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Rorty's Elective Affinities. The New Pragmatism and Postmodern Thought

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Philosophical Excursus III

Hegel's Presence in Rorty

1.

Hegel is the philosophical giant that appears in all Rorty's books, his specter hovers over the Rortyan conception of philosophy and his attitude towards the history of philosophy. But Rorty is interested only in one side of Hegel's philosophy, namely the Hegel from *Phenomenology of Spirit* rather than the older Hegel - the creator of the system. The "young Hegel" is one of the greatest Rorty's heroes (if we think of his philosophical figures in terms of good and bad guys, heroes and villains). Rorty never devoted an article to him, nor did he write about him more than a page or two in one place. He never wrote about him in the way a historian of philosophy writes about his "subject" - in a detailed, strict, severe and dull manner (to make perhaps too far a generalization). In a great narrative about the history of philosophy written over the years by Rorty, Hegel appears as a turning point in European philosophical tradition: it is he who breaks the "Plato-Kant canon", who begins the "tradition of ironist philosophy", as Rorty labels it, continued by Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida. He is the founder of such kind of philosophy - called also by Rorty a "literary genre" or (cultural) "criticism" - in which philosophers define their achievements through the relation with their predecessors rather than with truth.¹ He is for Rorty a paradigm of the ironist's abilities to use the possibilities offered by redescriptions of the past. And finally it is he who in Rorty's stories is opposed to Kant (and Plato) - in the history of philosophy Rorty always favors "Hegelians" opposed to "Kantians" in his specific

¹ Richard Rorty, CIS, p. 79.

sense of both terms.² He is for Rorty a paradigm of historicism, a model way in which one can abandon the ideal of philosophy as a search for ahistorical, atemporal and transcendental truths.

Historicization of reason, "temporalization of rationality" - was "the single most important step in arriving at the pragmatist's distrust of Philosophy", Rorty says about Hegel in his "Introduction" to *Consequences of Pragmatism*.³ Hegel gave philosophy the sense of finitude, temporality, historicity of its problems, helped it to realize that vocabularies change in history, that they are temporal and transient. Rorty's Hegel is a romantic conducting congenial reinterpretations of earlier interpretations, presenting redescriptions of redescriptions, telling stories about old stories in a new terminology; Hegel is a "poet" in Rorty's wide sense of the term (that is, "one who makes things new"⁴), a "strong philosopher" who is interested in dissolving old, inherited problems rather than in solving them.⁵

In one of philosophical narratives about recent two centuries of philosophy sketched by Rorty in *Consequences of Pragmatism* Hegel plays a crucial role in philosophy's achieving pragmatic consciousness:

Under cover of Kant's invention, a new super-science called "philosophy", Hegel invented a literary genre which lacked any trace of argumentation, but which obsessively captioned itself *System der Wissenschaft* or *Wissenschaft der Logik*, or *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*.⁶

The main Hegelian legacy in the nineteenth century was the sense of the possibility of "forgetting about science", the ability of the literary culture to stand apart from science, to assert its spiritual superiority to it.⁷ The way from Kant to pragmatism is presented to have taken the following form: Kant and Idealism (philosophy as the "third road", transcending both religion and science, allowing to see "the ultimate nature of the reality"), then Hegel and romanticism (philosophy as "science" only by name and as a matter of fact as a new literary genre) and finally Nietzsche and James who - at the same time and independently from each other - replace romanticism with pragmatism, that is, with the belief that new ways of speaking, new vocabularies, can help us to get what we want rather than to discover hitherto hidden secrets. The significance of

² See Richard Rorty, "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism", PP 1, pp. 197-198.

³ Richard Rorty, CP. xli.

⁴ Richard Rorty, CIS, pp. 12-13.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 40.

⁶ Richard Rorty, CP, s. 147

⁷ Ibidem, p. 149.

vocabularies is thus not in their ability of decoding reality, reading essences, but rather in their utility - that is the message of pragmatism which used German romanticism, notably Hegel, for its own purposes.⁸

Rorty often refers to the Hegelian definition of philosophy as "holding your time in thought". He says in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* that he understands this Hegel's famous phrase as follows: it means "finding a description of all the things characteristic of your time of which you most approve, with which you unflinchingly identify, a description which will serve as a description of the end toward which the historical developments which led up to your time were means".⁹ Holding in thought what is most precious from one's own epoch: Rorty reaches for Hegel in his narratives making him a key figure for the development of modern philosophical consciousness. He thereby differs in his reading of Hegel from Jürgen Habermas who sees in Hegel the beginning of a dead-end, the beginning of the "philosophy of subjectivity" which has already exhausted its possibilities.¹⁰ In Rorty's reading, the wrong step was made by Kant rather than Hegel, the Kant who separated science, morality and art¹¹ and turned philosophy into a foundational and epistemologically-oriented discipline¹² rather than the Hegel who has shown for the first time fully consciously the possibilities of historicity for philosophy.¹³

⁸ And therefore Dewey is "between Darwin and Hegel", see Rorty's text "Dewey between Darwin and Hegel" in *Rorty and Pragmatism. The Philosopher Responds to His Critics*, ed. Herman J. Saatkamp (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1995), pp. 1-15.

⁹ Richard Rorty, CIS, p. 55.

¹⁰ From commentaries, see especially David M. Rasmussen, *Reading Habermas*, chapter "Reading Habermas: Modernity vs. Postmodernity" (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 94-113 and R. C. Holub, *Jürgen Habermas. Critic in the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1991), chapter "Modernity and Postmodernity: the Debate with J.-F. Lyotard" , pp. 133-161.

¹¹ Richard Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity", PP 2, p. 170.

¹² As Rorty puts it in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*: "Kant ... managed to transform the old notion of philosophy - metaphysics as 'queen of the sciences' because of its concern with what was most universal and least material - into the notion of a 'most basic' discipline - a *foundational* discipline". PMN, p. 132.

