PART TWO

Philosophy of History

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> Hegel determines and presents only the most striking differences of various religions, philosophies, times, and peoples, and in a progressive series of stages, but he ignores all that is common and identical in all of them. The form of both Hegel's conception and method is that of exclusive time alone, not that of tolerant space; his system knows only *subordination* and *succession;* co-ordination and coexistence are unknown to it.
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> —LUDWIG FEUERBACH, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy"

What Is History?

Hegel sees history as an empirical science and the philosophy of history as its thoughtful and rational comprehension. In *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History,* he writes, "The sole end of history is to comprehend clearly what is and what has been, the events and deeds of the past. It gains in veracity the more strictly it confines itself to what is given, and—although this is not immediately evident, but in fact requires many kinds of investigations in which thought also plays a part—the more exclusively it seeks to discover what actually happened" (1998, 26).

Hegel was critical of empiricism. For him, historical facts do not speak of themselves. History is instead as much about interpretation as it is about narrating "what actually happened." It is in this light that he writes, "Even the ordinary, run-of-the-mill historian who believes and professes that his attitude is entirely receptive, that he is dedicated to the facts, is by no means passive in his thinking; he brings his categories with him, and they influence his vision of the data he has before him." History deals with truth. But this truth "is not to be found on the superficial plane of the senses," especially "in subjects [such as history]

which claim a scientific status." Rather, reason "must always remain alert, and conscious deliberation is indispensable. Whoever looks at the world rationally will find that it in turn assumes a rational aspect; the two exist in a reciprocal relationship" (1998, 29).

As the domain of reason, world history "belongs to the realm of the spirit." And the "province of spirit is created by man himself." Nature has no history because it is devoid of the consciousness of freedom. Spirit is to humanity what nature is to the animal and inorganic world. World history is "the record of the spirit's efforts to attain *knowledge* of what it is *in itself*." Its aim is that " the spirit should attain knowledge of its own true nature, that it should objectivise this knowledge [of itself] and transform it into a real world, and give itself an objective existence" (1998, 44, 54, 64).

Stating the methodology of his philosophy of history, Hegel says, "The only appropriate and worthy method of philosophical investigation is to take up history at that point where rationality begins to manifest itself in worldly existence—i.e. not where it is still a mere potentiality *in itself* but where it is in a position to express itself in consciousness, volition, and action." By contrast, the "inorganic existence of the spirit or of freedom—i.e. unconscious indifference (whether savage or mild in temper) towards good and evil, and hence towards laws in general, or, if we prefer to call it so, the perfection of innocence—is not itself an object of history" (1998, 134).

Having or not having history? That is the question. Hegel takes history as central in defining what it means to be human itself. He states in *The Philosophy of History*:

> History is always of great importance for a people; since by means of that it becomes conscious of the path of development taken by its own Spirit, which expresses itself in Laws, Manners, Customs, and Deeds. Laws, comprising morals and judicial institutions, are by nature the permanent element in a people's existence. But History presents a people with their own image in a condition which thereby becomes objective to them. Without History their existence in time is blindly self-involved—the recurring play of arbitrary volition in manifold forms. History fixes and imparts consistency to this fortuitous current—gives it the form of Universality, and by so doing posits a directive and restrictive rule for it. It is an essential instrument in developing and determining

> the Constitution—that is, a rational political condition; for it is the empirical method of producing the Universal, inasmuch as it sets up a permanent object for the conceptive powers. (1956, 163)

Hegel attaches such importance to history that to be without history is akin to being outside the domain of humanity proper. He classifies the various peoples and regions of the world into three basic categories, which I discuss in detail in chapters 6, 7, and 8: those without history (Africa, pre-Columbian New World, etc.), those with "unhistorical history" (Asia), and those with real history (western Europe).

Hegel's philosophy of world history contains three basic ideas. First, "world history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom" (1998, 54); second, it is a rational process; and third, it is the work of divine providence.

Freedom

"World history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom." This is Hegel's most famous statement on world history. It contains two ideas: history is about freedom, just as it is about progress. Progress and development mean the same thing. Hegel's philosophy of world history is a developmentalist paradigm. The two giants who came after Hegel, Marx and Weber, adhere to this paradigm, which is also commonplace in the modernization theory of American social sciences as well as in the contemporary buzz word *globalization*.

For Hegel, freedom, the goal of history, does not mean to act as one wishes. That would be the sphere of caprice and arbitrariness. "The random inclinations of individuals are not the same thing as freedom. That kind of freedom on which restrictions are imposed is mere arbitrariness, which exists solely in relation to particular needs." Freedom is that which is positively self-related; "justice, ethical life, and the state, and these alone, are the positive realization and satisfaction of freedom" (1998, 94).

Hegel writes, "The history of the world accordingly represents the successive *stages* in the development of that principle whose substantial content is the consciousness of freedom." This development of the consciousness of freedom is "*gradual,* not only because the spirit appears in it in a mediate rather than an immediate form—in that the spirit mediates itself with itself; but also because it

is internally differentiated, for it involves a division or differentiation of the spirit within itself" (1998, 129, 130).

For Hegel, as for Marx, development occurs when there is qualitative change. The "activity of the spirit is such that its productions and changes must be presented and recognized as variations in quality." Development "in the natural world, is a peaceful process of growth—for it retains its identity and remains self-contained in its expression," but in the "spiritual world [it is] at once a hard and unending conflict with itself." "Development, therefore, is not just a harmless and peaceful process of growth like that of organic life, but a hard and obstinate struggle with itself. Besides, it contains not just the purely formal aspect of development itself, but involves the realisation of an end whose content is determinate." The end of such development is "the spirit in its essential nature, i.e. as the concept of freedom" (1998, 126, 127). Development is a process with many obstacles in its path toward an ultimate end, the attainment of full freedom.

