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Following Hegel’s Sovereign Beast: An Excursus on the Right of Heroes

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Abstract: In *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida addresses an association that is as paradoxical as it is common. On the one hand, it seems as if the sovereign is, or at least should be, the furthest from the beast. And yet, as soon as we consult the various archives of political mythology—myth, theology, philosophy, art, *etc.*—we find them together, inseparable despite their distance. The seminar itself is a continuation of his previous explorations of the host concepts and figures that populate the political and philosophical history of sovereignty. The course takes him through a series of texts that stretches from Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau, to Freud, Heidegger, Lacan and Schmitt, among others, but his engagement with Hegel is limited. The few times that Hegel’s name does appear, it is almost exclusively a reference or aside within other more substantial engagements (Lacan and Heidegger, in particular). This absence is at least somewhat curious given the extent of Derrida’s previous engagements with Hegel’s corpus. I am not suggesting that this absence constitutes some essential oversight; rather, it is an opportunity to set out on an excursion from the course of *The Beast and the Sovereign* without leaving its territory. After all, Hegel also has an account of the origins of law. He, too, has a character that is set apart by his (almost) animal quality. This figure arrives on stage before history begins. His role—and indeed his “right”—is to found the most basic elements of the state. We are told that his “right” is absolute. He is no Lord. He is not driven by a desire for the recognition of the other. However, who confers this “absolute” right? If his actions are not bound by any measure or proportion, how do we distinguish between the hero and the criminal?

Keywords: Derrida; Hegel; heroes; violence; sovereign

1. Introduction

In *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida addresses an association that is as paradoxical as it is common. On the one hand, it seems as if the sovereign is, or at least should be, the furthest from the beast. Any system for measuring, ordering, and ranking living beings would clearly mark this distance. And yet, as soon as we consult the various archives of political mythology—myth, theology, philosophy, art, *etc.*—we find them together, inseparable despite their distance. The seminar itself is a continuation of his previous explorations of the host concepts and figures that populate the political and philosophical history of sovereignty.¹ The primary aim was

above all to explore the “logics” organizing both the submission of the beast [and the living being] to political sovereignty, and an irresistible and overloaded analogy between a beast and a sovereign supposed to share a space of some exteriority with respect to “law” and “right” (outside the law: above the law: origin and foundation of the law) ([1], p. xiii).

Following this aim, he goes on to interrogate a number of articulations of this paradoxical coupling. The course takes him through a series of texts that stretches from Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau, to Freud, Heidegger, Lacan and Schmitt, among others, but his engagement with Hegel is limited. The few times that Hegel’s name does appear, it is almost exclusively a reference or aside within other more substantial engagements (Lacan and Heidegger, in particular). This absence is at least somewhat curious given the extent of Derrida’s previous engagements with Hegel’s corpus. I am not suggesting that this absence constitutes some essential oversight; rather, it is an opportunity to set out on an excursion from the course of *The Beast and the Sovereign* without leaving its territory.

After all, Hegel also has an account of the origins of law. He, too, has a character that is set apart by an “almost animal quality” ([2], p. 86). This figure arrives on stage before history begins and, as he is surrounded by savages and barbarians (figures characterized by the childlike stupidity of “sense certainty”), he marks the first moment with an act of violence that is without measure or proportion. He is no Lord. He is not driven by a desire for the recognition of the other.² He is the hero, and his role is to found the most basic elements of the state. It does not matter “whether the form in which it is actualized appears as divine legislation of a beneficial kind, or as violence [*Gewalt*] and wrong” ([3], p. 376, Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*). His right is absolute. However, does this mean that we are simply left with another version of the right of the strongest? Such a simplistic account would pose a problem

¹ The title of the seminar in the yearbook for the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) clearly marks it as a continuation: “Questions de responsabilité (IX. La bête et le souverain)” ([1], p. xiv).

² Despite the similarities between the “right of heroes” and the struggle for recognition that occurs in the relationship of lordship and servitude (mentioned only once in the *Philosophy of Right* in §57 and gone over in detail in both the *Phenomenology*, 178–196 and the *Encyclopedia*, §430–436), there are distinctions. While both occur prior to the foundation of the State, the descriptions given in both the *Philosophy of Right* (see, §93, 350; as well as, §70, 150 and in the *Encyclopedia* §432) and in the *Introduction to the Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* suggest that the “hero” or “great man” precedes the struggle for recognition ([2], pp. 68–93). The distinction between the hero and the struggle for recognition is quite clear. In the struggle, each is motivated by the desire for the recognition of the other. The master–slave relationship begins with struggle to the death in which one party submits. If one of the two dies the moment fails. The hero does not desire the recognition of the uncivilized. He forces them to submit to his will. The moment does not fail with death of the uncivilized. Rather, their deaths clear the ground for the foundations of the state.

within a system of speculative dialectics, as it would mean that history begins with an *arbitrary* act of coercion (which would, of course, entail a dialectical license to respond on the side of the weak). Hegel clearly requires more of this moment. He maintains that the hero's acts are a response. They are acts of vengeance and they constitute a necessary lesson in the course of Spirit. But, even if this initial set-up (*i.e.*, Hegel's account of the state of nature) is accepted, how can Hegel be sure of the hero's identity? After all, what is it that sets the hero apart from the criminal? Both use coercion as the means to enforce their will. Both are—in Hegel's account—pathological. Thus is the difference one of degree? Such a reading would simply entail that the hero can only be read retrospectively. All that would be required to chart the course of *Spirit* through history is to catalog monuments (while being careful to avoid looking too closely into unmarked graves). However, this just transfers the problem of arbitrariness, as there are always contradictions between historical accounts. Thus it seems that as soon as we begin to follow the course of the hero, we find the philosopher. Each vouches for the other. Are they the same?