¹³ Which was revolutionary, to be sure. Although earlier Montesquie in his *On the Spirit of Rights* said that the constitution of a given nation is a product of its history, it was only with Hegel that historicism became self-conscious and directed against pretenses and illusions of philosophy itself. The turn away from ahistoricity of history of philosophy in Hegel was a turn against the Platonic tradition of practising philosophy. Philosophy in Hegel's hands is no longer an atemporal, apriori reflection of

2.

I shall be trying to show in the present excursus that the Hegelian Odyssey of Spirit from his *Phenomenology* is one of great models of the Rortyan narrativism and that Hegelian procedures of generating his own vision of philosophies of the past described by Rorty - correspond perfectly well to his own conduct and his recommendation how to proceed in philosophy. As is often the case with Rorty - his reading of Derrida's methods and his own methods, his readings of the so-called "textualists" and his own procedures, and also his reading of Hegel's strategies in philosophy and his own are very similar. One could perhaps dare to make the following generalization: Rorty writes about other philosophers, about the ways they practise philosophy, about their invention, originality and innovations - imposing on them (or - reading in them) his own experiences and conclusions drawn from them (which corresponds to the "pragmatist's grid" he imposes on fiction he reads and of which he says in the text devoted to Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum*¹⁴). His "grid" is so strong - and his rhetoric so persuasive and convincing - that he manages to read in philosophers he reads his own philosophical beliefs. And there is nothing surprising in the fact if we realize how "strong" a textualist and how "strong" a philosopher - a "poet" in his wide sense - Rorty in his readings of philosophy is. I take it as one of the most vivid marks of his philosophical genius, and the trait responsible to a considerable degree for his international intellectual success. So, as in the case of readings of Plato presented above: we should not look for Hegel himself in Rorty, for we can only find individual and almost private "Rorty's Hegel" there: the Hegel of his needs and of his imaginations, the hero of his narrative with a pre-established role, located well in advance in a fixed place, next to others - also set well in advance - opponents and followers (let us bear in mind that it was Rorty who mentioned the possibility that in his conversation of humankind "creatures of our own fantasy" would participate¹⁵).

permanent forms and ideas, it becomes self-consciousness of some culture, an expression, defence and criticism of its fundamental beliefs. What comes to mind here is Rorty from the first version of his response to Lyotard when he says that Dewey's pragmatism was a "philosophical apologia of political liberalism" ("Cosmopolitanism without Emancipation", typescript, p. 1). See also Frederick Beiser's article on "Hegel's Historicism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), pp. 270-300.

¹⁴ See Richard Rorty, "The Pragmatist's Progress" in Umberto Eco et al., *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), pp. 89-108.

¹⁵ Richard Rorty, "Historiography: Four Genres", *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), p. 71.

Between those heroes - like Plato, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger or Dewey - there emerge individual and unique links of philosophical sympathies and antipathies, links imposed once by the producer of the narrative, Richard Rorty. That is the reason why Hegel does not close German idealism and in Rorty's descriptions is first of all the greatest romantic, Nietzsche is so pragmaticized with his definition of truth as a "mobile army of metaphors" that he says "the same" as James as long as the latter abandons the theory of truth as correspondence to reality etc. etc. All the aforementioned figures are not heroes of some history of philosophy in general - they are specific and individual heroes and villains of the Rortyan history of philosophy which does not even attempt to be the proper, or only, or exhaustive one but rather is an *auxiliary* narrative constructed by Rorty over the years, needed by him for the description and definition of his own pragmatism and of himself as a philosopher. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why there was never published any Rorty's article on Plato, Kant or Hegel, for they themselves may turn out to be not too interesting for Rorty. They can only exist fuller when put in a greater whole, given voice within a greater, ongoing philosophical conversation. What is needed for that is what Rorty calls a "big sweeping story" - a story told with courage and a vision in mind.¹⁶ Perhaps all Rorty's philosophy can be read as such a story. And perhaps it will turn out some day that - using his own distinctions - he will not be the author of *geistesgeschichten* but will be read as an "intellectual historian" who gives a wide, synoptic vision: he will be read not as the one who merely presents stories from the history of philosophy using others' big visions but as the one who produces these visions himself.

As an example of inscribing in past philosophers (or, more generally - in other philosophers) his own beliefs, let us try to discuss briefly Rorty's account of philosophy suggested in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* and compare it to his description of Hegel's achievements. From the convergence between the two there can emerge a provisional conclusion (made for the purposes of that particular little "philosophical excursus") that Hegel is for Rorty a model, that - inscribing in Hegel his own principles and then realizing them in practice - he would like himself to be a figure as great as Hegel, with one reservation though: without looking for a "larger-than-self hero", like the Spirit for Hegel, Europe for Nietzsche or Being for Heidegger. (The aforementioned figures are ironist *theoreticians* who are not satisfied with small pictures in philosophy, who want instead to describe "a big thing": history, Western man, metaphysics - claiming most often that it has just been completed, or exhausted its possibilities for only then could they count as exceptional figures, as events in its history. Rorty says that ironist theoreticians "are not interested only in making themselves new. They also want to make this big thing new; their own autonomy will

¹⁶ Richard Rorty, "The state of philosophy in the United States", a typescript, p. 5.

be a spin-off from this larger newness".¹⁷ It is precisely this big hero - Europe, Spirit, Being - that separates them from mere ironists, paradigmatically in Rorty from Proust from *The Remembrance of Things Past*. While the above philosophers want to be "first postmetaphysicians" or "philosophers of the future", Proust merely describes what he had encountered in his life; producing his great work - he produces himself, and has no public ambitions: "Proust succeeded [where Heidegger failed - MK] because he had no public ambitions - no reason to believe that the sound of the name 'Guermantes' would mean anything to anybody but his narrator".¹⁸ Heidegger, on the other hand, in such an opposition between ironists and ironist theoreticians constructed by Rorty, believed that he knew certain words which had, or should have had, resonance for everybody in modern Europe: "words which were relevant not just to the fate of people who happen to have read a lot of philosophy books but to *the public fate of the West*".¹⁹ That is perhaps the most important reservation to be made - Rorty does not accept such a hero of his narrative, at least officially, so to speak, for one could remark that a similar, to an extent, "big hero" of his philosophy might be "liberal democracy", although he would obviously, and rightly, respond that it is a political rather than philosophical choice and that philosophy in his account is strictly separated from politics).