Hegel's philosophy of history, which sees development and progress as the moving forces for the attainment of full freedom, is based on the belief that "man displays a real capacity for change." This capacity for change makes possible the need for "progress towards a better and more perfect condition." Such need is realizable because man "possesses an impulse of *perfectibility*" (1998, 125). The American mantra "toward a more perfect union" sounds Hegelian in this context.

Freedom "by definition, is self-knowledge." The "substance of the spirit is freedom"; it is also "the sole end of the spirit." This "end of the historical process is the freedom of the subject to follow its own conscience and morality, and to pursue and implement its own universal ends." This means the "subject has infinite value and that it must become conscious of its supremacy." Hegel remarks aptly that the "end of the world spirit is realised in substance through the freedom of each individual" (1998, 55).

The "consciousness [of freedom] first dawned in religion, in the innermost region of the spirit," and the "penetration and transformation of secular life by the principle of freedom, is [*sic*] the long process of which history itself [is made up]." Religion occupies an important place in Hegel's philosophy of history. Indeed, for Hegel the history of a nation is basically the history of its religion. "Religion is the nation's consciousness of its own being and of the highest being." Accordingly, a "nation conceives of God in the same way as it conceives of itself and its relationship to God, so that its religion is also its conception of itself. A

nation which worships nature cannot possess freedom; for only if it sees God as spirit which transcends nature can itself become a spirit and attain freedom." Citing Montesquieu in agreement, Hegel says, "A nation's religion, its laws, its ethical life, the state of its knowledge, its arts, its judiciary, its other particular aptitudes and the industry by which it satisfies its needs, its entire destiny, and its relations with its neighbours in war and peace—all these are extremely closely connected" (1998, 54, 105–6, 101–2). This theory is central to Hegel's philosophy. His discussion of "non-Western" cultures and civilizations rotates around the issue of "people's character," whose fulcrum is their relation to and conception of God.

Rationality

Hegel sees history as a rational process. He declares, "reason governs the world, and that world history is therefore a rational process." The "rational is that which has being in and for itself, and from which everything else derives its value." It "assumes various forms," with nations being its most important manifestations. For the rational comprehension of this historical process, physical "perception and a finite understanding are not enough; we must see with the eye of the concept, the eye of reason, which penetrates the surface and finds its way through the complex and confusing turmoil of events" (1998, 27–30).

The rational is not something subjective imposed upon a nonrational objective world. On the contrary, "To consider a thing rationally means not to bring reason to bear on the object from outside and so tamper with it, but to find the object is rational on its own account. . . . The sole task of philosophic science is to bring into consciousness this proper work of the reason of the thing itself" (1967, 35).

The rationality of world history resides in its being of divine providence. This distinction takes us to the third aspect of Hegel's philosophy of world history.

Providence

History is the externalization and actualization of the divine will working itself through human agency. "The world is governed by God; and world history is the content of his government and the execution of his plan. To comprehend this is the task of the philosophy of history." World history "is governed by an

ultimate design; it is a rational process—whose rationality is not that of a particular subject, but a divine and absolute reason." Reason and religion, faith and knowledge are not at loggerheads; rather, they intersect each other. "A distinction is often made between faith and knowledge, and the two have to be commonly accepted as opposites. . . . But if it is defined correctly, the distinction between faith and knowledge is in fact an empty one" (1998, 67, 28, 41). Stated differently, "the process displayed in History is only the manifestation of Religion as Human Reason—the production of the religious principle, which dwells in the heart of man, under the form of Secular Freedom. Thus the discord between the inner life of the heart and the actual world is removed" (1956, 335).

The one religion that Hegel sees as being in tune with rationality is, of course, Christianity, specifically Protestantism. Hegel says that it is "one of the central doctrines of Christianity that providence has ruled and continues to rule the world, and that everything which happens in the world is determined by and commensurate with the divine government" (1998, 41).

The superiority of Christianity resides in its doctrine of the Trinity. "It is this doctrine of the Trinity which raises Christianity above the other religions. If it did not have this doctrine, the other religions might well provide more material for thought than it does. The Trinity is the speculative part of Christianity, and it is through it that philosophy can discover the Idea or reason in the Christian religion too" (1998, 51).

World history "is the expression of the divine process which is a graduated progression in which the spirit comes to know and realise itself and its own truth." The process of world history consists of a "series of separate stages." These various stages of the development of world history "are stages in the self-recognition of the spirit; and the essence of the spirit, its supreme imperative, is that it should recognize, know, and realize itself for what it is." To accomplish its end of the attainment of full freedom, "it produces itself in a series of determinate forms, and these forms are the nations of world history. Each of them represents a particular stage of development, so that they correspond to epochs in the history of the world." The "specific forms" of the development of world history at the various "stages are the national spirits of world history, with all the determinate characteristics of their ethical life, their constitutions, their art, their religion, and their knowledge." Each national spirit "merely shows how the spirit gradually attains consciousness and the will to truth; it progresses from its early

glimmerings to major discoveries and finally to a state of complete consciousness." These stages of development in world history are essential to the process as a whole, for the "world spirit has an infinite urge and an irresistible impulse to realise these stages of its development; for this sequence and its realization are its true concept." In short, "world history is the expression of the divine and absolute process of the spirit in its highest forms, of the progression whereby it discovers its true nature and becomes conscious of itself" (1998, 64, 65).

