



Department of Political Science  
Course of Political Philosophy

## **Haiti, Hegel and France: A postcolonial debate**

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## Introduction

This research aims to analyze and uncover the case of Haiti in relation to differing postrevolutionary and postcolonial debates. While the problematic history and past of the country are unarguable and still visible today, there is more than one version when it comes to discussing Haiti's postcolonial reality.

It would be inconceivable to fathom the idea of Europe's great powers without one of the most powerful assets known in history, colonies. In past centuries, colonial power was the decisive element that could distinguish a country's level of influence and power from another. Not only did it bring about prestige and glory, but it concretely gave the Motherlands an incredible amount of monetary power. It is therefore clear to understand why the era following that of colonialism could have been hard to acknowledge for these nations. Haiti has always been a complex challenge for what concerns its neighboring countries, notably the United States. Its geographical proximity makes it inevitable to overlook. To have such a struggling state at the footsteps of the world's most powerful nation appears as a stark contrast.

As Foucault defined it, post colonial theory is the "anti eurocentric investigation of the representation of race, ethnicity, and nationhood". It includes many factors and is therefore the attempt to reconstruct, or even perhaps construct, for the first time, national identities. In addition, it is a detachment not only from the idea of dependance but also from that of the inexistence of culture of the colonized countries. Postcolonial literature originated from the former colonies of European powers such as the Caribbean. It involves an engagement with the colonial experience, its effects on the countries and the societies inhabiting them. Postcolonialism also entailed the effects at general global development after the empires. It is actually about the before and after of such colonies, not exclusively the after. It is modernity from a new perspective (Yang,

Geng, Zhang, Wang, 2006). Furthermore, it is not a single theory, rather a set of perspectives, sensibilities and orientations. Postcoloniality is the “reality of a transnational global set of relationships and experiences” (Dalleo, *American Imperialism’s Undead*, 2016). There are several ways to look at characteristics of postcolonialism in Haiti, and it is in this context that we will introduce new elements such as Hegelian thought and especially his master-slave dialectic. The reason for this being that the association between Haiti and Hegel might reveal the founding basis for the true inspiration between the infamous dialectic.

The first chapter will discuss the past of the Caraibic country, seeking to find answers for the current circumstances in the islands’ history. This theory we are arguing for is relevant because it sheds light on countries who were previously neglected. The presupposition is a tendency of anti-western centrality. The chapter will deal with Haiti as a colony, reviewing its exploitation by the French and the rise of the revolutionary desire. The second chapter will look at Postcolonial analysis in accordance with the Hegelian thought, reviewing the role of the revolution in Europe, the master slave dialectic and universal history, and the proximity between the Haitian case and the age of enlightenment. The third chapter is dedicated to marxist analysis , opposed to Hegelian analysis, and universalism. We will unveil the true thought of Hegel, and what Haiti accomplished for France in accordance with universalist ideals. Lastly, the fourth chapter will conclude the argumentation by talking about Haitian universalism, the causes of universal emancipation, the accordance of human rights to all and the many consequences of the independence.

# **Chapter 1: Haitian history and its importance**

## **1. Haitian History**

Before discussing the multiple options of analysis for postcolonialism, we should first investigate the history of Haiti, and the region of the Caribbean. This is done to inform and clear doubts along the way regarding future discussions. Moreover, I will adopt a Caribbean-centric outlook, which will allow us to understand the perceptions of this region.

This chapter will shortly discuss the discovery of Haiti, its impact and most notably the initiation of colonial rule. Secondly, how this amounted to a full exploitation of the territory and of the people. After having reviewed such events, we shall better understand the rise of the revolutionary ideas and later on uprisings.

### **1.1 The discovery of Haiti**

The region of the Caribbean was colonized by Europeans in the 15th century and soon after became a site of enslavement and labor. It wasn't only one country that invaded the territory, but it started with Spain and continued with France and the Dutch. Language, religion and economic activities soon overtook these territories. Amerindians were progressively eliminated from the territories, and at the top of the hierarchy were Europeans. Right below them we could find "mulattos" or people of mixed race. Lower economic class meant, and still does today, a higher percentage of African heritage. African people weren't however the only displaced populations. Many people from Asia were brought there because of Asian colonies. The region was denominated the "West Indies", since when Christopher Columbus first arrived he thought he'd arrived in Asia. Reason for which the inhabitants were themselves called Indians.

Hispaniola was the name given to Haiti by Columbus in honor of the Spanish throne. The local inhabitants were known as the Taino-Arawak. Very quickly territory was split between France and Spain. On the right, what we know as the Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic, and on the left the French-speaking Haiti. This is where the story of these two countries started for the modern, western world. Territory wasn't split equally, and the largest share of it remained to Spain. The geographical island is one, however the countries moved in two different paths.

## **1.2 The colonial empire of France**

The establishment of the French colonial empire started in the 15th century. For a long period of time, the country was denominated the "Crown Jewel", or "La perle des Antilles", the pearl of the Antilles. This was due to its prosperous economic production and rich soil. We can here distinguish between the concepts of "extraction" and "settlement". On the one side, extraction colonies were used to transfer as much wealth as possible from the colony to the motherland, while on the other, the colony was used not because of its resources, but for settlement purposes. Haiti being the first type of colony. No property rights could be claimed in extraction colonies, nor was it possible to provide checks and balances against governments. In simple words, while European powers were gaining, colonies were losing for the years to come.

The arrival of Columbus proved many things to the world at that time. For instance, that the world wasn't flat, and that sailing for such a distance was indeed something that could be endorsed and used. The age of navigation started with the Caribbean, and the latter would change the world drastically. All that is characteristic of our modern times initiated during that age. Liberty, anti colonialism, nation building and citizenship. But also mercantilism and

consumerism. Therefore to acknowledge the Caribbean in a historical matter, is not relevant only in terms of slavery and colonialism, but it represents the roots that grew and brought us to the point we are at now. What we believe in, what we deem to be right and how we treat people are all concepts that can be led back to this time.

### **1.2.1 The Exploitation of the territory and of the people**

The Caribbean represented a double source of interest. On the one hand, it was a gateway for silver that was extracted in the Americas, and on the other hand, it was the central point of interest for plantations. Extraction of silver funded the Habsburg's empire, while the plantations were the most valuable holdings since they represented an economic model of full extraction and exploitation.