Returning to the theme we abandoned for a while, let us remind what Rorty says:

*Interesting philosophy is rarely an examination of the pros and cons of a thesis. Usually it is, implicitly or explicitly, a contest between an entrenched vocabulary which has become a nuisance and a half-formed new vocabulary which vaguely promises great things.*²⁰

Surely, we are inclined to suggest that the vocabulary which "vaguely promises great things" is Rorty's vocabulary. Such a "method" of philosophy brings it close to "utopian politics" and "revolutionary science" - and it is "to redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways" until you have created a pattern of linguistic behaviour which will tempt the rising generation to adopt this rather than that vocabulary. Thus this sort of philosophy works "holistically" and "pragmatically"²¹ rather than piece by piece, in small steps, analysing concepts by concepts or verifying a thesis by thesis. It directs the following recommendation to the reader: "try thinking of it in this way", "try to ignore

¹⁷ Richard Rorty, CIS, p. 101.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 118.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 118 - emphasis mine.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 9 - emphasis mine.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 9.

the apparently futile traditional questions by substituting the following new and possibly interesting questions", "stop doing those things and do something else". Let us quote one more sentence, referring to the whole project of a liberal utopia presented in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*:

I am not going to offer arguments against the vocabulary I want to replace. Instead, I am going to try to make the vocabulary I favor look attractive by showing how it may be used to describe a variety of topics.²²

3.

This is what Rorty says in his metaphilosophical generalizations and concrete recommendations. Now the time has come to present the picture of Hegel in Rorty (and the point is to bear in mind both Hegel and Rorty at the same time): Hegel "created new problems in place of the old", as he says in *Consequences of Pragmatism*,²³ the vision of truth from *Phenomenology of Spirit* is that it is "what you get by reinterpreting all the previous reinterpretations of reinterpretations",²⁴ the Hegelian dialectical method is not an argumentative procedure but merely a literary skill at "producing surprising gestalt switches by making smooth, rapid transitions from one terminology to another".²⁵ Rorty's Hegel from *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* avoids argumentation - constantly changing vocabularies; in practice, he drops the idea of reaching truth in favor of the idea of "making things new" (and interesting). It is not the case that their predecessors' claims are false, the case is that their language is obsolete.²⁶ He invents new tools to replace old ones, creates the third vocabulary rather than discovers how the two old ones can be combined,²⁷ to use Habermas' terminology: he is an oracular "world-discloser" rather than argumentative "problem-solver".²⁸ He is a paradigm of an ironist who uses "massive redescriptions".²⁹ The similarities are striking. Thus, Rorty may appear from the above brief presentation as today's Hegel - a producer of a convincing narrative from the history of philosophy - wiser owing to philosophical experience of Nietzsche, Heidegger, pragmatists and even Derrida and the French, as we are trying to show elsewhere in the book. I think that it is important

²² Ibidem, p. 9.

²³ Richard Rorty, "Overcoming the Tradition: Heidegger and Dewey", CP, p. 40.

²⁴ Richard Rorty, "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing", CP, p. 95.

²⁵ Richard Rorty, CIS, p. 78.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 79.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 12.

²⁸ Richard Rorty, "Is Derrida a Transcendental Philosopher?", PP 2, p. 123.

²⁹ Richard Rorty, CIS, p. 79.

to look at his neopragmatist narratives - in which Hegel may be a model for Rorty - also from this sort of perspective.

If we are now dealing with such issues as Rorty's attitude towards great constructions of the history of philosophy, let us remind his conception of narratives (*Geistesgeschichten*).³⁰ Rorty distinguishes between four kinds of philosophy: reconstructions (rational and historical ones), narratives, doxography and intellectual history. Historical reconstructions speak of past philosophers in the context of their present, in the context of their discussions with philosophers contemporary to them. Rational reconstructions, on the other hand, turn old philosophers into conversational partners for today's philosophers and their problems. Doxography, in turn, is a kind of philosophy in the form of books about history of philosophy, let us say, "from Tales to Derrida", which, as a genre, "inspires boredom and despair"³¹, for it assumes that there is a finite list of great philosophers and a finite list of philosophical problems. Finally, the fourth genre, intellectual history, constructs the picture of the past in terms of the present, referring to as wide a context as possible, to figures from out of the canon of recognized philosophers, to "limit cases"; its role is to inspire reformulations of the canon of great, past philosophers. Historical reconstructions and rational reconstructions are so dependent on each other as intellectual histories are dependent on narratives.³²

Rorty's favorite is "*geistesgeschichte* as canon-formation". This kind of philosophy takes responsibility for identifying which past philosophers are "great" (as opposed to both types of reconstructions, which brings them closer to the history of science), answers the question as to who counts as a philosopher and who does not. For *Geisteshistoriker's* job is

assembling a cast of historical characters, and a dramatic narrative, which shows how we have come to ask the questions we now think inescapable and profound. Where these characters left writings behind, those writings then form a canon, a reading-list which one must have gone through in order to justify what one is.³³

Geistesgeschichte wants to keep in us the awareness that we are still en route - that the dramatic narrative it offers to us is to be continued by our descendants. At the same time, it attempts to justify philosophical beliefs of its producer, attempts to maintain a certain chosen and favored image of philosophy. It works on the level of

³⁰ Richard Rorty, "Four Genres", op. cit.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 62.

³² Ibidem, p. 71.