The Goal of History and the Role of Reason

What is the goal of world history, now that we see its process? According to Hegel, "the goal . . . [is that] the spirit must create for itself a nature and world to conform with its own nature, so that the subject may discover its own concept of the spirit in this *second nature,* in this reality which the concept of the spirit has produced" (1998, 208). The creation of "second nature" underlies the core of Hegel's developmentalist paradigm of world history. By "second nature," Hegel means nature transformed by spirit—that is, human culture.

In *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* Hegel explains his concept of development, which constitutes the foundation of his developmentalist paradigm. He says, "In order to comprehend what development is, what may be called two different states must be distinguished. The first is what is known as capacity, power, what I call being-in-itself . . . ; the second principle is that of being-for-itself, actuality." He gives an example: "If we say . . . that man is by nature rational, we would mean that he has reason only inherently or in embryo: in this sense, reason, understanding, imagination, will, are possessed from birth or even from the mother's womb." Yet "while the child only has capacities or the actual, possibility of reason, it is just the same as if he had no reason; reason does not yet exist in him since he cannot yet do anything rational, and has no rational consciousness. Thus what man is at first implicitly becomes explicit, and it is the same with reason" (1995a, 1:20–21). He then makes what is perhaps one of his most concise statements regarding his perspective on development, rationality, and the process of world history:

> But even though man, who in himself is rational, does not at first seem to have got further on since he became rational for himself—what is implicit having

> merely retained itself—the difference is quite enormous: no new content has been produced, and yet this form of being for self makes all the difference. *The whole variation in the development of the world in history is founded on this difference.* This alone explains how since all mankind is naturally rational, and freedom is the hypothesis on which this reason rests, slavery yet has been, and in part still is, maintained by many peoples, and men have remained contented under it. (1995a, 1:21, emphasis added)

In the very next sentence, he says: "The only distinction between the Africans and the Asiatics on the one hand, and the Greeks, Romans, and moderns on the other, is that the latter know and it is explicit for them that they are free, but the others are so without knowing that they are, and thus without existing as being free. This constitutes the enormous difference in their condition" (1995a, 1:21–22). It is quite imperative that we recognize that Hegel draws the global line of distinction regarding reason, freedom, and development between the West and the Third World.

Hegel says, "The development of Mind lies in the fact that its going forth and separation constitutes its coming to itself." He explains this concept of the development of freedom:

> This being-at-home-with-self, or coming-to-self of Mind may be described as its complete and highest end: it is this alone that it desires and nothing else. Everything that from eternity has happened in heaven and earth, the life of God and all the deeds of time simply are the struggles for Mind to know itself, to make itself objective to itself, to find itself, be for itself, and finally unite itself to itself; it is alienated and divided, but only so as to be able thus to find itself and return to itself. Only in this manner does Mind attain its freedom, for that is free which is not connected with or dependent on another. True self-possession and satisfaction are only to be found in this, and in nothing else but Thought does Mind attain this freedom. (1995a, 1:23)

His conception of history is one of interface among reason, development, religion, and freedom. His definition of history would be that it is a rational process in constant development toward its goal of the attainment of full freedom moved by the hands of the Christian God.

The New World and the People Without History

Hegel begins his discussion of the processes of world history by getting rid of the "unhistorical" parts of the world. These parts belong to the domain of the "natural spirit," and he classifies the peoples of pre-Columbian Americas in the New World and mainly Africa in the Old World as belonging to this domain. I devote all of chapter 6 to Africa, so let us now look at Hegel's depiction of the pre-Columbian New World.

"The world is divided into the Old and the New—the latter taking its name from the fact that America and Australia only came to be known to the Europeans at a later stage of history." These two worlds are "in fact essentially distinct; the New World is not just relatively new, but absolutely so, by virtue of its wholly peculiar character in both physical and political respects." The pre-Columbian New World "did possess an indigenous culture when it was first discovered by the Europeans, [but] this culture was destroyed through contact with them." Hegel calls Native American culture, especially that which developed in Mexico and Peru, "a *purely natural culture* which had to perish as soon as the spirit approached it." "Natural culture" means the same thing as "natural spirit." Hegel adds: "America has always shown itself physically and spiritually impotent, and it does so to this day. For after the Europeans had landed there, the natives were gradually destroyed by the breath of European activity. Even the animals show the same inferiority as the human beings" (1998, 162, 163, emphasis added).

The "spirit" that approached the "purely natural" Native American world, the "breath of European activity" that engulfed them, was the spirit of Columbus, the breath of Christian Europe. In actuality, it was the spirit of death, destruction, and dislocation. The European conquistadors, Catholic *and* Protestant, carrying the mark of the Cross, brought mayhem to people who had done them no wrong. The Cross was meant to represent a death that would lead to eternal life through resurrection. What and where was the "resurrection" for those who perished in the millions when the European spirit "approached" them? Was their "resurrection" misspelled "reservation"? If so, whom were they supposed to reserve, as in "serve again"? Or is it that they were reserved for posterity, for history, as "primary sources" of what "America" was once upon a time in the past? None

of these questions seems to have ever occurred to Hegel—at least, there is no sign of them in his texts.

For Hegel, the New World (he also uses the name "America") is inferior to the Old World in all aspects. This inferiority extends even to the flora and fauna. "The fauna of America includes lions, tigers, and crocodiles, and although they are otherwise similar to their equivalents in the Old World, they are in every respect smaller, weaker, and less powerful" (1998, 163). Even the indigenous meat is less nourishing than Old World meat, Hegel opines.