Let's think of at the time “French” Saint Domingue, now Haiti, and “British” Jamaica. Not only did these activities were of course executed by slaves and so done under racial exploitation, but these also had devastating environmental effects, leaving the fauna and flora depleted. It has been estimated than more than eight hundred thousand African slaves were brought only to Cuba in the eighteen hundreds. Columbus had claimed many of the islands for Spain, and that was roughly the case until the 17th century, when France and England came into play. There came to be a true concentration of tension and power relations in such a relatively small region of the world. In most cases however, the main resource was one, sugarcane. The latter wasn't originally a local plant but it grew well in that environment. The main point of sugarcane was, and still is, its use in multiple and diverse scenarios. It was used for the production of sugar of course, which could be added to tea, chocolate and coffee, but is also used for the production of rum. These products became highly requested in Europe, so with demand came offers, and planters kept having a flourishing activity. This gave

great relevance to the Caribbean as a whole region. Oftentimes countries, notably France and England, were at war with each other and this caused countries such as Martinique to change colonizers frequently. Thus mixing and intertwining cultures even more.

With the rise of plantations also came the increasing need for workers. This is where slavery reached its peak. About 5 million enslaved Africans were brought to the islands, and as we know from history, forced to work. Life conditions made escaping the only choice, even if that was difficult. However, those who managed to do so, also called “maroons”, would form communities and establish themselves in territories that were hard to reach for the Europeans. The Caribbean is relevant because of what it represented at the time, its legacy, and of course slavery.

### **1.3 The rise of the Revolution & France**

Uprisings had started in 1791, and many plantation fields were subsequently destroyed. Women played a central part in the revolts, and actively fought battles. Suzanne Bélair was a sergeant and lieutenant in the army of Louverture. Toussaint Louverture is the man considered to be the symbol of the revolution. He was a general, and fought for the adoption of a constitution. However this was problematic since slavery had been abolished, but the territory was still a colony. At this point, Napoleon sought to reinstall slavery, and new battles were fought. Louverture was finally deported to France, and did not see the finalized independence of Haiti in 1804.

Haiti was the first, and only country to carry out a successful revolution and self-proclaimed Republic. It was also the first constitution in the world to recognize

the rights of all its citizens no matter the color of skin. At the time, this was unthinkable and scandalous of course. Post colonialism Haiti and Dominican Republic were both left with weak, unstable political landscapes and institutions. Most importantly however, Haiti has been a notorious example of nation-building, following its invasion and history of colonialism.

### **1.3.1 A true independence ?**

Independence is indeed a strong word, since the debt Haiti owed to France is most probably what traced the path for centuries of poverty and underdevelopment. Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2001) in *The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development*, treat the question of the gap between the rich and poor, and its roots to colonialism. It is arguable that present day inequality is linked to the type of colonial state established in the territories. As we have mentioned, Haiti being an extraction colony, therefore finding itself completely depleted.

Ultimately, the range of factors explaining the unequal process of development can be linked to colonialism, as well as democratic instability and absent institution building. It is argued that what causes underdevelopment are these “metropolis-satellite” relationships between the controlling country and its colony, as well as the development of capitalism. A revelatory example could be that of the British Commonwealth, where there is still dependency between the countries around the world and the “Motherland”.

Post-independence, the island found itself with an incredibly high economic sanction to pay-off, and no international network or allies to provide support. Hence these “metropolis-satellite” relationships between the controlling country and its colony are a cause of underdevelopment.

In addition to the country's internal challenges, Western countries and the United States refused to accept the existence of a free independent black nation. In fact, the United States refused to recognize it for about six decades. It was a shared preoccupation that the Haitian revolution would influence other colonies to revolt and subsequently claim their independence. Freedom was feared. An embargo was placed on the country, and forced payments to France amounted to an estimated 20 billion dollars, for their "losses". If this wasn't done, France was quick to threaten bombardments on Haitian territory. The debt was finally paid off after the second World War. As further punishment, the newly independent country was cut off from the sugar market, and Haitians had to turn to subsistence farming. The latter led to deforestation and soil erosion.

As if that weren't already sufficient, during the 20th century, a fairly constant occupation of Haiti by the United States is to be acknowledged. This was done to protect American investments, ensure payments to France and support dictatorial regimes. In response to the numerous invasions, Haitian Indigenism started to develop. It was a humanist movement born at the beginning of the 20th century. It was a reaction to American imperialism, against intellectual and spiritual colonization (Charles, 1984 and Guerrier, 2008). The American invasion was a clear statement that it was up to the US to manage Haiti's economy and foreign policy. Troops were stationed and the American Citibank took control of Haiti's National Bank.

Thematics of race, class and religion have always characterized Haiti's internal conflicts. A country with an abundance of dualisms. Catholicism and Vodou, black and white communities, and families that are extremely rich or extremely poor. This can be summed up in Haitian creole "*nèg anwo*" and "*nèg anba*" (men that are up and men that are down). It is inevitable to agree that relics of colonialism still thrive in Haiti's present. A state of permanent turmoil, conflict and marginalization. The modern reality doesn't seem very far off from the past one. Legacies of slavery destroyed social relations, and there is still a sense of

negativity instilled in practices of African origin. The Caribbean is central in post colonial analysis, because it is the region that was first discovered and initiated the colonial era. However, it was also the region that challenged this very system and revolted against it, paving the way for values of equality and emancipation regardless of class and ethnicity.

## Chapter 2: Haiti and Hegel

### 2. Susan Buck-Morss' analysis

In her groundbreaking work, American philosopher and historian Susan Buck-Morss draws connections that were before ignored between inequality, human emancipation and conflict. In her work *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*, which is what we will center upon for our analysis, she provides a connection between the German philosopher Hegel and Haiti.

It is only by challenging our thoughts to what is unexpected that we may discover linkages between cultures. It is only through “flashes of clarity that open the potential for understanding in spite of cultural differences” (Roads to Modernity, November 2016).

#### 2.1 Hegel's master-slave dialectic

Hegel explains the movement of history through the master-slave dialectic. The philosopher argues that these two figures present a symbiotic relationship. What is meant by this is that neither one of them can live without the other. However, there is a distinction because the slave is the one to make material changes, therefore leaving the master more dependent on the slave than vice versa. Because of this capacity, the slave has more agency in the world and makes history. Buck-Morss states the following:

*“The slaves achieve self-consciousness by demonstrating that they are not things, not objects, but subjects who transform material nature.”*

The philosopher goes further by saying that liberation does not in fact come from above but comes from the slaves themselves, who risk everything for freedom.

Buck-Morss highlights this once again:

*“ it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained.”*

And

*“The goal of this liberation out of slavery cannot be subjugation of the master in turn, but, rather, elimination of the institution of slavery altogether.”*

As the author reminds us, during the eighteenth century, slavery became the principal metaphor for Western political philosophy. It was a connotation for everything that was evil about power relationships.