In *Glas*—Derrida's most extensive engagement with Hegel and the *Philosophy of Right*—the focus is on sexual difference and the place of the family in the development of the state. Our excursion into Hegel's text proceeds by taking an alternate, yet complimentary, course. The point of entry in this essay is distinct from Derrida's, but the concern is the same: the ethical implications of the series of *aporias* and disappearances within Hegel's text.³ By following Derrida's approach to Hegel's text, we will attempt to raise the question of ethics by practicing an ethics of reading. We will closely follow the details of this moment by quoting the text and focusing our attention on its most difficult moments without losing ourselves in the reassurances of the dialectic. The aim here is to try to force the readers out of the slumber of abstract principles and bring their attention to the lived practices that are necessitated by those principles. Hegel—as the philosopher of the negative *par excellence*—includes these moments within his account. He is not afraid to tarry under the shadow of the cross, but is this

³ In *Glas*, Derrida exposes this pattern of interruption within the logic of identity by tracing the course of the “remain(s)” ([3], p. 252). The place of the “remain(s)” within this pattern is doubled as it is, at one and the same time, the infinitesimal remainder of the active process of dialectics and the limit that provokes its repetition. In effect, the “remain(s)” persist within Hegel's text as both the very possibility of dialectics and a perpetual contestation of both the scope and the stakes of “absolute knowledge.” As such, the affinity between the “remain(s)” and *différance* becomes clear as both make “it possible to translate Hegel at that particular point—which is also absolutely decisive point in his discourse—without further notes or specifications” ([4], p. 14). The translation that these quasi-transcendental concepts makes possible is the translation of an unacknowledged limit within Hegel's text. This limit bears with it an ethical question that Hegel's “three-stroke engine” is designed to resolve. And yet, as Derrida notes, “a sensible remain(s) prevents the three-stroke engine from turning over or running smoothly...the remain(s) does nothing but promise a new anniversary” ([3], p. 252). As such, each moment within “objective spirit” is both structured and carried forward by the promise of right without “remain(s),” that is, a right beyond the shadow of doubt, a “reconciliation” that would enable us to “delight in the present,” but this delight has a price. For each speculative “rose,” there must be another objective “cross” ([5], p. 22). The necessity of the cross would of course not be comprehended from *within* the moment—Hegel clearly articulates that “objective spirit” is incomplete, and while this incompleteness can and must be suppressed and constrained by the state, it can only achieve “reconciliation” in “absolute spirit”—but, from the perspective of the philosopher. As such, the question of the “remain(s)” —which is to say, the “particular point” within the text that *différance* translates—contests the judgment of the philosopher in a way that Hegel's text cannot anticipate ([6], pp. 253–254).

confrontation complete? After all, the philosopher speaks of the moment in past tense. He *has* confronted the negative and now he sees the “rose”. He offers us the path to that rose within his text. But, like any guide, he charts our course from the perspective of one who has already reached its end. He draws our attention to the negative and, when we gasp in horror, he politely asks our patience. We must resist the urge to look away and tarry within this moment of “utter dismemberment” ([7], p. 19). In order to follow the course of the dialectic, we must learn to *let go* of that which is *sublated*. We must let it fall to the ground. History, after all, is a slaughter-bench. And so, to read Hegel, we must learn to say good-bye; really “nothing is less surprising for a ‘habituated’ reader of the Hegelian dialectic” ([8]), p. xxxvi). But whose dismemberment are we witnessing? Do these reassurances come to our aid when it is our turn to face the slaughter-bench? If not, why should we find it so easy to find the magical power of dialectics at work in the suffering of others? Perhaps—following Blanchot—we should learn to exercise more caution when reading any “Book which destroys by constructing itself” ([9], p. 73).

2. The Right of Heroes

Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* contains only two relatively brief references to the “right of heroes”. The first occurs in §93 and the second in §350. This lack of detail could lead the reader to believe that the “right of heroes” is of marginal importance to the subject matter at hand, or even that the specifics of the right in question were somehow obvious and required no further elaboration. But, this right belongs to the very first moment of history and thus is far from being confined to the status of mere marginalia within a text which explicitly sets out to detail both “the concept of right and its actualization” ([5], p. 25). With this in mind, how are we to make sense of Hegel’s silence? One could argue that it can be explained by the very structure of the text. That is, in this text Hegel begins with the basic foundations of the state already in place (*i.e.*, marriage and agriculture) and, as a result, a detailed examination of this right is unnecessary. According to this line of thought, Hegel effectively sets this right and the particular moment that it pertains to (the state of nature) outside the bounds of the text. And yet, the boundary between this moment and the text is far from clear. Not only do the parameters set out in §1 necessarily include this moment, but Hegel also introduces this moment directly into the text by making multiple references to it. This makes the absence of a more thorough philosophical analysis of this right and the conditions that render it necessary (the state of nature) all the more puzzling.⁴ Of course—as with all of the moments within the system—it is, in a certain sense,

⁴ Despite its necessity, Hegel formally excludes this moment from the *Philosophy of Right* in §2. But, the rationale that is given for the exclusion of the “starting point” or “coming into being” of right is, in a word, unconvincing. To argue that the “determinate starting point” of right should be excluded from this text because it is the product of the proof that precedes it is, at best, an appeal to formalism (which, ironically, was an accusation that Hegel was very fond of using against Kant). On these grounds, we could perhaps excuse Hegel from including the full proof (in that it pertains to the concept as it is “in itself” and thus falls within the purview of the *Logic*), but to simply argue that both the proof and the result are outside of the science of right is arbitrary. This initial moment directly pertains to the “concept of right and its actualization,” and so cannot be outside the text ([5], p. 25). Nor can Hegel not argue that the logical proof is identical to its “coming into being.” If this was the case, then there is no need for the dialectic of objective spirit and everything would be contained within the ontological dialectic of absolute spirit. So, why is the “product” excluded in this instance? Hegel attempts to justify this exclusion in the addition to §2 by appealing to the dialectical dynamics of the

retained by the folding motions of the *Aufheben*, but the precise details of this right and its corresponding moment are not to be found within the *Philosophy of Right*. All that remains within this text are a few brief, but important references. I emphasize the importance of these references precisely because they refer to the very first moment of objective spirit, to the very moment in which history begins. Thus, despite Hegel's silence in the *Philosophy of Right* this moment is not simply important. It is necessary.

We will begin by examining the two references to the right of heroes within the *Philosophy of Right*, but due to the general lack of detail in this specific text, we will expand our examination and consider Hegel's account of objective spirit in other texts. The *Introduction to the Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* will be particularly significant due to the extended discussion on the historical role of great individuals, but we will also consider the relevant sections of the *Encyclopedia*, the *Phenomenology*, and other texts.

3. The Two References

Hegel's first reference to the "right of heroes" appears in his discussion of coercion and crime in §93:

Because coercion destroys itself in its concept, it has its real expression [*Darstellung*] in the fact that coercion is cancelled [*aufgehoben*] by coercion; it is therefore not only conditionally right but necessary—namely as a *second* coercion which cancels an initial coercion. The violation of a contract through failure to perform what it stipulates or to fulfill rightful duties towards the family or state, whether by action or by default, is an initial coercion, or at least force, in so far as I withhold or withdraw from another person a property which belongs to him or a service which is due him ([5], p. 120).