Adding to the list of New World peoples' defects, Hegel says, "The weakness of the human physique in America is further aggravated by the lack of those absolute instruments which can alone establish a firmly based authority—namely, horses and iron, the principal means by which the natives were subdued" (1998, 165).[1]

In a harsh and cold indictment against Native American humanity, he informs his students of what became the historical "fate" of Native America as it came into "contact" with Europe:

> As for the human population, few descendants of the original inhabitants survive, for *nearly seven million people have been wiped out. The natives of the West Indies islands have died out altogether. Indeed, the whole North American world has been destroyed and suppressed by the Europeans.* The tribes of North America have in part disappeared, and in part withdrawn from contact with the Europeans. Their degeneration indicates that they do not have the strength to join the independent North American states. *Culturally inferior nations such as these are gradually eroded through contact with more advanced nations which have gone through a more intensive cultural development.* (1998, 163, emphasis added)

Here is Hegel exposed: the Christian-bourgeois philosopher at his most callous, cruel, unfeeling, and inhumane. For Hegel, the extermination of the Native Americans was necessary because it impelled a lower cultural life to give way to

1. Two books published the same year at the end of the twentieth century rehash this Hegelian idea. They shared the same publisher, and both were *New York Times* best-sellers: Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1999) and David Landes's *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (1999).

a higher one. Hegel reads the death toll caused by disease, war, and hard labor as a vindication of the victory of a superior culture over an inferior one, a superior race over an inferior race, a superior religion over idolatry, superstition, and heathenism. What Hegel says about Native Americans is the same as what Hitler said of the so-called inferior peoples, first and foremost the Jews. For Hegel, might is right. Those who win are right, and those who lose are wrong. The victors prove their superiority over the vanquished, and the vanquished demonstrate their inferiority.

Hegel knew about the indigenous population by reading travelers' accounts. He comments that the "natives have certainly learned various arts from the Europeans, including that of brandy drinking, whose effect has been disastrous." In his view of the situation, "the only inhabitants of South America and Mexico who feel the need for independence are the *Creoles,* who are descended from a mixture of native and Spanish or Portuguese ancestors. They alone have attained a higher degree of self-awareness, and felt the urge for autonomy and independence. It is they who set the tone for in their country. But it would appear that only a few native tribes share their attitude." He admits that some "native tribes" have identified themselves with the "recent efforts of the Americans to create independent states, but it is probable that very few of their members are of pure native origin. For this reason, the English have also adopted the policy of preventing the rise of a native Creole population, i.e., a people of mixed European and native blood" (1998, 164). What we have here is a racist statement in tune with the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* (discussed in chapter 4). The "purely native" peoples of the Americas are deemed so submissive, timid, and given to despotism that any attempt at self-rule in the Americas had to come from the European settlers or from the Creoles, as if European blood, even a partial measure of it, makes one aspire to liberty.

Hegel notes that a large native population survived in South America "despite the fact that the natives there have been subjected to far greater violence, and employed in grueling labours to which their strength was scarcely equal." Although he knew of the oppression and suffering of those who were "subjected to every kind of degradation," his attitude toward them remains condescending. "One must read the accounts of travellers to appreciate their mildness and passivity, their humility and obsequious submissiveness towards a Creole, and even towards a European; and it will be a long time before the Europeans can succeed

in instilling any feelings of independence into them. Some of them have visited Europe, but they are obviously unintelligent individuals with little capacity for education. Their inferiority in all respects, even in stature, can be seen in every particular" (1998, 164).

He states that the Jesuits and the Catholic clergy introduced the "natives" to European culture and manners. They instructed in the "most appropriate means of bettering them, treating them much as one would treat children. I even recollect having read that a clergyman used to ring a bell at midnight to remind them to perform their matrimonial duties, for it would otherwise never have occurred to them to do so. These percepts at first served—quite rightly—to awaken their needs, which are the springs of all human activity" (1998, 165). The idea Hegel entertains here—that prior to European colonization the Native Americans had very limited needs, those confined mostly to bare necessities, and that the Europeans were the ones who influenced them toward higher urgings—is typical of the racist-colonialist myth of the civilizing mission.

Accepting without question the European treatment of the indigenous peoples of the New World, Hegel states, "The [Native] Americans, then, are like unenlightened children, living from one day to the next, and untouched by higher thoughts or aspirations" (1998, 165). Even if this were true, we have to ask, What is wrong with being like children? Children are innocent of crimes against humanity. Children know no bigotry or prejudice. As a Christian, Hegel should have been reminded of Jesus's statement that children are the nearest to God. Jesus taught that adults should be more like children in their simplicity and innocence of heart.

Per his depiction of Native Americans, Hegel inevitably celebrates their replacement by enslaved Africans. "The weakness of their [the Native Americans'] physique was one of the main reasons why the negroes were brought to America as a labour force; for the negroes are far more susceptible to European culture than the Indians." Hegel contrasts the Native Americans with the many free blacks in Brazil who successfully adopted European culture, including a physician named "Dr. *Kingera,* who first acquainted the Europeans with quinine." He reports that an Englishman knew of many black skilled workers and tradesmen, "even clergymen and doctors, etc." He adds, "But of all the free native Americans he knew, he could think of only one who had proved capable of study and who eventually became a clergyman; but he had died soon afterwards as a

result of excessive drinking" (1998, 165). He relies on the authority of a single Englishman to assert, with no apparent qualms, that the Native Americans could not be educated and that the rare specimen of educated native soon succumbed to alcohol.