## **2.2 A new dialectic**

A fundamental aspect of what Buck-Morss tackles first and foremost is a revision of Hegel's infamous master-slave dialectic. What the author does is essentially to form a transnational connection of the concept. What is meant by this is that Hegel would have begun thinking about relations between masters and slaves only as a result of the Haitian revolution. This may not seem relevant as to whether true or false, however it would be revelatory since his theories are considered as being purely abstract. Given the fact that Hegel produced his own work concomitantly with the Haitian Revolution, Buck-Morss can't help but question why scholars did not connect his writing to the events.

The way the historian argues in favor of this supposition is that there is, as she claims, an absence of communication between disciplines. This led to an exclusion of certain narratives and ultimately, to a misinterpretation of the world's history.

*“The contemporary slogan, Think Global—Act Local, requires modification. We need to first ask what it means to Think Global, because we do not yet know how. We need to find ways through the local specificities of our own traditions toward a*

*conceptual orientation that can inform global action.”* (Buck-Morss, *Universal History*, 2009)

What the author argues here is mainly that what we have thought and learned until this point is nothing but an illusion. If we think we are aware of what is global, we most likely aren't truly informed. Thinking globally means expanding the realm of our own narratives and local history. In order to come to a 'global' perspective, we need instead to use our own traditions and center it toward the exterior.

This reinterpretation leads to a new path of critical thinking. Buck-Morss here really connects the thought of Hegel, and the events of the Haitian revolution. It is inevitable in this sense not to see the correlation between the two. As Hegel discusses the slave being the one to create history and seek freedom, revolts in Haiti occurred and, in the end, were victorious. Historicizing the thoughts of the philosopher and the actions of slaves during the revolution, the author allows us to go beyond theory and broadens the vision to concrete events.

It is in what one wouldn't expect, that connections take place and unexpected linkages form. Her thought surpasses conventional ideological implications and instead focuses on “permeability of the space between opposing sides as it reaches for a common humanity” (Ibid).

### **2.3 Hegel's thought**

The French revolution was indeed important in the eyes of Hegel. Buck-Morss recalls how it led the population to move toward the idea of self rule. This is in parallel with Haiti's story, and she continues to say how Hegel managed to adopt a global perspective and to come to think about universal freedom. We have already mentioned that the philosopher did sympathize with the moderate revolutionaries and not the Jacobins. The former were opposed to the

abolishment of slavery. Why then would Buck-Morss think of Hegel as someone inspired by Haiti's rebellious events ?

All the ideas of the philosopher about revolution do not seem to go in accordance with that which the American scholar wishes to argue for. In all sincerity, what can be doubted is indeed the actual knowledge of Hegel on Haiti. There is no substantial proof of how much he actually was aware of. Even if he was informed on the latest newspapers, it doesn't guarantee that he knew it all. This is what Teshale Tibebu, an African historian, tries to explain in his *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History* (2011),

In his publication, he also observes that Hegel was a true admirer of Napoleon Bonaparte. This is something that can't be overlooked since it was this same figure who was the one to re-establish slavery in France's colonies in the Caribbean. This happened in 1802 and of course included Haiti. Subsequently to this event, Haiti was able to fight against France and finally impose true freedom. However, the rest of the French colonies did continue to live under slavery with Napoleon. At the same time as these events, Hegel wrote *Phenomenology*. The question then, is why did Hegel continue to be oblivious of Napoleon's doings? In Tibebu's words:

“Why did Hegel not revise his views about Napoleon and call him the enemy of freedom, considering that Napoleon had extinguished the flame of freedom in most of the French colonies and revived the threat of slavery in Haiti? Didn't Hegel read about such events in his morning newspapers?”

Another perspective is the one given by professor Christian Davis, where the latter argues in another direction. It is true that for Hegel the ultimate goal of humanity is freedom. It is however possible to reach this goal only in a given context. In simple words, without certain essential factors, the end result cannot be obtained. This includes elements such as having a kind of political and economic environment which allows for self-development, knowledge and

reflection. This is to say that these systems were the ones present in Europe and the West, not in the rest of the world. Logically then, if the populations outside of these designated regions couldn't, in the eyes of the philosopher, develop these characteristics, then perhaps slavery was consequential.

We can here associate the thought of Davis to the concept of the 'savage'. Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot's basic premise is that anthropology didn't invent the savage, but placed ideals that weren't western inside this figure. So basically the unknown became the savage. The idea behind the 'Other', is all that is foreign and peculiar. In the thematic trilogy, Trouillot distinguishes 3 positions, or slots. These are the savage, the utopia and order, or the civilized. Savages are in a state of nature, being with no state, religion or shame. By performing this study of the Other, anthropology monopolized the position of the savage, and kept a clear hierarchy between the other positions because it kept to characterize the "savage" in such a way. Race, colonialism and tribes seem all intertwined concepts.

All academic subjects don't create their fields of knowledge but rather take the knowledge and give it meaning and definition. This is also the case for anthropology. Academic disciplines filter and rank arguments and themes which they consider relevant. Therefore, they are not involved in the pure creation of the fields. With the discovery of "America", the classification of the tribes and indigenous groups of people, has been a European phenomenon.

Without deriving too far into anthropological studies, which are beyond our aim, we can use the academic field as a useful source of information and explanation. The aim of anthropology was originally that of explaining the phenomena observed in foreign tribes and cultures. This eventually divided into the appearance of men, later known as somatology, their language, or linguistics, and finally their beliefs, or ethnology. All these three aspects weren't previously dealt with in other sciences. However, due to heavy power imbalances between western and third world countries, anthropological studies often were too one

sided, meaning influenced by a colonialist view. Therefore, anthropology promoted a colonialist structure, because it lacked to challenge the power imbalance between the west and the non-westerners.

In a certain sense, this is also what was done by Hegel. By classifying who could develop what sort of skills and knowledge, he proceeded to separate one population from the other.

Hegel did classify the Africans as 'animal man', without an awareness of God, morality, or law (Davis, "*Hegel and the Third World*," 2013)

How could an 'Animal Man', ever reach self-awareness and freedom and be liberated from the men who had developed these skills and understandings ?

Clearly this was not an option.

Moreover, the slave's rebellion is not truly against the master, but against nature, therefore the master is not defeated in Hegel's dialectic. The master remains the master and the slave remains slave.

