Yet, we are not in the presence of some bizarre individual, but of an organized force which—observes Epstein—plays “an important role in the campaign of the conservatives against the Enlightenment,” and, in the religious, political, and social struggles of the time, constitutes the bastion of conservatism.<sup>47</sup> The fact is that D'Hondt seems essentially to consider “secret” a synonym for progressive and, to some extent, for subversive: “People who hide have renounced acceptance from others when they show themselves openly; they are heretics, nonconformists, enemies of the existing order.”<sup>48</sup> Things, however, are quite different, or at least much more complex: the conservatives resort to the

same weapons used by the enemies of the established order, and they engaged themselves in a sort of “imitation” even with regard to secret societies, which did not remain a monopoly of the reforming, revolutionary movement, as we can see in the example of the Rosicrucians.<sup>49</sup> Even in the most progressive lodges, like the one that received Fichte when the latter was accused of atheism, secrecy is not at all a synonym for deception and opposition to power: in Berlin, Fichte observes, “Freemasons” are anything but suspicious, and their well-known chief is “highly esteemed” by King Friedrich Wilhelm III.<sup>50</sup>

It should be added that Hegel’s possible affiliation with Freemasonry does not seem to have left any trace either in his correspondence or even in the debates of the time. No traces can be found in the public debate or in the private discourse that emerges from letters, diaries, or more or less confidential conversations. For example, the Freemasons honor Goethe with poems and other tokens of esteem.<sup>51</sup> And the shadow of Freemasonry still looms over Fichte even after the latter has broken with the organization. In 1806, Friedrich Schlegel, who was well aware of the break which had occurred six years earlier, still relates Fichte’s “anti-Christian” position to “Freemasonry.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, to the very end, Fichte is suspected of drawing largely from the “most secret doctrines” of Freemasonry. One who harbors this suspicion besides Schlegel is Franz X. B. von Baader—Varnhagen von Ense writes in 1811, many years after Fichte’s connection with Freemasonry has ended.<sup>53</sup> The debate even has a public significance, as Schleiermacher writes that “Freemasonry is always on the tip of [Fichte’s] tongue, though he never openly utters the word.”<sup>54</sup> According to D’Hondt, Hegel’s first connection to Freemasonry supposedly dates back to his stay in Berne. What is certain is that, in 1793, Fichte becomes a member of the Freemasons in Zurich, less than sixty-five miles from Berne, still in the German-speaking part of Switzerland.<sup>55</sup> Yet, the two philosophers do not seem to notice their almost contemporaneous affiliation or membership, despite Hegel’s eager interest in Fichte, who was older than him and already famous at the time.<sup>56</sup> Finally, not even during the harsh debate that followed the publication of *Philosophy of Right* was Hegel accused or suspected of being a Freemason, even though such accusations had become quite common, and all the more so since those who had accused Fichte of being a Freemason were the same people who engaged most passionately in the controversy against Hegel.

Clearly, none of this excludes the possibility that Hegel might ultimately have been a Freemason, and not only in Berne, but in Berlin, as well. At any rate, a central question still remains unanswered: how productive can it be, on a historical and interpretative level, to formulate a

hypothesis in such generic terms, a hypothesis which sheds no light on Hegel's position (German Freemasonry offered very different options) or on the debate that surrounded that position at the time?

## 5. Esoteric and Exoteric History

We seem to foresee a danger: that of contrasting a sort of esoteric history to an exoteric one. To give an example, according to official documents, Hegel, Jacobi, and Kotzebue appear to hold different positions. Yet, according to "secret" documents, all three are members of an organization whose internal ramifications and oppositions—that is to say, its history and configuration—remain mysterious. As a result, Freemasonry appears to be an essentially homogeneous phenomenon. Rather than serving exoteric history, esoteric history takes its place (through the discovery of hidden or secret sources and documents), and runs the risk of becoming merely sensational. Rather than a reconstruction of the political and social history of German Freemasonry, where we could possibly place Hegel, this is a sort of game of associations: one name draws another, or a keyword takes us from one name to another, until we stumble upon Hegel's. And yet, our knowledge of the concrete history of Freemasonry and its various ramifications remains quite limited.

Let us go back to *Eleusis*, with particular reference to a line that extols a "tie (*Bund*) sealed by no oath" (*B*, I, 38): does not this refute the hypothesis of Hegel's affiliation to Freemasonry? No, since there are Masonic currents which protest against the use of oaths during the initiation ceremony (and indeed, anything can be found in Freemasonry).<sup>57</sup> However, a different cultural line can be followed to explain the one from *Eleusis*. One needs only consider Kant's harsh criticism of oaths in public documents: he considered them to be "instruments to extort truthfulness" and even forms of "*tortura spiritualis*."<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, D'Hondt seems to prefer the esoteric history of Masonic gatherings to exoteric history. Besides, contrary to D'Hondt's intentions, the most progressive side of Hegel emerges from exoteric history, not from esoteric history. One needs only think that Kant's position on oaths (a position regarded as a hypocritical and convenient veil used by revolutionary and subversive intellectuals to conceal their ideas and intrigues) is harshly opposed by Christian Friedrich Nicolai, who was personally affiliated with Freemasonry.<sup>59</sup>

An esoteric history stemming from mysterious ties which are kept secret from the outside world is the view proposed by Fichte's anti-Masonic critics, who accused the philosopher of drawing from the "most secret doctrines" of Freemasonry. However, in reconstructing the history of