In a discussion of what humanity means, Hegel writes in the *Phenomenology,* "The man of common reason makes his appeal to feeling, to an oracle within his breast, he is finished and done with anyone who does not agree; he only has to explain that he has nothing more to say to anyone who does not find and feel the same in himself. In other words, he tramples underfoot the roots of humanity. For *it is the nature of humanity to press onward to agreement with others;* human nature only really exists in an achieved community of minds. The anti-human, the merely animal, consists in staying within the sphere of feeling, and being able to communicate only at that level" (1977b, 43, emphasis added). If Hegel knew what it meant to be human, why did he not have any remorse or express outrage for the death of millions of human beings in the Americas? Why did he not "press onward to agreement with others" in this case, Native Americans? Why did he not attempt to achieve "community of minds" with them? In Hegel's paradigm of modern rationality, allegedly inferior people such as the Native Americans are supposed to give way to superior people such as he. That is the only way world history could march on and press forward toward the realization of full freedom.

Hegel is cognizant of evil and injustice in history, but he sees them as part of the larger logic of the development of world spirit. As he has it, "In order to justify the course of history, we must try to understand the role of evil in the light of the absolute sovereignty of reason. We are dealing here with the category of the negative." Hence, we "cannot fail to notice how all that is finest and noblest in the history of the world is immolated upon its altar." Nevertheless, "reason cannot stop to consider the injuries sustained by single individuals, for particular ends are submerged in the universal end. In the rise and fall of all things it discerns an enterprise at which the entire human race has laboured, an enterprise which has a real existence in the world to which we belong." As a consequence, "the affirmative element is not to be found merely in emotional attachment or in the imagination, but is something which belongs to reality and to us, or to which we ourselves belong" (1998, 43). In such a way, by invoking the "absolute sovereignty of reason" over "emotional attachment," Hegel rationalizes evil in history. Within the time period of the history of modernity, what Hegel calls the

"category of the negative," I designate "negative modernity." What he calls the "affirmative element," I call "positive modernity."

Hegel dwells further on the theme of evil in history. "But if we say that universal reason is fulfilled, this has of course nothing to do with individual empirical instances; the latter may fare either well or badly, as the case may be, for *the concept has authorized the forces of contingency and particularity to exercise their vast influence in the empirical sphere*" (emphasis added). Furthermore, as we "consider particular instances, we may well conclude that there is much injustice in the world, and there is certainly much to find fault with among individual phenomena. But we are not concerned here with empirical details; they are at the mercy of chance, which has no place in the present discussion." Hegel calls criticism against injustice "subjective criticism." Such criticism directed "solely at particular matters and their shortcomings—regardless of the universal reason behind it—is extremely facile; and inasmuch as it conveys an impression of good intentions towards the welfare of the whole, and lends itself an air of sincere benevolence, it can become extremely self-important and full of conceit" (1998, 66). What is remarkable about this passage is that Hegel himself is involved in all kinds of "subjective criticisms" imaginable, passing negative judgments (more of which we'll see in subsequent chapters) on almost every world culture and religion outside western Europe. It would be idiosyncratic to assume that his critique of these non-Western cultures is rational, objective, and in line with the universalistic goal of the "march of the world spirit" toward the realization of full freedom.

Hegel is aware of the "violence" and "irrationality" of human passions in history, the "evil" and the "wickedness," the downfall of "the most flourishing empires the human spirit has created." This awareness may create a "profound pity for the untold miseries of individual human beings" in which we can "only end with a feeling of sadness at the transience of everything. And since all this destruction is not the work of mere nature but of the will of man, our sadness takes on a moral quality, for the good spirit in us (if we are at all susceptible to it) eventually revolts at such a spectacle" (1998, 68).

Hegel says there is "nothing we can do about it [evil] now." Indeed, "we retreat into that selfish complacency which stands on the calmer shore and, from a secure position, smugly looks on at the distant spectacle of confusion and wreckage." Consistent with his developmentalist paradigm, he sees the "cunning of reason" at work in the dark pages of history. He ponders: "But even as we look upon history

as an altar on which the happiness of nations, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals are slaughtered, our thoughts inevitably impel us to ask: to whom, or to what ultimate end have these monstrous sacrifices been made?" Although he sees that man "can be held responsible, for good as well as for evil" and that "only the animal can truly be described as totally innocent," he still chastises what he calls the "litany of lamentations" that "the good and the pious . . . fare badly in the world, while the evil and the wicked prosper" (1998, 69, 91).

Even at this point, Hegel's account of evil in history does not extend to the fate of the Native Americans. He expresses no sorrow at that monumental evil of European modernity, the extermination of Native Americans. The evil that he refers to with so much sadness and sorrow is that of European history, not the fate of the Native Americans. He sees no "magnificent empires" in pre-Columbian America. Instead, he sees barbarism, savagery, and nations of unenlightened children; it is good they are gone. For him, genocide may be wrong in and of itself, but the genocide of Native Americans was not wrong because they were inferior human beings. With the same callous logic, he justifies the enslavement of Africans in the Americas.

Hegel's dialectic of the development of world history is the dialectic of development and progress for some but the dialectic of death and destruction for others. As the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski puts it, "In Hegel's system, rebellion against the existing world may be justified in a particular case, but we have no means of telling whether it is or not until destiny is accomplished. If it proves successful, this shows that it was historically right; if crushed, it will evidently have been only a sterile reaction of 'what ought to have been' *(Sollen).* The vanquished are always wrong" (2005, 66). The West won; ergo, it was right. The Third World lost; ergo, it was wrong. Such is the militaristic logic of Hegel's "dialectic." No wonder he was infatuated with men of war and conquest, but even here he was enamored of Western men only: Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon.