Hegel's words about Haiti read:

"Negroes, uninterested and lacking in interest, in a state of undisturbed naivety, are to be regarded as a nation of children. They are sold and allow themselves to be sold without any reflection as to the rights or wrongs of it. [...] They cannot be said to be ineducable, for not only have they occasionally received Christianity with the greatest thankfulness and spoke movingly of the freedom they have gained from it after prolonged spiritual servitude, but in Haiti they have even formed a state based on Christian principles. They show no inner tendency to culture however." (Hegel, *Philosophy of the Subjective Spirit*)

While Hegel's racism is undeniable, that wasn't the only factor determining his ideas. The man was against radical revolutionaries of all kinds, even the ones in France.

It seems here as if each scholar is arguing for a version of Hegel that contradicts one another. What is certain however, is that Hegel couldn't have it all. The admiration for Napoleon paired with the support for the successful liberation of the enslaved in Haiti is improbable. It seems to be clear that Hegel never was a revolutionary, even when it came to the abolition of slavery. Perhaps he could be called a reformist, standing for a gradual abolition of slavery.

## **2.4 Universal history's shortsightedness**

Universal history is a theory common to enlightenment thinkers, who believed history to be teleological. It states that humanity is a common path leading to universal freedom. We can here cite the same Hegel, who thought that human history moved along stages, which eventually terminated in spiritual liberty. On the other hand, Kant argued that human history moved toward political liberty.

However, because of the existing miscommunication between disciplines, the result has been a continuation of the idea of 'Enlightenment' of Universal history, which isn't corresponding to reality. In reality, what universal history centers on is a major Euro-centric narrative. This means that what is considered is nothing more than a biased vision of growth of cultural history. Therefore, the narrative of development of black slaves is for instance excluded in this field.

It is in accordance with these motives that the American author espouses a new form of humanism, her main argument being that narratives which were previously left out need to be included in history. Furthermore, her inspiration derives from postmodernism, as well as reflects the positions of scholars such as W.E.B Dubois.

## 2.5 Enlightenment or Illusion

The fundamental principle enlightened thinkers believed in is freedom. Once more, as Buck-Morss reminds us, philosophers who were inspired by this current of thought saw slavery as “everything that was evil in power relationships.” Does this mean they were aware of the events of slavery? Inevitably they were, however certain events were left out of their reasonings, even if they did believe their philosophies to be universal and applicable to all. These thinkers did indeed believe in the idea of universal freedom, however this was happening at the same time as the slave trade was growing exponentially. This is because the exploitation of the slave laborers was accepted as part of the world by the very enlightened thinkers. Needless to say this went in contradiction to what they proclaimed, and freedom was not in fact every man’s inalienable right.

Freedom should’ve been “the highest and universal political value” ( Buck-Morss, Susan. “Hegel and Haiti.”, 2000)

This contradiction is one that lies at the center of European history, as well as that of the rise of modern capitalism. If this was not obvious enough in the past for these thinkers, what the author doesn’t seem to convey is why modern scholars, now inevitably informed and cognizant of the facts, haven’t proceeded to form this association. How is it possible that they presented western history as narratives that are coherent ?

The answer given by Buck-Morss is once again completely reliant on the lack of relationships between disciplines.

This theory can be explained in the following way. While the philosopher Hegel has been considered exclusively as a philosopher who was engaged in abstract thought, he is then considered to have had no influence on the part of history. Even if he did write about the influences of history!

*“The greater the specialization of knowledge... the easier it is to ignore discordant facts.”(Ibid)*

What Susan Buck-Morss does is that by reading the infamous master-slave dialectic by Hegel, she is able to associate the dialectic to Haiti. The author wishes to highlight the idea that his work was not born by means of pure abstraction or imagination, rather the theory came out of concrete factual historical events. It did not come from a man who was unaware of the world but quite the opposite, from an individual who was very much engaged in current world affairs. In this sense, she continues, his philosophy was universal. It should perhaps be considered valuable to modify Universal history and include the numerous contradictions that took place during the era of the European Enlightenment, as well as the other narratives of those whose history was never considered nor valued.

*"Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains."*

This is what Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote in *On the social contract* in 1792. However, even after stating the following, the author seems to ignore the conditions of millions of European owned slaves. Catalan philosopher Louis Sala-Molins condemns this by arguing that there has inevitably been an interesting contradiction between the texts of the enlightened philosophers and what was concretely going in France at the time.

For this reason Sala-Molins takes into account the “Code Noir”, a legal code applying to black slaves in the colonies. The following was enacted in 1685 and signed at the time by Louis XIV. The latter legalized practices such as slavery, torturing and mutilating slaves were they to try to escape and considering human beings as moveable property. The code contained a list of punishments with their severity. What is also interesting about the categorization of the slaves for the code is that the latter could be considered both property and citizen. This depended and varied according to moments in the slave’s life. This

is a curious doubling of inclusion and exclusion. This facilitated domination because it left the slaves reliant on his owner and accused or punished. For instance, a slave considered as moveable property couldn't be held responsible for any court, they could however if they were considered persons. Moreover, even if the master was prohibited from torturing and killing the slave, it was unlikely that the latter would be prosecuted legally for doing so. If he were to be accused and incarcerated, this would have looked like an undermining of his figure, and on a larger spectrum it could have been a possible danger for the colony's stability.

This code came at the same time as the Enlightenment era, and inevitably this creates a lack of credibility for these revolutionary thinkers. What becomes problematic is that these thinkers approached the theoretical problem without really tackling the concrete problematics such as this code. Rousseau for instance never mentioned the black code, nor the deportation of Africans in the Indies, and their horrifying life conditions.

### **2.5.1 Haiti and Enlightenment**

After having discussed the nature and contradictions of the Enlightened thinkers and philosophers, we shall explore the role of Haiti in all of this argument.

*In Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment*, Nick Nesbitt does just the following. Haiti's revolution influenced radical enlightenment . The author states in fact the former colony to be an:

"incomplete project of Enlightenment counter modernity"

To do so, it is necessary to rely on Haiti's history of emancipation during this age, always considering that it has been the first country to recognize the rights of all despite skin color. In this sense, the country has played a fundamental role

in the realm of universal emancipation and contributed to humanity. The era of enlightenment was therefore 'transnational'. What the slave revolt accomplished was unique on its own, however what came after the revolts and the acquired independence was even more unbelievable at the time. Universal emancipation was at the center of the movement as well as the accordance of human rights, even to people of African descent. This is important to highlight since not even the most radical philosophers accepted the notion. The Haitian revolution is ultimately an event to consider beyond simply the fact that it happened, or that it was the first black republic. What those slaves did is a true reformation of the Enlightenment, in order to achieve universal emancipation. Furthermore, the Haitian society that came after 1804 was a direct challenge to the society of the time, and to current development with its "alternative economic and/or political model".