³³ Ibidem, p. 61.

problematics rather than on that of solutions to problems. Rorty in his philosophy clearly favors narratives as opposed to universal and totalizing theories, he is for reformulations of the past in the form of dramatic narratives performed on an individual basis and against reproduction of the "history of philosophy" as the one which is non-contingent and based on a purported consensus, against an unchangeable and established once and for all march through the same problems - towards solutions of them and towards the truth. Rorty is supported in this belief by irony and rhetoric, by a persuasive nature of his undertaking: the canon is being formulated all the time, it is being formulated by those who are the most convincing in their philosophical narratives. Let us read books and let us put them in the context of other books, as Rorty says in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Let us make new lists of positive and negative heroes, new goodies and new baddies, new taxonomies, new lists of interesting philosophers, new alliances in the history of philosophy, let us impose our vocabulary to others' vocabularies, using them for our current purposes. Hegel comes in handy to Rorty all the time. He allows him to construe a counterbalance for the Kantian sort of philosophy which, in turn, is a dark spot in numerous narratives about modernity, starting with *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* where Kant is presented as the one who transformed philosophy into a "foundational" discipline, to Rorty's discussions from "Freud and Moral Reflection" from *Philosophical Papers* where he is charged with having left the possibility of enriching the vocabulary of moral deliberation only to "novelists, poets, dramatists"³⁴, to discussions from *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* where Kant is opposed once again to Freud who managed to replace the picture of man as the Kantian "dutiful fulfiller of universal obligations" - with that in which "each human life is a poem", for a democratized genius has been given to each individual in the form of creative unconsciousness.³⁵ Human self in

³⁴ Richard Rorty, "Freud and Moral Reflection", PP 2, p. 156.

³⁵ Konstantin Kolenda who wrote the first in the Anglo-Saxon world book about Rorty, *Rorty's Humanistic Pragmatism* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1990), provided it with the following subtitle: *Philosophy Democratized*. He says that "We are reminded by Rorty that thought originating in any branch of intellectual activity *may* have practical consequences in the general climate of opinion, but it is no less valuable when it produces no more than *a constructive change in the thinker's or reader's self-image*. This is the sense in which philosophy becomes democratized..." (p. xv - emphasis mine).

Let us add here that "democracy" obviously does not come from the individual Greek "daimonion" (false etymologies!) but from "demos", "people". Thus Kolenda's picture would be of an individualized, privatized - egotistic etc. philosophy. This can throw some additional light to the American view of democracy as "live and let others

Rorty's description as a "web of beliefs and desires" is as far as possible from the Kantian well-formed system of the faculties of reason. The Hegelian question about progress in history is still open to Rorty, the owl of Minerva spreads its wings (no sooner than) at dusk, it is still a challenge because, as he puts it

we latecomers can tell the kind of story of progress which those who are actually making progress cannot. ... Those who made us possible could not have envisaged what they were making possible, and so could not have described the ends to which their work was a means. But *we* can.³⁶

And it is precisely the Hegelian historicism, manifesting itself in his definition from *The Philosophy of Right*, that is so important for Rorty's self-identity that it is worth being remembered. Apart from Blumenberg, Bloom, Dewey, Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Freud - Hegel is one of the most important Rorty's heroes. For, let us return to that memorable phrase, "we cannot do without heroes". Both in life and in our narratives. We need conversations with mighty dead philosophers, we want to see the history of our race as a "long conversational exchange"³⁷ - for, as Rorty said already in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, philosophers' only moral concern should be "continuing the conversation of the West".³⁸ And that is the breaking of the said conversation that separates the world of the Anglo-Saxon philosophy from that of the Continental one: in the former, generally, speaking and with few exceptions, to be sure, the conversational partners in departments of philosophy are neither Plato, nor Hegel, nor Nietzsche, nor Derrida, and thereby none of those who deals with them today. One point is essential - the significance of the history of philosophy. In the USA, since the arrival of positivists as refugees during the second world war, neither a new canon has been formed, nor an old one has been more strongly established - for philosophical books from the past are of little interest to professional philosophers. Rorty wrote once in *Consequence of Pragmatism* about a practical problem: who is going to "teach Hegel"? And perhaps it was not accidentally, we can speculate, that he used Hegel, the hero of the present "philosophical excursus" in this phrase?

live". Hence perhaps there may appear the difference: (Rortyan) "democratized" philosophy in Kolenda's sense - and philosophy ("in favor of", "supporting") democracy. Two different philosophies, clearly so, and hence a tension - and aversion! - to calling this "democratized" bit of it "pragmatism" on the part of so many critics and commentators...

³⁶ Richard Rorty, CIS, p. 56.

³⁷ Richard Rorty, "Four Genres", p. 51.

³⁸ Richard Rorty, PMN, p. 394.

4.

I think that it might be very interesting to supplement this excursus with a quick glance at Hegel's presence in French philosophy (as part of our "European" contexts). What I would like to draw the attention to would be the status of Hegel as a "master thinker" right after the war, and then a passage from Hegel to Nietzsche in the sixties, and, finally, a gradual retreat from Nietzsche (and "Nietzscheans") at the end of the eighties and in the nineties. My story begins with "Hegel's tyranny" in France. What requires an explanation is at least the phrase "Hegel's tyranny". Precisely what period are we talking about, what sort of tyranny do we have in mind - and finally, what Hegel do we mean. What we are interested in here - within questions pertaining to the topicality of Hegel - is a powerful and permanent influence he would exert on a pre-war and post-war French thought (the years of 1930-1960, roughly speaking) but as long as it became an object of sharp discordance and wide criticism of the next generation of thinkers and philosophers, the postmodern generation. Thus we will be dealing here with the generation of Alexandre Kojève, Jean Hyppolite, Georges Bataille, reading and commenting on Hegel - mainly from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* - against which there stood up the generation of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. While for the former generation Hegel was that master of thinking, *maître à penser*, for the other generation he was only (and yet still as much as) the figure to necessarily get free from. The paradigmatic shift of focus from Hegel to Nietzsche in France was revealed in the most powerful way in two books: Gilles Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) and Pierre Klossowski's *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux* (1969). Since then, it has been Nietzsche rather than Hegel who seemed to provide French philosophical thought with a tone.³⁹

The question to ask in this place would be, for instance, the following: what was so peculiar about the Hegel that the whole generations of Hyppolite's pupils (furthermore, the most brilliant participants in his seminars - such as Derrida and Foucault) turned against him with such solidarity? Who was the Hegel that would dominate French intellectual life for over thirty years, from Kojève's initially small,