Disposing of Native Americans as "unenlightened children" who deserve extermination, Hegel moves on to discuss the European population in the New World. Because the indigenous population has "vanished—or as good as vanished," the "effective population comes for the most part from Europe, and everything that happens in America has its origin there." The surplus population of Europe has migrated there. "America has [accordingly] become a place of refuge for the dregs of European society" (1998, 165, 166).

Hegel notes many advantages of European immigration to America. The European "emigrants have cast off much that might restrict them at home, and they bring with them the benefits of European self-reliance and European culture without the accompanying disadvantages; and to those who are willing to work hard, and who have not found an opportunity to do so in Europe, America certainly offers ample scope" (1998, 166).

North America owes its prosperity to industry. Its politics are republican, based on "civil order and firmly established freedom." South America, by contrast, is based on military force. It is full of continuous "military revolutions," unable to form stable states like its northern counterpart. South America was Catholic, and it was conquered. North America, by contrast, was Protestant, and it was colonized. The North American states were "entirely *colonised* by the Europeans," "industrious Europeans who applied themselves to agriculture, tobacco and cotton planting, etc." The people were concerned with "the desire for peace, the establishment of civil justice, security, and freedom, and a commonwealth framed in the interests of the individuals as discrete entities, so that the state was merely an external device for the protection of property" (1998, 166–67).

The Spanish, who dominated South America, enriched themselves by exacting tribute from the indigenous people. They relied on "force, adroitness, and self-confidence" in order to control and dominate the indigenous people. "The noble and magnanimous aspects of the Spanish character did not accompany them to America." In the New World, "the population which has settled in North America is of a completely different order from that of South America" (1998, 167).

Hegel compares North America with Europe. Unlike Europe, America "affords a perennial example of a republican constitution. It has a subjective unity; for the head of the state is a president who, as a guarantee against any monarchic ambitions, is elected for only four years." North America contains countless Protestant denominations, a situation he calls the "anarchy of worship." "Religious affairs [there] are simply regulated in accordance with the desires of the moment." He laments that "the most unbridled license prevails in all matters of the imagination, and there is no religious unity of the kind which has survived in the European states, where deviations are limited to a few confessions" (1998, 168).

On the politics of North America, Hegel's thought resembles the Marxist theory of the state. In "the politics of North America, the universal purpose of

the state is not yet firmly established, and there is as yet no need for a closely knit alliance." He clarifies that a "*real state and a real government only arise when class distinctions are already present,* when wealth and poverty are far advanced, and when a situation has arisen in which a large number of people can no longer satisfy their needs in the way to which they have been accustomed" (emphasis added). Thus, "North America cannot yet be regarded as a fully developed and mature state, but merely as one which is still in the process of becoming; it has not yet progressed far enough to feel the need for a monarchy." Moreover, North America is not yet a state in that people are still migrating, both from Europe and within the continent. A "state cannot truly exist as such until it has ceased to direct its energies into constant migration" (1998, 168, 169, 170).

He closes his discourse on America with the following reflection. "America is therefore the country of the future, and its world-historical importance has yet to be revealed in the ages that lie ahead—perhaps in a conflict between North and South America. It is a land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical arsenal of old Europe." He closes the book on America with finality: "It is up to America to abandon the ground on which world history has hitherto been enacted. What has taken place up to now is but an echo of the Old World and the expression of an alien life; and as a country of the future, it is of no interest to us here, for prophecy is not the business of the philosopher" (1998, 170–71).

Although Hegel granted the possibility that America might "abandon the ground on which world history has hitherto been enacted," it has instead become a reinvented, reenergized, and reinvigorated reincarnation of Old Europe. The "land of desire" that is Protestant North America has become the most advanced land of "commodity fetishism" in the world, reproducing on a massive scale what Hegel sees taking place in the Europe of his time. The "desire" has become the "dream"—that is, the American dream, perhaps the most common hegemonic cultural perception of (the United States of) America both at home and abroad. In this land of "dreams," anyone can achieve anything she sets her mind on. Of course, there are some "problems" such as racism, sexism, and so on that throw cold water on those having this warm, pleasant dream.

The possible conflict between North America and South America that Hegel thought of as a possibility took the form of North American hegemony over South America and the Caribbean, from the Monroe Doctrine to the new millennium push for globalization and free trade. America in general and North

America in particular followed the game of Old Europe. Hegel's "advice" to strike a new path was not heeded to.

Hegel nowhere mentions the enslaved African people of North America; it is as if they never existed. That the love of liberty by Europeans in North America was founded on the denial of the same for the millions of enslaved and colonized peoples seems to have escaped the notice of the philosopher of freedom. Both North America and South America thrived and prospered on the backs of African slaves. To make the former the home of rationality and freedom and the latter the home of force and arbitrariness makes sense only from the standpoint of Hegel's Protestant prejudice and his complete disregard for the enslaved Africans in both Americas. North America was the land of republican despotism—republicanism for white Protestants and despotism for enslaved Africans. South America was the domain of dictatorial despotism. South America was consistent in its embrace of different forms of dictatorship: one for whites, another for blacks. North America, by contrast, was hypocritical in having within its bosom the irreconcilable systems of republican liberty for whites and unbridled despotism over blacks. In the powerful words of Frederick Douglass in his famous speech "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" given at Rochester on July 5, 1852: "Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the every-day practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival" (1969, 445).

Having cast Native Americans as people without history embedded in the "natural spirit" and European America as the land of the future, hence not an object of historical reflection, Hegel moves on to the Old World. Declaring Africa unhistorical, he discusses what he considers the real theater of world history, "*the conquering march of the world spirit* as it wins its way to consciousness and freedom" (1998, 63, emphasis added). Let us now see how Hegel narrates this marching order of the world spirit.