## **Chapter 3: Marxist analysis & Universalism**

Countering Susan Buck-Morss' argument on postcolonial debate in Haiti, is, among others, Henry Heller's. If on one hand the first scholar argued that the Haitian revolution was the most universal aspect of the French revolution since the country would have been used by Hegel as his reference for the master-slave dialogue, what she argued is in fact that this was the quest for universal freedom, on the other hand there is however, a second interpretation of the facts we will here consider. This is the Marxist analysis. We will present this view by saying that for these thinkers, Hegel's master-slave dialectic was an expression of class conflict in Europe and had nothing to do with Haiti.

Marxists do agree with Buck-Morss on the fact that the islands' revolution pushed forward the principle of universal freedom and undoubtedly influenced the revolutions in Europe. What is tried to affirm here is that the universal significance of the Haitian revolution can be interpreted independently from Hegel's thoughts. What is problematic with the latter philosopher is that his thoughts also included racism, and were eurocentric. Therefore to take as a starting point the first country in the world to proclaim human rights independently for all, and associate it with Hegelian thought would perhaps not be the most ideal interpretation.

Alternatively to such is what we shall analyze further on. The point of the argument is not that the Haitian revolution wasn't indeed critical to universal history, it is instead that this event led to a more democratic and inclusive form of revolution. Moreover, Buck-Morss' conviction that Haiti was used by Hegel as the base for his thought is dubious and contended in this argumentation. Indeed it is possible or even probable that the German philosopher was informed on historical events, however his reference would've most probably been of European nature. Hegel was not politically radical, and didn't show signs of

particular worry or concern toward black people. There would be in this sense no apparent motive to think of Haiti when we think of Hegel and his dialectic.

### **3.1 Susan Buck-Morss & Marxism**

According to Heller, a first indication of a short-sighted analysis on the part of Buck-Morss is the simple fact that the latter did not acknowledge in the first place a Marxist analysis of class relationships.

What the American scholar wishes to rebuild in a sense is universal history. She does this by imagining the narrative to be centered on non-European narratives. We have previously seen this in the former chapter. The error of universal history would have been in this criticism 's centeredness on Europe.

*“The task is to reconfigure the enlightenment project of universal history in the context of our too-soon and not-yet global public sphere” (Buck-Morss, Hegel, Haiti and Universal History, 2005)*

For this new universal history, Haiti plays a central role not as a victim of Europe’s wrongdoing, but as a building example for the same Europe. It is here argued that the country needs to be liberated from the Eurocentric narrative of power once and for all.

*“What happens when, in the spirit of dialectics, we turn the tables, and consider Haiti not as the victim of Europe, but as an agent in Europe’s construction?”. (Ibid)*

For this same reason, even if the Enlightened thinkers did argue in favor of Haiti, they couldn’t have moved the direction of the country. It was only when the slaves took the situation in their own hands that progress was made. Interestingly it is the slaves who truly realized the Enlightened principles of the West, much more concretely so than what any philosopher could have done. Human liberty, human rights, a constitution for all and equality.

Toussaint Louverture was, in particular, the man who led the uprisings and established the path toward freedom. This was the first and only objective of the revolution. It was only freedom that truly gave legitimacy to the revolution in universal terms. This is how the French saw themselves. According to this logic then, the Haitian revolution made the principles of the French revolution valid at universal level. This is because it challenged conventional modes of exploitation at the time present in class society. Let us be reminded of the fact that the French revolution happened as a response to poverty and oppression. The leadership of the revolution in France was held by the working class who seized it from the bourgeois class. The uprisings included revolutionaries, black slaves and feminists. Indeed we can clearly see the resemblances with the Haitian uprisings. This is what Buck-Morss further suggests.

Furthermore, it is argued as being mostly improbable that Hegel referred to Haiti for his master slave dialectic since the latter was in favor of the revolution only up to a point. What is certain is that he did not support the more radical democratic Jacobins, who were the only group in support of Haiti's revolutionary tendencies, in favor of the more conservative Girondins. One would therefore find no reason to assume that he supported the same Jacobins in Haiti. In conclusion to such it can be said that Hegel's universalism was in fact limited.

Another argument used by Buck-Morss to disqualify Marxist analysis is to enunciate Marxist analysis as a 'stagist' view of history. This is to say that slavery was seen as a premodern institution, and it also involved an element of racism. What Heller responds to is first of all that defining Marxism is not an easy task. Various definitions of Marxism are possible, and they vary in meaning and definition. It is possible to have both stagist and anti-stagist positions in Marxist analysis. This is why Marxists can't be excluded from the analysis of Haitian postcolonialism.

### 3.2 The role of Haiti for France

The interesting distinction between Haiti and other colonies isn't only its successful rebellion, but it is especially the fact that the revolutionary movement was not in favor of a complete negation of French culture and identity. The revolution wasn't about retrieving a previous custom, but it was about preserving what had been constructed but without the injustices. A fundamental key of understanding the position of Haitians is to state that Toussaint Louverture presented himself as a citizen of a colony of revolutionary France.

The constitution of Haiti read:

*'All men are born, live and die free and French'* (Louverture, "Louverture Project").

This subsequently changed after Napoleon's attempt to reimpose slavery in the country. Only then did Haiti move to full independence.

A further consideration to make is to have in mind that the position of France during the eighteenth century was contradictory. If slavery was on one hand illegal in the mainland, it was on the other hand flourishing in the colonies. This included Haiti as well as Martinique and Guadeloupe. This ensured the political position of France, as well as its economic prosperity. What happened outside of the motherland was far from the views and considerations of the French citizens. Saint-Domingue continued being the largest producer of sugar, with between 15.000 and up to 500.000 slaves present in the colony by the end of the 18th century.

It was only at the end of the century that writers like Montesquieu began questioning the morality of slaves' presence in the colonies, and that French citizens began re-evaluating their ideals. This is when the French society of the 'friends of the blacks' or 'Societe des Amis des noirs' was founded. The group was formed by a small elite group and it stood in favor of the abolition of slavery and the interruption of the slave trade.

The Haitian slaves formed a significant part of the manufacturing economy in France. Of course with the arrival of the revolution, this economic sector was affected and provoked a crisis. This then led the Jacobins to gain popularity, and the monarchy to be put in a disadvantaged position. From that moment onward is the history we all learned, the monarchy was abolished and replaced in favor of the republic, and the Jacobins further replaced all memory of the monarchical era. It is the Jacobins themselves who abolished New World slavery, and who made the role of women be discussed. In this sense we can say that the Haitian revolution radicalized the French.