³⁹ Incidentally, some explicit enemies of postmodern thought - like Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut - in their (once) famous pamphlet *French Philosophy of the Sixties*, trans. by M.H.S. Cattani (Amherst: The Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1990) - present the whole French "thought of difference" as only a radicalization of themes deriving from German philosophy. Hence also comes the very structure of their book - it is devoted to French Nietzscheanism (Foucault), Heideggerianism (Derrida), Marxism (Bourdieu) and Freudianism (Lacan). From such a perspective, we all are merely repeating - Plato...

irregular and elitist lectures in Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes from 1933-1939, to Hegelian seminars in Collège de France in the turning of the sixties and the seventies? The question about that Hegel - read mainly from the famous Chapter Four of the *Phenomenology* devoted to "dialectic of mastery and slavery" - will help us in dealing with the issue of complicated relations between Hegel and postmodern thinkers of today's France. We get the impression that one cannot understand current (or perhaps - recent, to which we shall return further in the text) French anti-Hegelian scenery without asking the questions what that Hegel was, where he came from and what the circumstances of his appearance were.⁴⁰

The point here is not analyzing French Hegelian studies from pre-war and post-war period, for it was not they that exerted powerful influence on today's and yesterday's cultural face of France, and especially its philosophical face. Hegel dominated France after the war - he just tyrannized and paralyzed it with his presence, his discourse and conceptuality, like all later "masters of thinking".⁴¹ After the war, Hegel imposed the horizon of questions and answers, he was the single most serious philosophical authority. As Michel Foucault expressed the thought in the name of his generation in *The Discourse on Language*, i.e. in his opening lecture at Collège de France in 1970 - when the battle with Hegel carried out with Nietzschean weapons was already definitely won: "... our age, whether through logic or epistemology, whether through Marx or through Nietzsche, is attempting to flee Hegel".⁴²

But why should one "flee from Hegel" at all - and is it possible to flee from him? How is one to break with Hegel if one lives and breathes in philosophy his dialectic, one thinks his language, argues with his arguments? That peculiar inability, that stiffening of tongue that attempts to oppose Hegel perhaps has been expressed in the best way by Emmanuel Lévinas (in the text "Hegel and the Jews" from the collection of essays *Difcile liberté*); he said the following: "It is surely not easy to oppose Hegel's speech. It is so not only because thought lacks audacity but because language as if becomes disobedient. There is hardly anything more deplorable than to

⁴⁰ The present piece asks a question about the passage from Hegel to Nietzsche as well as about Hegel himself in French account. An unavoidable in that context question about Nietzsche - "the new Nietzsche", as says the title of the collection of texts edited by David Allison, famous in the Anglo-Saxon world - I am asking elsewhere.

⁴¹ For "masters of thinking" as *spécialité de la maison* of French philosophy, see Tom Rockmore, *Heidegger and French Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1995), the chapter "The Master Thinker in French Philosophy", pp. 18-39.

⁴² Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language", appendix to *Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 235.

"express one's view on Hegel', to classify him...".⁴³ Language as if becomes disobedient, says Lévinas, language becomes "completely mute", says Foucault, thinking somehow stops, not wanting, not being able to find familiar points of departure... How to avoid the situation which also Foucault mentions that when we set up on an anti-Hegelian journey - at the end of it there will be Hegel who within his system, and especially within dialectic, forecast every opposition against himself. How to be "other than Hegel" rather than anti-Hegelian, how to avoid battles on a ground chosen by him, how to take a non-Hegelian strategy? It is precisely the Nietzsche as presented by Derrida, Klossowski and Deleuze that came as the greatest help for the whole generation of French philosophers. He became, as the latter puts it, "the absolute opponent of dialectic", as Nietzsche's philosophy is the "absolute anti-dialectic", and between the two, Hegel and Nietzsche, "there will be no compromise".⁴⁴

Alexandre Kojève is of interest to us here as the one who shaped - together with Jean Hyppolite - the picture of Hegel in post-war France, influencing through his lectures e.g. Bataille, Lacan or Merleau-Ponty (in *Specters of Marx* Derrida says that nobody can deny the fact that the reading of Hegel by Kojève "played a formative and not negligible role, from many standpoints, for a certain generation of French intellectuals"⁴⁵, to which in turn Richard Rorty replies mercilessly - "so what?", it is no reason for him to be of any interest today - and that is a really meaningful and interesting difference⁴⁶). Georges Bataille is of interest to us here as long as in our account he is a figure at the philosophical cross-roads, the philosopher who suits neither the former nor the latter French generation described here, a philosopher who is both Hegelian and Nietzschean, reading at the same time Hegel and Nietzsche and approaching the reading of one of them with conceptual tools taken from the other. And finally, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida are two postmodern figures in whom a retreat from Hegel (for in Jean-Francois Lyotard it was a retreat from Marx⁴⁷) - with the help of Nietzsche read in a new way - took the most clear forms.

⁴³ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Difícile liberté*, Albin Michel, 1963 (in Polish as *Trudna wolnoææ*, trans. A. Kuryś, Gdynia: Atext, 1991, p. 252).

⁴⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1962), in Polish as *Nietzsche i filozofia*, trans. B. Banasiak, Warsaw: Spacja/Pavo, 1993, p. 205.

⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. by P. Kamuf (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 72.

⁴⁶ Richard Rorty, "A Spectre is Haunting the Intellectuals", *European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 3, number 3, December 1995, p. 295.

⁴⁷ As I am trying to show in more detail in my Polish book *Rorty and Lyotard. In the Labyrinths of Postmodernity*.