If we pause here for a moment, an interesting problem begins to suggest itself, namely, if the violation of a contract represents an "initial coercion" then what of the initial imposition of an ethical–legal framework, such as the family or state that would recognize and enforce such contracts? If this constitutes an initial coercion, then the dialectic is essentially abortive in Hegel's own terms, as all individuals would have the inalienable right to resist the coercive force of the hero. Hegel recognizes this potential problem and immediately introduces his solution:

Pedagogical coercion, or coercion directed against savagery and barbarism [*Wildheit und Rohheit*], admittedly looks like a primary coercion rather than one which comes after a primary coercion which has already occurred. But the merely natural will is *in itself* a force directed against the Idea of freedom as that which has being in itself, which must be protected against this uncivilized [*ungebildeten*] will and given

system. In effect, he is simply arguing that any contingency that may result from this missing "starting point" will be rounded off as the concept is objectively realized, or more simply, the end justifies the means. As a transitional confrontation between the concept and nature, it must involve some degree of contingency, some collateral damage, and, contrary to Hegel's assertion, this belongs within the science of right. Hegel tacitly concedes this by referring to this excluded beginning to support arguments that he presents within the text (see [5], pp. 51, 86–88, 120–121, 130, 193–194, 207–209, 224–225, 230–231, 235–236, 243, 250, 375–376). When closely examined, these references—in combination with the corresponding logical "proofs"—present us with a partial image of the very moment that Hegel explicitly excludes from the text.

recognition within it. Either an ethical existence [*Dasein*] has already been posited in the family or state, in which case the natural condition referred to above is an act of violence against it, or there is nothing other than a state of nature, a state governed entirely by force, in which case the Idea sets up a *right of heroes* against it ([5], pp. 120–121).

Here we see that this right is legitimated by the orientation of the “natural will”. This will is presented as “a force directed against the Idea of freedom” and, thus, the “right of heroes” constitutes a defensive reaction to the “natural will” ([5], pp. 120–121).⁵ The fact that it is characterized as a response is significant, because as a secondary coercion it is justified. That is to say, it is justified in the sense that it cancels [*aufgehoben*] the primary coercion and thus objectively actualizes right. This point is elaborated on in the addition to §93:

Within the state, heroes are no longer possible: they occur only in the absence of civilization. The end they pursue is rightful, necessary, and political, and they put it into effect as a cause [*Sache*] of their own. The heroes who founded states and introduced marriage and agriculture admittedly did not do this as their recognized right, and these actions appear as [a product of] their particular will. But as the higher right of the Idea against the state of nature, this coercion employed by heroes is a rightful coercion, for goodness alone can have little effect when confronted with the force of nature ([5], pp. 120–121).

Hegel specifies that this right is limited to a specific context, namely, the absence of civilization and that its legitimacy is grounded in the Idea itself, but what is unique about this particular right, aside from the fact that it initiates the dialectic of objective spirit, is that it requires neither recognition nor proportion. As a result, within the state of nature, the hero seems to possess an unlimited right to arbitrarily employ coercive force against the “natural” or “uncivilized” will of others. Hegel emphasizes this point in §350,

It is the absolute right of the Idea to make its appearance in legal determinations and objective institutions, beginning with marriage and agriculture, whether the form in which it is actualized appears as divine legislation of a beneficial kind, or as violence [*Gewalt*] and wrong. This right is the *right of heroes* to establish states ([5], p. 376).

5 Hegel’s characterization of the “natural will” is reflected in his interpretation of both original sin and the state of nature. In the *Philosophy of Right* this characterization can be found in §18 and the addition to §139. This provides us with Hegel’s general rationale for dismissing much of the content of the myth of the fall, but it provides no specific details and thus it should also be compared to his more extended interpretations, which occur in the addition to §24 of the *Encyclopaedia Logic* and in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (see [10], pp. 104–108, 207–211, 300–304). We should also note that Hegel’s reading of the doctrine of original sin is far from orthodox. This becomes evident when we consider the number of divergences that his reading contains:

1. Man is not created innocent.
2. Sin is not the result of a decision. Nor is it prompted by an external actor.
3. The expulsion is not a punishment. It is an awakening to an ontological reality.
4. Shame is not the product of guilt, but of the awareness of the ontological condition of man.

For a more detailed account of Hegel’s interpretation of the Fall and of his relationship to theology, refer to Cyril O’Reagan’s *The Heterodox Hegel*; and for a consideration of its place within the *Philosophy of Right*, refer to Adriaan Peperzak’s indispensable *Modern Freedom: Hegel’s Legal, Moral, and Political Philosophy*.

As Hegel states, the Idea has an *absolute right* to make its appearance and as such it does not matter whether this appearance takes the form of “divine legislation...or as violence and wrong” ([5], p. 376). At this point, we are confronted by a serious problem, namely, given that the right in question requires neither recognition nor proportion, how is it to be distinguished from wrong? Or more directly, how are we to distinguish between the hero and the criminal? Hegel’s response to this problem is complicated and involves both his interpretation of the context (the state of nature) and the primary actor (the hero).

4. Heroes, Savages and History

There is little to be found on the character of the hero within the *Philosophy of Right*, but Hegel does address the exceptional quality of the hero in his examination of the relationship between the ethical order and virtue. This discussion occurs in §150;

Within a given ethical order whose relations are fully developed and actualized, *virtue in the proper sense* has its place and actuality only in extraordinary circumstances, or where the above relations come into collision. But such *collisions* must be genuine ones, for moral reflection can invent collisions for itself whenever it likes and so give itself a consciousness that something *special* [*Besonderem*] is involved and that *sacrifices* have been made. This is why the form of virtue as such appears more frequently in uncivilized societies and communities, for in such cases, the ethical and its actualization depend more on individual discretion and on the distinctive natural genius of individuals. In this way, the ancients ascribed virtue to Hercules in particular. And since, in the states of antiquity, ethical life had not yet evolved into this free system of self-sufficient development and objectivity, this deficiency had to be made good by the distinctive genius of individuals.—If the theory [*Lehre*] of virtues is not just a theory of duties and thus includes particular aspects of character which are determined by nature, it will therefore be a *natural history of spirit* ([5], pp. 193–194).