### **3.3 The many interpretations of universalist ideals**

If Nesbitt and Buck-Morss' universalism comes from the way in which the Haitian revolution preceded the French one, and made the realization of Jacobin ideals of equality, liberty and fraternity possible, Ethiopian-American political scientist Adom Getachew proposes yet another vision.

To Getachew, what is important about the Revolution is its specificity. What she means by this is that in order to have a full-frame picture of the situation, specificity is important because it focuses the attention on the problems which led to the event, especially politically wise. Moreover, it is political practices that create ideals rather than just accomplishing pre-existing ideals. Colonization is about dominance and it is this very dominance that fueled the actions of rebellion.

Why associate the rebellion of Haiti, a population that was undermined and blatantly exploited , with ideals of universalism that did not belong to them but to their masters ? Why not instead consider universal values not for what the French dictated, but for values that emerge in response to the actions of aggression and political conundrums. The truth is, Haiti came along with

another type of universalism. One that is considerate of personal and collective autonomy.

This only seems natural considering that the country had strong revolutionary leaders such as Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean Jacques Dessalines, who both fought for the constitution and the declaration of independence. Especially in terms of collective liberty, and equality. Citizenship was allowed to all, specifically black citizenship which was offered to all those who were able to escape colonialism and slavery. This is how Haiti made its ideals transnational. Both slavery and colonial rule, two unimaginable mountains to surpass were in fact overcome, and defeated.

In this sense, universalism is not to be intended as a result of exclusion from the main narrative, and an accomplishment of the revolutionary ideals of France. The interpretation here is different. Reading universalism only in the sense of an exclusion and not of domination, also excludes certain aspects of how truly significant was the insurgence of the revolution, and why it isn't simply a realization of the French revolutionary ideals.

Lets begin with a reminder of the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. The latter stated that the application was meant for all, when in reality it was always filtered through race, gender class and religion.

Susan Buck-Morss is in favor of the view that colonial slavery did bring about the exclusion of the slave because of racialization, the exclusion from any legal protection and differentiation between a man of the colony and a man of the homeland nation. It is true that on those grounds, slaves did not receive any rights nor personal, nor as per regarding matters such as political participation. The exclusion brought about "conceptual barriers of difference".

The slaves were under all aspects 'inferior' to those who ruled and who had citizenship.

## Chapter 4: Haitian Universalism

### 4.1 Rights for a few or for all

Jacobin universalism did indeed present its set of limits in terms of its exclusion and heterogenous spread of formal rights. Perhaps it is not difficult then to understand the position of scholars when they argue that slavery was an extreme form of exclusion. Furthermore, not only were slaves not given rights and were not allowed to participate in the political sphere, but they were also excluded from the very category of human beings. Slaves were in fact considered as 'property' and not being a human community.

Therefore, how could one expect these enslaved people to be able to have any kind of rights and liberties at all?

The doing of Haitians then seems a radical act of inclusion, by extending the rights to all men.

*"the revolution was the first to implement, as early as 1791, not the freedom of a certain class or race, nor the civil rights of a 'constitutional state,' but the program of universal emancipation that we today call human rights."* (Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* 2008).

As Nick Nesbitt explains it, the revolution did put in place not only certain rights for certain categories of individuals, but it is an event, or better said, the first event, to ever completely accomplish the task of universal emancipation and our modern conception of human rights. Ideals in France transferred to the colonies, in this case Haiti, traveling from metropole to colony. At the time, colonies were informed about what was happening in the mainland through pamphlets, which is how the information about the French revolution came to be known. This

went in disfavor of the planters, who wouldn't have wanted their enslaved personnel to gather any strange, or rebellious ideas.

The news spread so thoroughly that certain slave insurgents at the very beginning of the revolts were reportedly carrying pamphlets with the rights of man written in them. This put France in a difficult and contradictory position since on the one hand it declared how man should be fairly treated, and on the other they enslaved another half of the population.

France and Caribbean expert Laurent Dubois underlines this very aspect of the story of Haiti. By citing the very ideals of the French revolution, the dominating country was forced to confront itself with this discrepancy. The ocean wide distance between universal principles and the actual practice of slavery happening on the other side of the world. Jacobin ideals were officially known in Haiti and they were relentlessly pursued. The dissemination of the French did seem to be extremely influential on the way in which history proceeded.

## **4.2 Causes of emancipation**

It is difficult to say that France's historical events happening at that time were the sole motive for the events in the Caribbean. Certainly however, one uprising follows another, and it is hard to stop the pattern. Was emancipation only due to the European revolution of 1789 ? This is a debated topic, and several scholars challenge this by saying that emancipation would have eventually happened, and that the French ideals of universalism had little to no influence on the actual historical events.

As we could imagine, both Nesbitt and Buck-Morss would disagree with this statement, and instead say that the colony 'surpassed' or 'exceeded' its metropole in realizing the goals of enlightenment and human liberty. Undoubtedly, the island itself was more committed to human rights than was

France. Dubois writes “By creating a society in which all people, of all color, were granted freedom and citizenship, the Haitian Revolution laid the foundation for the continuing struggles for human rights everywhere.” (Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* 2004).

The diverging narratives divide scholars and researchers on which view of the revolution to consider legitimate and relevant. However, despite the ongoing debate, and the many interventions, what the case of Haiti remains as is a strong and powerful narrative about the important struggle that occurred between the slaves and the colonists. Even more than that, it changed power relations that were thought of as impossible to shift, especially for what regards human rights.

British historian Robert Blackburn considers to be important simply the fact that the Haitian revolution radicalized the rights of all men which made it something that much more easy to access for future generations. What the Haitians did was firstly personal, but secondly collective. The fight for freedom has never been exclusively individualistic, nor restricted to one country or area. Let us think about the case of the most known revolutions . The French revolution occurred in 1789, this was subsequent to the American revolution in 1765, and later on the Haitian revolution which concluded itself in 1804 and so on. The whole period following the Haitian independence was characterized by a series of consequent revolts and rebellions. This is to say that no one revolution was ever ‘solitary’ in terms of being confined to one situation of domination. They all followed each other like an intertwined chain. Hence the fight of one country or one faction for rights or freedom is useful not to one but to all.

#### **4.2.1 Tout moun se moun**

A fundamental feature regarding the argument is something we have yet to mention. That is the influence of Haitian culture per se. The latter culture had been the result of the various countries of origin of the slaves, notably African

countries. The most evident sign of creole influence is the very language itself. Haitian kreyol in fact has a saying ‘*tout moun se moun*’ translating to ‘every person is a person’. This can showcase how simply the principle of equality and freedom was understood, even back then. Moreover, as Blackburn puts it “African values and concepts animated the liberation wars” (Robin Blackburn, *American Crucible*, 2011).