The manifesto of the generation of Hyppolite's students was Gilles Deleuze's book, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, published in 1962. It was there that Nietzsche was for the first time presented as anti-Hegel and his anti-Hegelianism was recognized as his philosophical mark (such a reading was then widely accepted by two big Nietzschean conferences in Royaumont in 1964 and then in Cerisy-la Salle in 1972, the papers of which was published in two thick volumes, not accidentally entitled *Nietzsche aujourd'hui*). The Hegel/Nietzsche opposition needed by the whole generation is clear and simple: "... dialectic is work and empiricism is pleasure. And who said that there is more thoughts in work than in pleasure?", or, in Deleuze's words - "Nietzschean 'yes' opposes Hegelian 'no', affirmation opposes - dialectical negation, difference - dialectical contradiction, joy, pleasure - dialectical work, lightness, dance - dialectical heaviness, beautiful irresponsibility - dialectical duties".⁴⁸ Let us remind: "Il n'y a pas de compromis possible entre Hegel et Nietzsche" is Deleuze's fundamental conviction. It is impossible in his view to understand the whole Nietzsche's work if one does not note "against whom" its main concepts are directed. And the enemy is Hegel. "Hegelian themes - says Deleuze - are present in his work like an enemy whom he fights".⁴⁹ Nietzsche intended to reveal all "mystifications" which were to find their last refuge in dialectic, he intended to free Hegel's thought from the burden of its dialectic. Nietzsche's philosophy is just incomprehensible in Deleuze's account if one does not take into consideration its "fundamental pluralism": "pluralism is a purely philosophical way of thinking invented by philosophy: it is the only guarantee of freedom of a particular mind, the only principle of violent atheism. Gods died, but they died of laughter hearing that some God said that he was the only one".⁵⁰ Nietzsche seen through Deleuze's eyes - as well as through those of Pierre Klossowski from his book *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux* and of Jacques Derrida from *Eperons. Nietzsche's Styles*, and recently in America of Alexander Nehamas from *Nietzsche. Life as Literature* - suggests a new way of thinking - an affirmative thought which, finally, "excludes each negativity".⁵¹ Instead of a speculative element of negation, opposition, contradiction -

⁴⁸ Gilles Deleuze, pp. 13, 13-14.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 171.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, p. 8.

⁵¹ Ibidem p. 14. Alexander Nehamas treats Nietzsche as a philosopher who creates an artwork - we would say, in the manner of the late Foucault from his "aesthetics of existence" - out of himself. "Nietzsche exemplifies through his own writings one way in which one individual may have succeeded in fashioning itself - an individual, moreover, who, though beyond morality, is not morally objectionable. The individual is none other than Nietzsche himself, who is a creature of his own texts. This character does not provide a model for imitation, since he consists essentially of the specific

Nietzsche is to offer the element of difference, affirmation and pleasure. Nietzsche's superman in Deleuze is to be directed against a dialectical conception of man, transvaluation - against a dialectical elimination of alienation. Nietzsche's work, to sum up, is according to Deleuze "saturated with anti-Hegelianism".⁵²

5.

Alexandre Kojève conducted his seminars in the mood of a renaissance of Hegelian interests inspired by himself that began to spread towards the end of the twenties under the influence of e.g. Marxism and the Russian revolution. When Alexandre Koyré reported in 1930 during an international Hegelian congress "the state of Hegelian studies in France", he was forced to remark at the very beginning that his paper would be brief and poor in comparison with other ones for neither at that time nor earlier there was any Hegelian school, nor even an eminent student of Hegel.⁵³ Reasons enumerated by Koyré are manifold: first of all, difficulties in comprehending Hegel, the total oblivion into which he had fallen in the sixties of the nineteenth century when translations of his writings into French had been made, then - a "return to Kant", and, finally, Hegel's Protestantism. They had led to a dominating "attitude of hostility", as Koyré remarks; Hegelianism was degraded also due to highly unfavorable opinions expressed by the greatest philosophical authority of France after the first world war, Leon Brunschicg.⁵⁴ The turning point in the reception of Hegel was the book by Jean Wahl, *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (1929) of which Jean Hyppolite was to write later that it had been a shock for all - *une sorte de révélation*. Thus Hegel appeared in France of the thirties - as if from nowhere (incidentally, out of the three Hegelian pioneers - Wahl, Kojève, Koyré - the latter two were Russian emigrés whose interests and personal fates had thrown them before their arrival to France to Husserlian-Heideggerian Germany of the twenties). And right after the second world war everything avant-garde, modern and progressive referred to Hegel and his dialectic of "mastery and slavery" from *Phenomenology*.⁵⁵ Finally, in the

actions - that is, of the specific writings - that make him up, and which only he could write". *Nietzsche. Life as Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985), p. 8.

⁵² Gilles Deleuze, p. 13.

⁵³ Alexandre Koyré, "Rapport sur l'état des études hégéliennes en France" in: *Études d'Histoire de la pensée philosophique* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1961), p. 205.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, pp. 207, 208.

⁵⁵ German *Herrschaft* and *Knechtschaft* is English *mastery* and *slavery* and French - from Hyppolite and Kojève - *maître* and *esclave*. A new French translator of *Phenomenology*, Jean-Pierre Levebvre (1991), referring to a biblical dimension of the pair *Herr und Knecht*, suggests still another possibility: *maître* and *Valet*, rendering

sixties, to paint this picture to the end that interests us here, the Hegelian page was turned once again - the point was, as Foucault put it in a passage quoted above, to "flee" from Hegel. As Vincent Descombes comments on this situation in a very good (especially in more historical passages) book *Modern French Philosophy*:

The difference separating the two generations [that of three 'H's - Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger - and that which loved three "masters of suspicion" - MK] lies in the inversion of the sign that marked the relationship to Hegel: everywhere a *minus* was substituted by a *plus*. The reference point remained the same.⁵⁶

Without getting too much into details of the evolution of Kojève's views (as we are doing it elsewhere) and starting from his Hegelian lectures edited and published by Raymond Queneau as well as from some of his post-war texts (and especially a correspondence with his most serious philosophical adversary, Leo Strauss, published four years ago, which provides their polemics about the figure of the "tyrant" and a "philosopher" with an additional dimension), I would be inclined to say, agreeing with his numerous French and American commentators, that his work is a splendid example of a genius of propaganda. A genius which promotes Hegel, Marx, Heidegger - as well as Kojève - at the same time and which is a "very talented story-teller" (Descombes), provides his revelational - and revolutionary - interpretations as Hegel's message to France on the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Revolution.⁵⁷ Historical

Knechtschaft as *servitude*. In Poland, new proposals by Marek J. Siemek (from *Philosophy of Completed Modernity - Hegel*, Torun: UMK, 1995) go in the same direction as these of Levebvre, presented in "L'oeuvre en mouvement" in a Hegelian issue of *Magazine littéraire* (Nov. 1991, No 293), p. 24 - starting from different positions, they arrive at similar linguistic conclusions.