Here we see that virtue has its place and actuality in, and only in, a *genuine* collision of ethical duties. The frequency of these instances directly corresponds to the level of ethical development that the system has achieved. The more developed an ethical order is, the less frequent these collisions are. They belong to those moments that are outside, before, or above history and law. That is to say, they occur within the state of nature. While this adds some clarity to the general role that virtue serves within Hegel’s account of historical development, it does not tell us how the hero acquires this virtue. After all, in the state of nature, individuals have no recourse to an ethical system to guide their actions. Right can only be actualized by an individual that displays “virtue”—a “hero”—but how can virtue be known within the moment? How does one act virtuously in the Hegelian sense? Is it an acquired skill or an innate attribute? This is a very specific question because in order to act virtuously the individual must effectively actualize right, and thus the action in question must serve to further the realization of the Idea. In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel describes virtue as being dependent upon “individual discretion” and the “distinctive natural genius of individuals,” but what exactly does this mean ([5], pp. 193–194)? In order to clarify the relationship between the hero and the Idea we must turn to Hegel’s introduction to the *Philosophy of History*.

Within the lectures Hegel provides us with a more thorough description of the specific character of the hero, but this specific description is also more general than his description in the *Philosophy of Right* as here the hero is synonymous with the “great individual of world history” and it seems that these individuals are not strictly confined to the “dull innocence” of the pre-historical world ([5], p. 375). These “great individuals” are unique in that they “embody...a moment of the productive idea itself,” they seize this higher universal and make it their own and thus they become “instruments of the substantial spirit” ([2], pp. 82–84). As such, the justification for their actions does not lie within the prevailing situation,

...for they draw their inspiration from another source, from that hidden spirit whose hour is near but which still lies beneath the surface and seeks to break out without yet having attained an existence in the present. For this spirit, the present world is but a shell which contains the wrong kind of kernel ([2], p. 83).

The fact that heroes do not need to appeal to the current legal or ethical conditions in order to justify their actions immediately raises the question of legitimacy. How are we to be sure that they are working to realize the Idea and not simply satiating their lust for power? To this Hegel replies,

The only true ends are those whose content has been produced by the absolute power of the inner spirit itself in the course of its development; and world-historical individuals are those who have willed and accomplished not just the ends of their own imagination or personal opinions, but only those that were appropriate and necessary. Such individuals know what is necessary and timely, and have an inner vision of what it is ([2], p. 83).

While the ends of all individual agents, as “knowing and thinking beings”, are “interwoven” with those of the universal the ends of heroes are distinct ([2], p. 81). This distinction is due to the degree to which the hero’s particular ends are “interwoven” with those of the Idea. Typically, individuals rationally pursue their particular ends and are not aware that their actions take part in the mediation of the Idea. Heroes are the exception to this norm. They are those “world historical individuals” that have an “inner vision” of what is necessary in their age, they are “the most far-sighted ones among their contemporaries...and whatever they do is right” ([2], pp. 83–84).

Within the hero this connection, this “inner vision” of what is necessary, takes the form of a passion. Retuning to Hegel,

In such individuals, then, that which is necessary in and for itself assumes the form of passion. Great men of this kind admittedly do seem to follow only the dictates of their passions and of their own free will, but the object of their will is universal, and it is this which constitutes their pathos. Passion is simply the energy of their ego, and without this, they could not have accomplished anything. In this respect, the aim of passion and that of the Idea are one and the same; passion is the absolute unity of individual character and the universal. The way in which the spirit in its subjective individuality here coincides exactly with the Idea has an almost animal quality about it ([2], p. 86).

The hero can thus be thought of as a vector, a delivery mechanism for the Idea. He is consumed by the Idea and he serves its will with an *almost* animalistic enthusiasm. Now if we compare the hero to the typical individual, who relates to the Idea through its capacity to rationalize, the hero exists as an inversion, that is, his connection to the Idea is passionate almost to the extent of being animalistic,

which is to say, instinctual or unreflective. Consequently, the ends that the hero pursues are not, strictly speaking, his own; he exists as the instrument of right. This is not to say the hero is totally indistinguishable from right. He is an individual subject and, as such, he has an existence distinct from that of the Idea. For Hegel this existence is inessential or contingent,

Their actions are their entire being, and their whole nature and character are determined by their ruling passion. When their end is attained, they fall aside like empty husks ([2], p. 85).

What is interesting here is the relationship between the composite structure of the hero and his actions. For Hegel, there is no relation and even if there were some form of cross contamination—some subjective interruption—this excess would simply be subsumed within the dialectical folding of the system. It would be carried over from one stage only to be rounded off in the next. This rather puzzling structure leaves us with more questions than answers.⁶

It is clear that Hegel needs to maintain a distance between the hero and the Idea, but this distance is difficult to maintain. The hero is given an unlimited right to employ coercive force—a right that requires no recognition from his contemporaries—and further, he acquires this right instinctively. He brings right into the world with his actions. He lays the most basic foundations of the state. He is the “passionate instrument” of right. And yet, there is a fragment of his will that remains outside of the Idea. This fragment is bound to what Hegel refers to as his husk. The husk is presented as ahistorical, a contingency that true philosophical enquiry would eliminate. But, it is this husk that effectively preserves the purity of reason ([2], p. 28). After all, if the hero were entirely possessed by the Idea, if he had no agency, no particularity, then the products of his actions—the foundations of the state—would be irreconcilably tainted. In fact, it is the composite structure of the hero that enables the philosopher to read his actions. Without this husk, the hero’s actual products could not be rationalized. The hero is thus set apart, in an ontological sense, from his context—the specifics of how he is set apart remains confined to his *almost* animal-like connection to the Idea—and through his inspired