The "March of the World Spirit"

Hegel sees world history as having an absolute beginning and an absolute end. It "travels from east to west; for Europe is absolutely the end of history, just as Asia

is the beginning." Although "the earth is a sphere, history does not move in a circle around it, but has a definite eastern extremity, i.e., Asia" (1998, 197).

In one of his most important reflections on the process of development of world history, Hegel writes: "The spirit is free; and the aim of the world spirit in world history is to realize its essence and to obtain the prerogative of freedom. Its activity is that of knowing and recognising itself, but it accomplishes this in gradual stages rather than at a single step. Each new individual national spirit represents a new stage in *the conquering march of the world spirit* as it wins its way to consciousness and freedom" (1998, 63). Each stage of national spirit constitutes a moment in the development of the whole of world history. Each national spirit fulfills its duty and passes on, handing the baton over to the spirit that comes next in the relay of historical progress.

Hegel uses Montesquieu's term *spirit of the nation* to explain the process of world history. "The spirit of the nation is therefore the universal spirit in a particular form," Hegel says; "the world spirit transcends this particular form, but it must assume it in so far as it exists, for it takes on a particular aspect as soon as it has actual being or existence." Furthermore, "the particular character of the national spirit varies according to the kind of awareness of spirit it has attained." In this course of development of world history, the "particular spirit of a particular nation may perish; but it is a link in the chain of world's spirit's development, and this universal spirit cannot perish" (1998, 53).

The "spirit of a nation" gives way to its successor only after having fulfilled its historical task. "When the spirit of a nation has fulfilled its function, its agility and interest flag; the nation lives on the borderline between manhood and old age, and enjoys the fruits of its efforts." Glowing with the memory of its bygone golden age, the nation now "lives on with the satisfaction of having achieved its end." It thus "falls into fixed habits which are now devoid of life, and thus moves gradually on towards its natural death." This death of the spirit of a nation comes only *after* the consummation of its success. It then becomes superfluous. When "a nation is fully developed and has attained its end, its profounder interests evaporate" (1998, 59, 58). Such is Hegel's rendering of what is known conventionally as the rise and fall of civilizations.

The death of one national spirit is the ground for the rise of a new and higher national principle. "The death of a national spirit is a transition to new life, but not as in nature, where the death of one individual gives life to another individual

of the same kind. On the contrary, the world spirit progresses from lower determinations to higher principles and concepts of its own, to more fully developed expressions of its Idea." The "reawakening of nature is merely the repetition of one and the same process; it is a tedious chronicle in which the same cycle recurs again and again. There is nothing new under the sun. But this is not so with the sun of the spirit. Its movement and progression do not repeat themselves, for the changing aspect of the spirit as it passes through endlessly varying forms is essentially progress." The national spirit "does not simply fade away naturally with the passage of time, but is preserved in the self-determining, self-conscious activity of the self-consciousness." When a national spirit dies, "it dies only in its capacity as a national spirit." And yet as a "national spirit, it belongs to world history, and its task is to attain knowledge of its function and to comprehend itself by means of thought" (1998, 63, 61).

Hegel uses a metaphor from the plant world to explain the process of world history and the role played by individual national spirits. Each national spirit "brings a fruit to maturity, for its activity is directed towards the fulfillment of its principle." But the fruit does not "fall back into the womb from which it emerged; the nation itself is not permitted to enjoy it, but must taste it instead in the form of a bitter draught. It cannot refuse to drink for it has an infinite thirst for it." Drinking satisfies its thirst, but the "price of its satisfaction is its own annihilation (although it also heralds the birth of a new principle). The fruit again becomes the seed, but the seed of another nation, which it brings to maturity in turn." Each national spirit plays its historic role and is sacrificed on the altar of progress, leaving space for a new and higher national principle, a substitution that continues until the consummation of the realization of full freedom. Having fulfilled its mission in history, the national spirit merges with "the principle of another nation, so that we can observe a progression, growth and succession from one national principle to another." The principles of the national spirits, which form a link in the chain of "necessary progression," are "themselves only moments of the one universal spirit, which ascends through them in the course of history to its consummation in an all-embracing totality" (1998, 62–63, 56, 65).

Hegel calls the national spirits of world history "world-historical nations." A "nation is only world-historical in so far as its fundamental element and basic aim have embodied a universal principle; only then is its spirit capable of producing an ethical and political organisation." By contrast, if "nations are impelled

merely by desires, their deeds are lost without trace (as with all fanaticism), and no enduring achievement remains. Or the only traces they leave are ruin and destruction." And just as there are world-historical nations, there are world-historical individuals: "The ends which world-historical individuals set themselves in fact correspond to what is already the inner will of mankind" (1998, 145, 88).

In the universal spirit of world history, the particular national spirits vary according to the "different degrees of knowledge of freedom." Accordingly, the "*Orientals* do not know that the spirit or man as such are free in themselves. And because they do not know this, they are not themselves free. They only know that One is free; but for this very reason, such freedom is mere arbitrariness, savagery, and brutal passion, or a milder and tamer version of this which is itself only an accident of nature, and equally arbitrary. This One is therefore merely a despot, not a free man and a human being" (1998, 54).