⁵⁶ Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J.K. Harding (Cambridge: CUP, 1980), p. 12.

⁵⁷ It is sometimes said that Kojève gave France "interpretations" of, Hegel while Hyppolite gave it "commentaries", the former being subjective, often unfaithful and foreign to Hegel, the latter being an example of an objective, cold and modest philosophical work. Not accidentally in numerous contemporary works devoted to Hegel and written by French historians of philosophy - Kojève's book is not even mentioned... It is simply unbelievable considering the influence of one and the other on post-war French thought. Jacques d'Hondt, an established French Hegelian authority, says that Hyppolite presented a deep commentary, while Kojève merely interpreted some aspects and some chapters of the *Phenomenology* - that he had specifically chosen. See *Magazine littéraire* No 293, p. 32.

circumstances favored indeed such a prophetic reading and commenting: the period of Hegelian seminars reminded in its intensity that of writing the *Phenomenology* itself - cannon sounds during the battle of Iena, Hegel completing his work, Napoleon, that *l'âme du monde à cheval*, parading in front of Hegel's windows on his horse. The war, violence, interventions in Spain, generally, a culmination of pre-war tensions in the form of the outbreak of the world war. Precisely - the "world" one, on a "world" dimension, like Napoleonic wars were "world" ones for the first time in history. Once again the clue to thinking about the world was History with the capital 'h' (Czesław Miłosz in a short text about Albert Camus, "Fraternal Interlocutor", wrote that in the forties and fifties French intellectuals were fascinated by History - "we [here in Central Europe - MK] were also fascinated by it, but in a different way. They longed for personal saturation with historicity. We were saturated with it in abundance...").

One of the participants in Kojève's Hegelian seminars was Georges Bataille who simultaneously attempted to write about Nietzsche, protesting as the first in France against appropriation of him by the Nazi ideology.⁵⁸ Sometimes it is said that Bataille's intention was anti-Hegelian right from the start and the tool for his struggles with Hegel was to be Nietzsche read extremely intensely and personally.⁵⁹ (As Bataille put it in *On Nietzsche*: "Except for a few exceptions, my company on earth is mostly Nietzsche" or "My life with Nietzsche as a companion is a community. My book is this community"⁶⁰). But personally I share the view - and I am not isolated in this respect for the same goes for e.g. Denis Hollier⁶¹ - that Bataille as the only French philosopher of the period that interests us here is neither Nietzschean nor Hegelian (staying close to both). It is perhaps so that as the only one he needed in his thinking both a transgressive as well as a dialectical element - in his *Summa atheologica (Inner Experience, Guilty, On Nietzsche)* he revealed a Nietzschean part of his work and in

⁵⁸ For instance in such texts as "Nietzsche and the Fascists" or "Nietzschean Chronicle" translated in English in *Visions of Excess. Selected Writings 1927-1939*, trans. by A. Stoekl (Manchester: Manchester UP), 1985.

⁵⁹ See Bruno Karsenti, "Bataille anti-hégélien?", *Magazine littéraire*, Nov. 91, No 293, pp. 54-57. To how deplorable results can lead reading Bataille as a mere sociologist, see a very poor book by Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille* (London: Routledge, 1994). From among a couple of books I know, the most philosophically interesting to me was Jean-Michel Besnier's *La politique de l'impossible* (Paris: La Découverte, 1988).

⁶⁰ Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, trans. by B. Boone (New York: Paragon House, 1992), pp. 3, 9.

⁶¹ See Denis Hollier, "Le Dispositif Hegel/Nietzsche dans la bibliothèque de Bataille", *L'Arc*, 38, pp. 35-47.

The Accursed Share its Marxian-Hegelian side. Divided into two, Bataille wrote under the sign of both philosophers, rejecting at the same time a unambiguous and permanent subordination either to Nietzschean textuality (the "irresponsibility" of which Pierre Klossowski writes so much) or to everything that is brought about by social-oriented thinking.⁶² On the one hand, he was looking in a Nietzschean manner for Hegel's non-knowledge, what remains un-thought in his system and what he found in "poetry, laughter, ecstasy" as blind spots of the system,⁶³ being distant from the community and political and social mission of the philosopher and close to a transgression restricted to the text;⁶⁴ on the other hand, he was writing his counter-history of civilization in which work was a mark of slavery rather than a road to emancipation and where social power was associated only with destruction, and not production.

6.

"Dialectic of mastery and slavery" from Kojève, Bataille with his idea of general rather than restricted economy, to Foucault and Derrida, was a *constant* in French thought, Descombes says. Chapter Four of the *Phenomenology* became the most frequently discussed - and appropriated and then digested - passage from Hegel's writings. Not surprisingly enough, the opposition against Hegel's domination in the years of 1930-60 appeared both in Foucault and Derrida e.g. in considerations on dialectical conception of history, on the place reason occupies in history as well as on dialectic itself. Let us take into account several texts representative for that period, leaving aside others, sometimes devoted to Hegel to a large extent (such as Derrida's *Glas*): Foucault's "Preface to Transgression" and "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" and Derrida's *Positions* and "Hegelianism Without Reserve". For what we mean is not so much, and not only, to show the relation of the two thinkers to Hegel's philosophy but rather to indicate opposing Hegel - precisely with Nietzsche, and it is there that this can be seen most clearly. The atmosphere of the "new Nietzsche" in question can be seen from the opening sentence from Klossowski's book on Nietzsche: "how is one to speak of 'Nietzsche's thought' without ever referring to what has been said about him", besides, Nietzsche there is supposed to reject the attitude of a "teaching philosopher",

⁶² I present in more detail the opposition between textualists and communitarians in post-war French culture in a text "'They should only follow the one who leads...!' or on philosophy and politics (Sartre-Barthes-Foucault)" in A. Jamrozikowa (ed.), *Revisions - Continuations*, Poznan: Humaniora, 1996.