⁶ Other commentators have also found Hegel’s account of the “world historical individual” puzzling. Eric Weil touches upon this issue in his *Hegel and the State* and Ido Geiger produces a unique reading of the hero in relation to Antigone and war in his *The Founding Act of Modern Ethical Life*. Geiger’s account raises a series of very interesting questions, but it does not take into account the distinctions that divide the *Phenomenology* and the *Philosophy of Right* on this point. For instance, Antigone’s claim pertains directly to the family and recognition whereas the hero’s in the *Philosophy of Right* precede both the family and recognition. Nonetheless, Geiger produces an innovative and intriguing interpretation. In *Hegel’s Theory of the Modern State*, Avineri argues that Hegel’s account is contradictory as it seems that, at times, the individual is conscious of its ends, and at others, semi- to totally unconscious ([11], p. 233). Taylor claims that Avineri’s observations are invalid due to the apocryphal nature of his source (*i.e.*, *Reason in History*). But, simply disqualifying a text on the basis of canonical accord, and then reconciling the text on the basis of a historical perspective, renders the argument unconvincing. After all, it is Hegel’s account of the “world historical individual” and the so-called *cunning* of reason that enables his system to introduce the ontological assertion from the greater *Logic*—which Taylor openly objects to—into history and effectively determine the content of “unconscious motivation” and render it totally conscious ([12], pp. 237–238). The hero highlights the troubling circularity of Hegel’s ontological claim. In that, the identity of the hero can only be secured from the position of absolute knowledge and absolute knowledge can only come to be if its very possibility is built into being. In short, the philosopher guarantees the truth of the “seed,” and the “seed” is the very possibility of the philosopher. As Hyppolite notes, the problem here is the very historicity of absolute knowledge ([13], p. 36).

actions he sounds out the hollowness of this context. Figuratively speaking, it is the hero, or rather, reason acting through the hero, that sounds the bell [*klang*] and it is this sound that brings “man” to recognize the “wound” (*i.e.*, the ontological condition of ‘humanity’) that was there all along.⁷ In short, the hero is Hegel’s *deus ex machina*. It is his solution to the problem of the beginning. That is, the problem of setting a self-contained system in motion and demonstrating this system in the court of history.

For Hegel, objective spirit is a court; it is where he can—and indeed must—make the case for his *Logic*. In that, the developmental course of the former must follow the structural determinations of the latter. In order to make this case he must successfully exclude anything that might interrupt his circular system. There must be no real exterior. There can be no limit to thought. The system must be self-contained. If it is not, if there is an exterior, if there is anything beyond the grasp of knowing, then his case fails and Kant’s “thing-in-itself” remains and with it endless doubt. Thus, the case to be made is that the *Logic* is indeed the rationality of the actual ([5], p. 20). In terms of structure, the case could be called a theodicy, but not in the traditional sense. Hegel’s system is onto-theological in the fullest possible sense: there is no external god, no beyond, there is only the unity of existence and the concept, only the Idea, and thus the case is, if anything, an onto-theodicy ([5], p. 26). In order for the case to succeed—that is, in order for it to go beyond the unhappy consciousness of Kantian morality—finite being must contain its own negation. In the objective sphere, this translates into Hegel’s account of the state of nature and the ontological structure of “man”. But, in order to progress from this state and move reason beyond the confines of the “natural will” there must be an exception to the rule. This exception is the hero. The hero simply appears within this pre-historical context because he is necessary on a conceptual level. He is the means through which right is first translated into actuality.

As Hegel clearly articulates, this first act of translation appears as “divine law”,

The proper beginning and original foundation of states has rightly been equated with the introduction of agriculture and of marriage...In the consciousness of the ancients, the introduction of agriculture and of the institutions associated with it were divine acts, and they were accordingly treated with religious veneration. A further consequence, which also occurs in the other estates [this quote is referring to the substantial or immediate estate], is that the substantial character of this estate entails modifications with regard to civil law—especially to the administration of justice—and likewise with regard to education and instruction and also to religion; these modifications do not affect the *substantial content*, but only its *form* and the *development of reflection* ([5], pp. 235–236).

The qualification is important because if the modifications that originate from the foundations of the state affected the substantial content then the rationality of the actual becomes tainted by the vengeance of heroes. That is, this necessary violation of the law—and we must remember that even for Hegel this is vengeance and not punishment—would not be contained within the pre-history of the state. Consequently it would contaminate and compromise the integrity of the law and with it all of ethical life. Hegel is emphatic on this point,

⁷ I add the image of the bell and its sounding [*klang*] to invoke both Derrida’s work in *Glas* and the sounding out that formally ends the “dull innocence” of the flower religions and begins the “earnestness of warring life” and “guilt” that is characteristic of the so-called animal religions ([3], p. 4; [7], p. 420).

The historical origin of judge and lawcourts may have taken the form of a patriarchal relationship, of coercion [*Gewalt*], or of free choice; but this is irrelevant as far as the concept of the thing [*Sache*] is concerned. To regard the introduction of jurisdiction by sovereign princes and governments as merely a matter [*Sache*] of *arbitrary grace and favour*, as Herr von Hailer does [in his *Restoration of Political Science*], is an example of that thoughtlessness which fails to realize that, since legal and political institutions in general are rational in character, they are necessary in and for themselves, and that the form in which they first arose and were introduced has no bearing on a discussion of their rational basis ([5], p. 252).

Again we see Hegel arguing that the manner or form in which law is founded and by which it develops has no effect on its rational basis. In part, this is because the rationality and necessity of the law are ensured by the concept, but this insurance policy is at the very least questionable. This hard and fast distinction between form and content holds within it an implicit argument. Namely, that form is simultaneously a neutral and insufficient means of conveyance for content. Paradoxically form—like its many family members within the Hegelian system (*i.e.*, nature, contingency, particularity, *etc.*)—contains content without containing it, it carries or conveys, it bears the mark, but never the fullness of the meaning.⁸ The truth of this assertion can never be maintained in any particular moment precisely because a moment in isolation is incomplete. It can only be demonstrated as a kind of governing sequence, which can only be verified from the position of absolute knowledge.

This mode of transition can be referred to generally as speculative dialectics, conceptually as *Aufhebung*, and figuratively as the cunning of reason,

Particular interests contend with one another, and some are destroyed in the process. But it is from this very conflict and destruction of particular things that the universal emerges, and it remains unscathed itself. For it is not the universal Idea which enters into opposition, conflict and danger; it keeps itself in the background, untouched and unharmed, and sends forth the particular interests of passion to fight and wear themselves out to in its stead. It is what we may call the cunning of reason that it sets the passions to work in its service, so

⁸ This distinction (*i.e.*, form and content, nature and spirit, *etc.*) is maintained in Hegel's account of cognition and signification:

The distinction between thought and will is simply that between theoretical and practical attitudes. But they are not two separate faculties on the contrary the will is a particular way of thinking—thinking translating itself into existence [*Dasein*], thinking as the drive to give itself existence. This distinction between thought and will can be expressed as follows. When I think of an object [*Gegenstand*], I make it into a thought and deprive it of its sensuous quality; I make it into something which is essentially and immediately mine. For it is only when I think that I am with myself [*bei mir*], and it is only by comprehending it that I can penetrate an object; it then no longer stands opposed to me, and I have deprived it of that quality of its own which it had for itself in opposition to me. Just as Adam says to Eve: 'You are flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone', so does spirit say: 'This is spirit of my spirit, and alien character has disappeared' ([5], p. 35).