The different traditions and cultures certainly had a role in the context of the rebellions. With discourses about liberty, and moments of gathering among the people who were enslaved, both culture and community had an ascendant. This is argued by Nesbitt who talks about the ‘creolization’ of the colonies. Once more, there is uncertainty as to whether kreyol and culture could have transformed the principles of universalism into something concrete and legitimate to build upon as a source of rights of man. Haitian slaves linguistically modified their colonial language and mixed it with other influences, such as Portuguese, English and Spanish. Is it then to be considered an innovation, or simply a derivation of the rights of man?

French revolutionary ideals were inevitably present to create the condition for revolutionary action to happen. The basis ground for the revolution could be said to have been facilitated by the declaration of the rights of man, or as Nesbitt describes it created the ‘ontological ground’ for it. Haiti however, did present quite a singular case for the time, and the presence of these universalist rights was a natural process of unfolding due to the essence of the country and its history. Once again, it is difficult to discern the influence of the ideals on the action and to be certain of how much they marked the course of action.

One more argument to be showcased is that the colonization of France in the islands did not mean that these revolutions were ‘French’. Each colony had its own story and revolution, which can be in relation to France’s course of events, but the unfolding of the colonized country’s history is to be separated up to a certain level from the colonizing country because it would be unfair to do

otherwise. This is a reprise of Martiniquian author and politician Aime Cesaire's analysis.

#### **4.2.2 French ideals, Haitian actions**

The fulfillment of the French ideals culminated in Haiti, but it was in addition to the revolutionary actions of Haitian slaves. Practical actions brought theoretical principles into the concrete world.

Political action has been discussed in the previous sections, and we have attempted to compare and confront the multiple and different views upon the question. We have concluded that political action can ultimately be viewed in two ways. A first possibility is to view it as a response to a set of conundrums and ideals. A second is to consider it as a result of certain practices.

In the case which is of our interest, Haiti, we have reviewed both possibilities. The presence of heavy French ideals and the striking actions of Haitians revolutionaries came together in what could have been argued as a completely unexpected way. A repressed uprising, doomed to fail, challenged the odds and brought to accomplishment the most enlightened of ideals.

The fact that the declaration of independence was announced after its accomplishment is certainly interesting since it is not what happened in other instances, most notably in the case of the American revolution. The declaration is made in order to confirm and officialize the accomplished fact. It is done to legitimize what has happened. This is to say that the aims of the revolution were not announced beforehand. Uprisings started and culminated into what we have seen. What could be deduced is that this is an event that just happened, without a clear intention or agenda in mind, and only after its accomplishment did the actors declare a clear image of which ideals were fought for, and what the victory meant in clear political terms.

On the contrary of this argument, Michel-Rolph Trouillot does not condone this apparently casual and unorganized view of Haiti's politics. The anthropologist in fact declared that the "Haitian Revolution thought itself out politically and philosophically as it was taking place." (Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 1995).

According to the scholar, the project of the revolution got increasingly radical throughout the thirteen years of combat for freedom. The desire for freedom thus culminated into the acts of war but were not without foundation. We can affirm that anti-colonial ideals emerged during the process of the revolution but were not fully antecedent to it. Political and ideological, as well as military contestation of the situation brought to the fruition of the final result. With the basis of this argument we indeed intend to say that ideals and political action are contiguous. The conditions of domination are to be deemed responsible for the response of the dominated, and their subsequent elaboration of ideals.

### **4.3 Haiti's capacity of creation**

Hannah Arendt considered the capacity of creation of what was "not given" (Hannah Arendt, "What Is Freedom?," in *Between Past and Future*, 1993), but instead highlights a tendency of innovation, especially when it comes to revolutions. What she believes is that these events are the introduction to a new chapter, as they naturally defy the previous system with a new, reformed way of doing, "the problem of beginning" (Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, 2006 ). On that account, the very essence of a revolutionary act is not to copy a model, but to realize something without parallel. Emancipation takes the shape of a trailblazing reconstruction of the present, a transfiguration one could remark. A breaking point with the present condition is called for in order to politically and socially reform the ongoing apparatus, and this prior to reformed ideals.

Haitian politics presented themselves to the 19th century world as benign without equal. The country set in motion a complete alternative ideal of autonomy. One resulting from unbearable colonial domination. Slaves were able to reinvent themselves as a peasant class that also was independent. Cultivating abandoned land and fleeing plantation sites. Former slaves were able to live by their own means and organize their lives accordingly to such. The relationship to the land was no longer one of subjection, but of ownership.

Ensuring collective autonomy was a necessary condition to allow slaves to finalize their individual autonomy. From the island's independence followed a consequential path for each one individually. We have previously mentioned that Toussaint Louverture's initial constitution was very much still connected to France. Inhabitants of the island were for this reason considered "free and french". This did not however mean that the country was going to be subjected to France's colonial empire. The country had specific laws pertaining individually to their case. Ultimately, this meant that French identity was to be kept but without any legislative dependance from it. France hadn't yet given Haiti the ability to legislate.

### **4.3.1 Free and French**

The main argument for Toussaint was to keep ties with France; unlike other battles of independence, the colony wished to preserve its relationship to the Empire. This was the definition of true emancipation for the Haitian leader. The latter proposition was however not accepted by the country, and Haitians had to find alternative ways to maintain their liberty. It was only with Jean-Jacques Dessalines that collective autonomy from sovereignty was understood as being necessary.

The initial article of the constitution reads as follows:

“The people inhabiting the island formerly called St. Domingo, hereby agree to form themselves into a free state sovereign and independent of any other power in the universe, under the name of the empire of Hayti.” (The Haitian Constitution, 1805 )

The ‘Empire’ of Haiti was an appellation wanted in order to establish equality in the realms of the other Empires, declaring to the world the full autonomy of Haiti. Foreign military presence was not allowed in order to prevent situations of dependance.

The way autonomy of the territory and the people was preserved was by abolishing titles and privileges, as well as preventing any person of white color to be a proprietor of land. “no white person, of whatever nationality shall set foot on this territory with the title of master or proprietor nor, in the future, acquire property here.” (Ibid)

The return and degeneration of racial hierarchies and segregation was feared by then leader Dessalines. Land was to be possessed strictly by natives. Article 14 of the constitution tackled specifically the question of racial hierarchy. Beyond the matter of the ownership of land, what was necessary was to socially reevaluate and elevate blackness to a category equal to others. The association of blackness to slavery had to be worked on, and go through its own emancipation. In a certain way this is still in the works to the present day.