⁶³ Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. by L.A. Boldt (New York: SUNY Press, 1988), p. 111.

⁶⁴ See Allan Stoekl, *Agonies of the Intellectual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

to give up writing "in care of the human condition".⁶⁵ And it was not accidentally that Michel Foucault asked about his philosophical identity said in "Le retour de la morale", his last interview - given while he was correcting two last volumes of his *History of Sexuality* - that two fundamental experiences which had shaped his philosophical development were Heidegger and Nietzsche. Mentioning his "fundamental Nietzscheanism", he says exactly the following: "Je suis simplement nietzschéen" - I am just a Nietzschean.⁶⁶

Foucault's homage paid to Bataille, the founder of *Critique* - in "A Preface to Transgression" - powerfully shows "the Nietzschean turn" in France:⁶⁷ the author writes there about our falling "asleep in dialectic and anthropology" (which, I suppose, refers us back directly to Hegel and Kojève) from which only Nietzsche can wake us up. Discursive language, however, like in the passage from Lévinas cited above, becomes "ineffectual" and "nearly silent".⁶⁸ There remain non-Hegelian, non-philosophical writers such as Klossowski or Blanchot (or also, in Foucault's view, Bataille) who as the only thinkers can find proper words to express the experience of transgression. Foucault says, presenting a peculiar proportion, that "perhaps one day it [the experience of transgression - MK] will seem as decisive for our culture, as much a part of its soil, as the experience of contradiction was at an earlier time for dialectical thought".⁶⁹ If the experience of contradiction corresponds to the Hegelian dialectical thinking, that of transgression must correspond to some totally new thinking - maybe the thinking of Foucault himself? Philosophical language is to be characterized by "profound silence" and in a language stripped of dialectics, the philosopher is aware that "we are not everything". A new search for limits is to replace an old search for the whole, and transgression is to replace the Hegelian movement of contradictions. The language of philosophy remains "bound" as long as it does not think over the

⁶⁵ Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux* (Mercure de France, 1969), in Polish as *Nietzsche i b³édne ko³o*, trans. B. Banasiak and K. Matuszewski, Warsaw: Wyd. KR, 1996, p. 62.

⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits 1954-1988* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), vol. IV, p. 704.

⁶⁷ One also speaks of the "aesthetic turn" - see James J. Winchester, *Nietzsche's Aesthetic Turn. Reading Nietzsche After Heidegger, Deleuze, Derrida* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994). Especially important, in my view, are moral implications of this turn in French philosophy, discussed recently by Richard Rorty in CIS in an opposition between moralists and aesthetes.

⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977), p. 38.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

experience of the limit.⁷⁰ The genealogist, as opposed to the historian, learns that "behind things" there is no timeless and essential secret but rather the secret that they have no essence.⁷¹ The Foucauldian genealogist is as anti-Platonic as Nietzsche and as anti-Hegelian as Deleuze.

And finally Jacques Derrida who always struggles with Hegel in different forms, stating explicitly about his relation to Hegel that "we will never be finished with the reading or rereading of Hegel, and, in a certain way, I do nothing other than attempt to explain myself on this point".⁷² Hegelianism for him is "the ultimate reassembling of metaphysics"⁷³, the culmination of the logocentric tradition running from Plato. Derrida does not create, however, being aware of difficulties of philosophical thinking against Hegel, a totally anti-Hegelian stance.⁷⁴ Referring to Lévinas, he says, disclosing his own strategy towards Hegel: "as soon as he *speaks* against Hegel, Lévinas can only confirm Hegel, has confirmed him already".⁷⁵ The game with Hegel is going on the margins of Bataille's reading of him as presented in Derrida's *Writing and Difference*. Bataille was to have taken Hegel too seriously, he was to have taken the absolute knowledge too seriously.⁷⁶ Comparing Hegel's "mastery" and Bataille's "sovereignty", Derrida comes to the conclusion that Hegel did not see the possibility of existence of anything outside his system - for instance, poetry, laughter, ecstasy, which neither are knowledge nor provide it. Excess, *dépense* - are beyond reason. And it is not accidentally that a considerable part of post-war French thought mentions the theme of Hegel's "madness" from the period before he had not completed his system: namely, how is one to accept the fact of being the incarnation of the Absolute Spirit, of announcing the end of history, without being at the same time - God? Although there is no definition of the Derridean *différance*, if it were one, there might perhaps be that of

⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 41.

⁷¹ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews*, p. 142.

⁷² Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Athlone Press, 1987), p. 77.

⁷³ Jacques Derrida, "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology" in: *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 80.

⁷⁴ See Włodzimierz Lorenc, *Hegel i Derrida. Filozofia w wersji radykalnej* (Warsaw: IF UW, 1994, in Polish), p. 254.

⁷⁵ Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Lévinas" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 120.

⁷⁶ Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy. Hegelianism Without Reserve" in *Writing and Difference*, p. 253.

suppressing the Hegelian *Aufhebung* wherever it operates, as he says in *Positions*. Hence the affinity of the *différance* with all operations against Hegel's dialectical speculation. Both in Derrida, as well as in Foucault, the opposition to Hegel gives birth to the escape towards Nietzsche (and, incidentally, Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, next generation of French philosophers and today's opponents of both Nietzschean postmodernists and of their Nietzsche, publish collective volumes entitled provocatively *Pourquoi nous ne sommes pas nietzschéens* (1991) - why are we not Nietzscheans... So, who are we?)

To sum up this little walk taken to the French postmodern thought, let us say that we did not mean to deal in detail with any of the postmodern figures described here, or with any commentators of Hegel first and then Nietzsche. What we meant here was the topicality of Hegel today; we merely attempted to outline his constant and permanent presence in subsequent generations of French philosophers. The explicit presence in the first generation and the presence-as-negation, presence in fight led from new, Nietzschean positions. And whenever we open Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* in its Hegelian passages, we have to bear in mind the fact that he wrote his book in a totally different culture, although at the same time as Kojève, Hyppolite or Bataille - nowhere in the world was Hegel so alive, and so topical, so close and then so controversial, as in the post-war France.