This 'disappearance' within cognition is compelling. The fact that it has *disappeared* entails that there was a previous appearance. Of course Hegel will dismiss this appearance as merely superficial, merely form, yet how does it disappear? Does it simply vanish without a trace or could it remain within the system? Could it be that cognition accumulates disappearances? This process of cognition, that is, of cognition as translation and disappearance, is precisely where Derrida's reading disrupts Hegel's text. Derrida effectively interrogates Hegel's text by tracing the repetition of disappearance within Hegel's semiology (see [14]) and his account of love and the family in "ethical life" (see [3]).

that the agents by which it gives itself existence must pay the penalty and suffer the loss. For the latter belong to the phenomenal world, of which part is worthless and part is of positive value ([2], p. 89).

We pause here in order to ask a simple question, specifically, who can make these value determinations? Who can determine between necessity and contingency? It is clear according to Hegel that the philosopher can, but if we question the promise of absolute knowledge, we are left with a series of more or less plausible dialectical explanations for historical events. Hegel continues,

The particular is as a rule inadequate in relation to the universal, and individuals are sacrificed and abandoned as a result ([2], p. 89).

Here again, how are we to determine where the inadequacy lies? Perhaps “individuals are sacrificed and abandoned” because our conception of the universal is inadequate in relation to the particular. That is, perhaps the slaughter-bench is not necessary in itself; perhaps it is rendered or read as necessary by and for the philosopher. After all, if objective spirit is not the realm of the cross, the philosopher cannot “recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present” and begin his dance ([5], p. 22). Returning to the quote,

The Idea pays the tribute which existence and the transient world exact, but it pays it through the passions of individuals rather than out of its own resources. Caesar had to do what was necessary to overthrow the decaying freedom of Rome; he himself met his end in the struggle, but necessity triumphed: in relation to the Idea, freedom was subordinate to the external events ([2], p. 89).

The problem here is that the cunning seems to be more of a convenience. That is, the conceptual necessity for the hero is clear, but the rationality, or even plausibility, of his actuality is very limited. He arrives on the stage without explanation and once there he is still not really there. He shares their finitude, their passionate excesses, but he remains distant. He sees beyond them, perhaps even through them. He is outside of their happiness, at one and the same time driven by an unconscious (even animalistic) desire for right. His actions are acts of vengeance. These acts are not motivated by a desire for recognition nor can they be construed as punitive as they lack any sense of proportionality. And yet this force without measure—which impresses its commands into the consciousness of the uncivilized with such force that it takes the form of divine acts—does not contaminate the substantial content that it produces. Hegel maintains that the means that were employed to realize these institutions are irrelevant. They are conceptually necessary and thus justified. The development of the state continues unabated by the violence that establishes its foundations.

Hegel concedes that the origin of institutions, such as marriage and agriculture—even the origin of legal and political institutions in general—may indeed be acts of coercion, but he insists that these are only transitional forms and they are distinct from the substantial content. Yet, this content can only become actual in and through a series of disappearances. It is dependent upon the very insufficiency of form—upon the emptiness of the husk—so that it can preserve itself. But, how can this separation be maintained if its only guarantee is an infinite series of disappearances?

Hegel’s system needs a hero much like it needs an author, but it can never really offer us either. The hero does enter the stage, but he does not develop within it. He does not develop dialectically. He simply appears as a matter of conceptual necessity. The plot cannot progress without him and so, suddenly, he is there. And yet, he is never *really* there. He is both himself and another: at once *almost*

animal-like in his passions and almost human in his ends. As a result, his actions appear stilted and mechanical. He is a prop, a marionette, but never a subject. The author also never graces us with his presence. We are left with a stage director, a translator and a reader, but never an author. Of course the show—the show being objective spirit—goes on; it must always go on. It cannot stop. Its purpose is, as we have noted, to demonstrate the rationality of the actual. The demonstration hinges on the truth of the first act—the state of nature and heroic vengeance—and yet due to the very insufficiency of the finite it can never be fully verified. Faced with such a fundamental paradox the only possible response is infinite deferral via infinite demonstration: an unending feast.⁹

5. The Philosopher and His Hero

At this point, we will take a step back from our close reading of Hegel's text in order to begin to schematize our course and its possible implications.

5.1. How Does History Begin?

Here we can begin with a simple statement: the beginning of history is heroic vengeance. The components of this beginning are as follows:

[A] The State of Nature: In the representational [*Vorstellung*] thought of Christianity this moment referred to as original sin, but philosophically interpreted it is the primary mode of cognition and it forms the necessary beginning of all consciousness. In this mode of cognition the subject is driven by natural, object-directed desire. It does not recognize its separation from the natural world and because it does not recognize this separation it cannot develop. Seeing as “spirit is to be free and is to be what it is through itself” and that “nature is, for man, only the starting point that he ought to transform” this mode of cognition constitutes an act of violence against the Idea ([16], p. 63). In response the Idea establishes the ‘right of heroes’ ([5], p. 120). At this stage ‘man’ is an unfertile seed.

[B] The Hero: This character also arrives out of conceptual necessity, which is to say, he does not develop dialectically within a given moment or shape. He can be thought of as the materialization of “the divine principle of turning” in that he initiates or makes possible the “return to self” by “giving the wound” ([17], p. 103). He enacts heroic vengeance on the uncivilized and thereby exposes the emptiness of the initial mode of cognition as the executor, or translator of the Idea. He fertilizes the seed.

The products of this moment are marriage and agriculture, which form the essential foundation of the state in the *Philosophy of Right*. Without this foundation there is neither property nor love: there is only the uncivilized and nomadic life of savages ([5], p. 235). Consequently, objective spirit does not begin with the struggle for recognition. This struggle is driven by a desire that does not exist within the natural will, namely, a desire for recognition. This desire is indicative of a later stage, that is, a stage that follows the moment of heroic vengeance.

⁹ For more on the theme of eating and reading in Hegel, refer to Glas and Werner Hamacher's *Pleroma—Reading in Hegel* [3,15].