#### **4.4 Exclusion or Inclusion**

From the discussion we made previously about the ownership of land only being allowed to certain categories based on ethnicity, Buck-Morss intervenes and adds her own take on the matter of inclusion and exclusion. She questions the revolution’s weaknesses. Up until this point we have strictly limited our focus to what the revolution has accomplished, not exactly to what it has failed to do.

What if we were to reprise the American scholar's argument and assert that the creation of a 'Black Empire' was nothing more than a reflection of the nationalist, European Empires? Did the former slaves turned leaders of Haiti truly create a new model and a new way of arranging society?

To answer these suspicions, we must consider what happened in the postcolonial, post revolutionary scenario. Not long after the independence, revolutionary universalism was forsaken in favor of a racialist nationalism. Louverture's 1801 constitution put in place the bedrock for a political community that was going to be inclusive, and that recognized all its inhabitants as free and French. Nevertheless, in 1804, just three years later, the same Louverture set the point in highlighting the 'blackness' element.

Elements such as excluding white property, and the denomination of every citizen as being black seems to reinstate an exclusionary narrative. In addition to this, the denomination of 'Empire' could encourage a tendency of imitation to imperialist aspiration. This is what Buck-Morss suggests to be anti-universal of the revolution's post independence scenario. But in this case then, if Haiti's intentions were truly exclusionary, why would the constitution also exempt prohibition of property ownership for white women who had married Haitians? The exemption was also valid for people of German and Polish citizenship. This is due to the fact that these nations contributed to Haiti's revolutionary efforts. Furthermore, to recognize all citizens as being black was not meant to be interpreted as a sign of superiority or reverse discrimination, rather this was done to signal that blackness was a category associated with historical resistance. Therefore the victory against colonialism and slavery was remembered with every Haitian citizen.

Toussaint Louverture's wider aim was to export and expand the newly gained freedom to other parts of the world. Africa was the main interest of course, it being the initial route of the slave trade. Although this was not possible to accomplish at the time, the island did serve as an asylum for freedom to all

Africans who arrived in the country. Haitian universalism had the objective to spread itself throughout the world in order to avenge all the people. Even Dessalines had in mind such a project of salvaging the Western Hemisphere since they had already defeated France.

What is important here is nevertheless not what Haiti wasn't able to accomplish, but what role it played at a global level, that is to say a refuge for all slaves or people who were escaping a colonial reality. Cuban historian Ada Ferrer refers to a key event for our argumentation, which is that Haitians would interrupt slave trade ships, save the people onboard and free them by bringing them into the country, and giving them rights of residency. Haiti was constitutionally declared as a free soil territory, and when North and South reunified, the provision became valid in the entirety of the island. This led to an enlargement of the number of asylum seekers and fugitive slaves. Naturalization was effective after one year of residency for all "Africans and Indians, and those of their blood" 84, this is recorded in the constitution of 1816 of the Southern republic.

The result of the provision of asylum empowered Haiti to geographically enlarge its anti-colonial project, and also created the possibility for transnational citizenship. Haiti's Empire was far from a European model. It established a vision of cross-border and multinational possibility of freedom. For instance, during Bolivar's mission of independence from Spain, he and his generals were repeatedly granted access to Haiti, and ammunition including human capital were provided on the condition that all slaves were to be liberated and that Africans in captivity were sent to Haiti to become citizens.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis started with the initial aim to uncover and analyze the ways in which Haiti rose after the colonial empire, and what were therefore the postcolonial realities and views upon this era. After having discussed several aspects and taken into account diverse factors, it is time to finally conclude and summarize the topics raised.

The complicated relationship between the European powers and their colonies has been a path of misery and repression in its entirety. It quite literally shaped the world's history, and caused the reality to be as it is known currently. What we know today and we define as 'Postcolonialism' isn't simply a period of transition, but it is a discourse centered on conditions under imperialist control, and responses to it. Postcolonial theory has concerned itself with all forms of human injustice. It is not only about the colonized countries, but has affected the interpretation and understanding of texts, the narrative of history and how we are to remember it. It is a tool of interrogation and reflection on what has been and what is to be acknowledged.

There are, however, issues that arise with this theory. How is one able to reclaim a shared cultural identity, when no literature in the western sense, had ever been known by colonized people? Moreover, what about the people that were brutally transported into a whole different world. The latter had to deal with a new geographical and cultural dimension. The very concepts of nationality or shared identity are indubitably hard to conceive in such a situation. Therefore, what does identity become? It could be argued that it comes together as a hybrid form of what was once the shared culture and what there is left after colonialism. What was therefore the process like for colonized countries? This is what I truly wished to uncover in the case of Haiti and France.

“The first ‘Negro’ Republic, the first Latin American Nation, the second nation in the Western Hemisphere” (Sweeney, 1996), had a hard time being accepted by the world.

From the discussion made in this thesis, universalist values are probably the most complex and problematic argument to be tackled due to the incoherent manner in which they were applied. The continued and prolonged tie between colonized and colony brought about a series of complications and debates that have been reviewed throughout our argumentation. One of the main points to draw is certainly the influence of French culture and values upon the newly declared Haitian population. As Susan Buck-Morss disputes, universalist ideals were realized through the Haitian revolution. Moreover, not only were those ideals accomplished in the realm of the newly independent country, but according to the scholar these events also enabled a revolutionary desire in other countries. The influence of Haiti, seems therefore wide, so much so that even Hegel would consider the country as the starting example for his infamous ‘master-slave’ dialectic.

Countering this first approach of analysis is the Marxist point of view, which tries to break the ‘liaison’ of Haiti to Hegelian thought. The weight and significance at global level needs indeed to be considered per se in its context. The eurocentric tendencies of the latter would appear incoherent and ultimately unlikely given that we are talking about emancipation from Europe. Consequently, as this third chapter attests, Hegel and Haiti form a problematic duo.

However, besides these main grounds of debate, what all scholars, and theories have been able to find themselves in accordance with is one thing, the undeniable role of Haiti during this postcolonial period. The Haitian revolution and thus its enlightenment, had a concrete effect on universal history, and also gave rise to an accelerated and more democratic revolutionary scope. Its tangible aid to enslaved people who were rescued and given asylum, its renewed

and implemented form of universalist ideals, and its elaboration of a Constitution, the first in human history, that considered and recognized all people as each other's equal, are characteristics that remained unmatched at the time. All this contributes to saying that despite the roles and influences played by external factors, the path of the country was decisive and prominent.

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