5.2. Does the State of Nature End?

In a word, no, the state of nature is the initial mode of cognition and, as such, it is not confined to any specific temporal period. Within the boundaries of the state, this mode of cognition takes the form of children and criminals. Each requires “education” in the broad Hegelian sense of the term and it is through this process of education that ethical life both gains and maintains a determined shape. Outside of the state we find uncivilized nations, that is, nations that are not states. These nations lack “the objectivity of possessing a universal and universally valid existence [*Dasein*] for itself and others in (the shape of) laws as determinations of thought” and, therefore they are not recognized ([5], p. 375). Thus, not all wars are wars for recognition. Some wars, that is, wars against uncivilized nations, are wars of vengeance.

5.3. What are the Implications of a Continually Recurring State of Nature?

Due to the nature of Hegel’s system the implications *are* the system in its entirety. That is, the fact that the finite cannot contain the absolute entails that the absolute must be distributed through the totality of possible moments. Thus, any text that attempts to verify the system will have to write out the totality; such a text would be the autobiography of God. This is Hegel’s text. It is a text that demands to be written without end. Here the labor of Hegel converges with that of Borges’s Pierre Menard. As Menard exclaims,

My purpose is merely astonishing...the final term of a theological or metaphysical proof—the world around us, or God, or chance, or universal Forms—is no more final, no more uncommon, than my revealed novel. The sole difference is that philosophers publish pleasant volumes containing the intermediate stages of their work, while I am resolved to suppress those stages of my own ([18], p. 91).

Each is engaged in a process of re-writing: Hegel rewrites God, Menard rewrites Don Quixote; yet what they aim to produce is not a copy, but the truth that the original had failed to fully grasp. Each struggles with a task that is, at least to them, simple: it is after all blatantly evident to the trained eye, and yet it is, at least for the time being, ineffable. Once again Menard captures the essence of their struggle,

The task I have undertaken is not in essence difficult...If I could just be immortal, I could do it ([18], pp. 91–92).

Hegel, as the philosopher, must prove his theory by translating actuality into the text. Yet, as a translator, his work does not belong to the moment. He always arrives too late; he always arrives in the wake of the author. He reads what has been already written and copies it into his book of life. Yet, if we were to ask him who taught him how to read, he would be unable to answer. Perhaps, he is a sign of the end, a product of the penultimate moment, but seeing as he is bound within that moment he is unable to answer us in any definitive way. He does not belong to the now of the moment. He is a stranger to the life of the living. He strives to “forget himself” in order to be able to serve the “truth” of Spirit ([7], p. 45). As such, all that he can tell us is that he was chosen by the Absolute, that he is conceptually necessary, a product of Spirit’s gathering strength. Much like his hero, he simply arrives. And much like his hero, he accomplishes the impossible: he gathers meaning from death. Only the dead can enter his book. Only the dead can be born again in spirit. Only they can be absolved. The

living can only share in the “living feeling” (auto-affection) of absolution by facing death ([19], pp. 250–251).

The act of *facing death* does not only occur in the dialectic of the lord and bondsman; it is not always the meeting of two, each mutually desiring the recognition of the other. Lethal violence is not *always* meaningless, not *always* a failure (indeed if Hegel’s text is to fulfill its function as a demonstration of the truth of the *Logic* it must not fail). In heroic vengeance *meaning* is *taken* from death. To those who bear witness within the moment, they receive this death as divine law, they recognize themselves both as they were (and ought not have been) and as they must become. Philosophically interpreted, this violence—and we must remember that it is violence *without measure*—is licensed by the “right of heroes”. As the philosopher reads this moment, the apparent wrongs become pedagogical coercion, and vengeance becomes an object lesson to the uncivilized. The death of the uncivilized at the hands of the hero founds both marriage and agriculture, but it does this by initiating the turning away. The lethal violence of the hero is the *klang* that awakens “man” from his slumber in the natural world; it is the *klang*, the sound, the blow, that initiates the “divine turning” in which “man” first turns away from “nature” and towards “spirit”. Thus, the first moment of recognition is the recognition of the truth of spirit in the death of another. This mode of self-recognition or auto-affection in the death of another continues outside of the bounds of the historical. The endless return of the natural will in the form of the child, criminal, and barbarian brings with it the very material through which spirit (endlessly) finds and recognizes it-self. The body of the natural will dies for resurrection and is resurrected for death. The task of the philosopher is simply to arrive afterwards and proclaim the necessity of this negation in the course of Spirit.

5.4. Can We Think of Objective Spirit as a Process of Writing?

In the “Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State”, Marx writes,

As the whole point of the exercise is to create an *allegory* to confer on some empirically existent thing or other the *significance* of the realized Idea, it is obvious that these vessels will have fulfilled their function as soon as they have become a determinate incarnation of a moment of the life of the Idea. Hence, the universal appears everywhere as a determinate particular, while the individual never achieves its true universality ([20], p. 99).

If we accept this interpretation and read the *Philosophy of Right* as an allegory then we must also address the question of authorship. That is, if the text is an allegory, if the meaning of the text is concealed behind the explicit figures, then who is writing? According to Hegel the author is the Absolute. His philosophy is merely the interpretative apparatus: the reading machine. As Marx observes, the subjects are “reduced to...*names* of the Idea,” and as names or components they all work to realize the auto-affective desire of the Absolute ([20], p. 67). History is thus always already an allegory written by proxy, yet there are moments when the text goes beyond the limits of allegory and indeed of writing itself. The moment we have selected in this essay is such a moment. In this moment, meaning does not enter the text allegorically—hidden or obscured by a façade—but, directly. The death of the uncivilized occurs as a *writing-out* of the other. This act of *writing-out* explodes [within] the text,

As nature enters that form, so it remains in it, just as a shell starts suddenly towards its zenith and then rests for a moment in it; metal, when heated, does not turn soft like wax, but all at once becomes liquid and remains so—for this phenomenon is the transition into the absolute opposite and so is infinite, and this emergence of the opposite out of infinity or out of its nothingness is a leap. The shape, in its new-born strength, at first exists for itself alone, before it becomes conscious of its relation to another. Just so, the growing individuality has both the delight of the leap in entering a new form and also an enduring pleasure in its new form, until it gradually opens up to the negative, and in its decline too it is sudden and brittle ([21], p. 132; see [3], pp. 106–107].

Heroic vengeance enters the text as a leap out of the text. It enters as what cannot be contained, as a flash, an instant of “unheard, inaudible, deafening speech” ([22], p. 331). The text recoups, it recovers after the instant has passed, finds marriage and agriculture already in place and continues on. The text continues on,

At the same time, in the manner presented above, this life fends off involvement with the negative—for [since what we have so far called positive has in the event turned out to be the negative considered in itself] it confronts the negative as objective and fate, and by consciously conceding to the negative a power and a realm, at the sacrifice of a part of itself, it maintains its own life purified of the negative ([21], p. 133).

In the instant of vengeance—the instant that cannot be written—a sacrifice occurs and through it “life” is “purified of the negative,” but, this “purification” or “living feeling” of the self as it is in itself (auto-affection) can only become complete by stepping through (and thus beyond) determination. The text that remains is thus driven to what it can only interpret as autophagy. It consumes itself. It eats itself in order to feel itself. It cannot see the remain(s). It casts them aside as inessential contingencies or simply evidence of the insufficiency of the finite: the insufficiency of the “word” itself. Hegel’s text is a text is written by and through the sacrifice of the word made flesh, but in order to maintain the purity of this or indeed these (the sacrifices occur in the plural) sacrifices it must—and can never—extend beyond simply writing “death” to an absolute *writing-out*. Hegel’s text must—and cannot—finish its meal. What is left is an endless feast in which “the work of the ‘No’ in its multiple forms behind which reading, and writing, prepare for the advent of a ‘Yes’ both unique and ever reiterated in the circularity where there is no longer any first and last affirmation” ([9], p. 73). What is left is a choice. We can rejoin the feast and follow the dialectic circle towards a future that only ever *sees itself coming*.¹⁰ Or, we can hold off. We can take a step back from the table and the endless clinking of glasses, the endless refrain of “salute” and “adieu.” We can begin to ask precisely what—and *who*—we are saying good-bye to.

6. Hegel’s Beasts and Sovereigns

At this point, the reader might be tempted to ask, why are we following Hegel’s hero? He is, after all, not included in Derrida’s seminar. So what do we have to gain by taking this particular detour? The answer to this question depends on what is being asked. If the focus of the question is why Hegel is not

¹⁰ A mode of futurity that it shares with the *Oroborous*—that miraculous creature that is always open to receiving whatever may appear over the horizon, but in the practice of its openness it finds that once it has sunk its teeth into what initially appeared to it as another, it encounters only itself.

included within the seminar then our task is similar to that of an accountant. We would have to begin by cataloging the inventory of the seminar and then proceeding to evaluate the potential costs and benefits of including Hegel. The conclusions of such a process would be confined to the fit—or lack thereof—between the contents of the seminar and this particular omission. Quite simply, we would be left with two possible conclusions: either Hegel was excluded because there was little to gain by including him, or his absence marks an essential oversight that needs to be addressed. But, what would be the point of this exercise? One could imagine that this approach could conceivably yield some benefit to a reader whose aim is to understand *The Beast and the Sovereign* as a text or situate it within the author's *oeuvre*. But, to my mind, the benefits of such speculative forensics are as limited as they are uninteresting. My aim was not to survey, define or somehow illuminate Derrida's seminar; rather, it was to engage with its problematic via an application of it. As such, the relation it has to the seminar itself is not forensic, but thematic.

What I am following in Hegel's text is the relationship between the beast and the sovereign. While Hegel's hero is not presented—at least explicitly—as a werewolf, his concern is the problem expressed in Plautus' *homo homini lupus*. Namely, how one can account for the relationship between force and law. This problem is particularly difficult when one begins to question the historical foundations of the state. How can a legal order retain its legitimacy when it is both founded and maintained by acts of lethal violence? How can it maintain the distinction between murder and lawful killing? The relationship between the sovereign and the beast can be seen as a kind of response to this problem. This “irresistible and overloaded analogy” that repeatedly draws the sovereign and the beast into association takes the form of a kind of legal fiction [Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, xiii]. Like a legal fiction it stands in the place of a response without being able to account for itself. It points to a character that is, at one and the same time, at the center, outside and above the law, but it cannot explain how such a thing is possible. It remains confined to the status of the “as if.” Hegel, true to form, sets out to do more than attempt a response—he sets out to solve it. The hero is only the beginning of this solution. For the rest, the reader will have to continue on to the appearance of the executioner/judge, monarch and, eventually, absolute spirit.

This fact alone could well serve as a rationale for his exclusion from Derrida's seminar. After all, the problem of dealing with Hegel's text is deciding how and when to stop. Bataille succinctly poses this problem in *Guilty*: “In the end can we not include all the possibilities of thought (as more or less did Hegel, who perhaps, in a sense, died drowning) [5]?” And so, the reader may ask, how do we begin to read such a text and, moreover, why should we continue to read it?

In regards to the latter, we could refer to the historical impact—both within and beyond the academic confines of philosophy—of Hegel's text. From the rejection of British Hegelianism by Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore, to the more direct and sustained engagements of Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology and post-structuralism, Hegel's legacy is immense and his work cannot and should not simply be ignored. The question of what we are to make of this legacy brings us back to our first question, that is, how are we to read Hegel's text? There are a wide variety of possible answers to this question and it would be foolish to try and account for each and every one. My answer to this question has been to read Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* as being an expression of his ontology. As such, my interpretive aim is not to simply dismiss Hegel as being metaphysically confused, but rather to take the expressed aims of the text seriously. The aim is not to simply condemn or indict

Hegel, but to read him ethically. Hegel's view on "savages" and his celebration of the pedagogical merits of violence and war are admittedly unsettling, but it is precisely because they are unsettling that they demand our attention. There is a two-fold ethical duty in reading these moments. On the one hand, they deal with legitimated instances of lethal violence and, as such, as a reader, we face the ethical duty of seeking out the principles and arguments that ground this claim to legitimacy. On the other hand, we have an ethical duty to Hegel's text—a duty to present his arguments to the very best of our abilities. These duties are inseparable. If we simply dismiss or omit these moments, then we not only fail to read Hegel's text, but we fail those that he condemns. By following Derrida's approach and tracing out the course of each moment in detail, I have attempted to open a space in which Hegel's text interrupts itself. This does not mean that Hegel's text should simply be abandoned as hopelessly flawed; rather, the impossibility of the system should serve as an impetus to revisit Hegel's text. His account of the relationship between violence and law is both rich and complicated. Even if we do not accept his account, it reflects a *possible*—if not at times dominant—way of living in the world. Read in this way, we could argue that Hegel maps the terrain of this world with a level of detail that is unmatched. Thus, if we are not convinced by the claim that this mode is the "true" or "necessary" orientation of subjectivity then we can at least use this text as a map to find a way that is otherwise.

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