In contrast with the Orient is the Greek world. "The consciousness of freedom first awoke among the *Greeks,* and they were accordingly free; but, like the Romans, they only knew that *Some,* and not all men as such, are free." The "Greeks not only had slaves, on which their life and the continued existence of their estimable freedom depended, but their very freedom itself was on the one hand only a fortuitous, undeveloped, transient, and limited efflorescence, and, on the other, a harsh servitude of all that is humane and proper to man." Then the third and final stage in the development of the consciousness of freedom occurred in the Germanic world. "The *Germanic* nations, with the rise of Christianity, were the first to realize that man is by nature free, and that freedom of the spirit is his very essence" (1998, 54).

Hegel summarizes these "different degrees of knowledge of freedom": "firstly, that of the Orientals, who knew only that *One* is free, then that of the Greek and Roman world, which knew that *Some* are free, and finally, *our own* knowledge that *All* men are as such free, and that *man* is *by nature* free." These classifications "supply us with the divisions we shall observe in our survey of world history and which will help us to organize our discussion of it" (1998, 54–55).

He identifies the three stages in the development of the consciousness of freedom in world history as "unfree particularity," where only one man is free; "imperfect and partial" awareness of freedom, where some are free; and freedom in its "purely universal form," wherein "man as such" is free (1998, 130). These phases correspond to the Oriental, the Greek and Roman, and the Germanic

stages, respectively. The Hegelian vision of history as development and progress from a lower to a more perfect attainment of freedom—in which the Oriental, Greek and Roman, and Germanic phases are seen as successive and progressive stages—shows the remarkable affinity between Hegel and Marx. Marx, in his famous introduction to *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1970), identifies the stages of world history as Asiatic, ancient, medieval, and modern, in that order of progression.

The various stages of world history, represented by their respective national spirits, are essential moments for the realization of full freedom. As Hegel has it the *Phenomenology,* each stage is but a moment in the development of the whole of world history. He calls it "impatience" to look for the result without the process. The "*length* of this path [of progress of world history] has to be endured, because, for one thing, each moment is necessary; and further, each moment has to be *lingered* over." The world spirit "has had the patience to pass through these shapes over the long passage of time, and to take upon itself the enormous labor of world-history." In Hegel's analogy to the plant world, each new stage—the bud, the blossom, and the fruit—negates its predecessor, yet they all are "moments of an organic unity in which they not only do not conflict, but in which each is as necessary as the other; and this mutual necessity alone constitutes the life of the whole" (1977b, 17, 2).

Classification of World History

Hegel devises three different classifications for understanding the development of world history: dual, triple, and quadruple. In the dual classification, he divides history into pre-Christian and Christian eras. He states, "God has revealed himself through the Christian religion; that is, he has granted mankind the possibility of recognizing his nature, so that he is no longer an impenetrable mystery." Christianity is the religion that "has revealed the nature and being of God to man. Thus we know as Christians what God is; God is no longer an unknown quantity." Christians "are initiated into the mysteries of God, and this also supplies us with the *key to world history.* For we have here a definite knowledge of providence and its plan."[2] In Christianity, the "spirit is reconciled and united with

2. For Hegel's account on Christianity, see Tibebu 2008.

its concept, in which it *had developed from a state of nature, by a process of internal division,* to be reborn as subjectivity" (1998, 40–41, 131, emphasis added). In Hegel's scheme, humanity comes out of the state of nature fully, completely, and universally only at the Germanic-Christian stage of world history in general and at the Protestant-bourgeois modernity substage in particular.

In *The Philosophy of History,* Hegel states, "God is thus recognised as *Spirit,* only when known as the Triune. This new principle is the axis upon which the History of the World turns. This is *the goal* and the *starting point* of History" (1956, 319). If Christianity is the axis upon which world history turns, if it contains both the goal and the starting point of history, if in Christianity the concept becomes one with the object, then what we have is the validity of the claim to absolute truth of the demarcation of history into "before Christ" and "anno Domini."[3]

The triple classification of world history, which Hegel calls the "three main principles in the older continents" (the Old World), consists of "the Far Eastern (i.e. Mongolian, Chinese or Indian) principle, which is also the first to appear in history; the Mohammedan world, in which the principle of the abstract spirit, of monotheism, is already present, although it is coupled with unrestrained arbitrariness; and the Christian, Western European world, in which the highest principle of all, the spirit's recognition of itself and its own profundity, is realised" (1998, 128–29).

In the quadruple classification, Hegel identifies the Oriental, the Greek, the Roman, and the Germanic phases. He calls the first stage of history (the Oriental) the childhood of history.[4] This stage of "natural spirit is still immersed in nature

3. For a detailed discussion on this subject, see Tibebu 2008. Karl Löwith writes, "The history of the world is to Hegel a history B.C. and A.D. not incidentally or conventionally but essentially" (1970, 57).

4. Herder had earlier articulated the age metaphor for the phases of world history (childhood, adulthood, manhood, and old age). In *Another Philosophy of History for the Education of Mankind,* written in 1774, he writes about what he calls "analogy with the life-ages of man." He identifies the Oriental, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman ages as the childhood, boyhood, adulthood, and manhood of history, respectively. Quite in line with what Hegel would later state in his philosophy of world history, Herder writes, "No one is *alone* in his age; he builds on *what has come before,* which turns into and wants to be nothing but the foundation of the future—thus speaks the analogy in nature, the talking *image of God* in *all works!* Evidently it is so with the *human race!*" Accordingly, "the Egyptian could not exist without the Oriental; the Greek built upon them, the Roman lifted himself atop

and is not yet self-sufficient; it is therefore not yet free, and has not undergone the process by which freedom comes into being." But still there are found "states, arts and the rudiments of learning already in existence; but they are still rooted in the soil of nature" (1998, 130). This region is the "soil of nature" not yet warmed enough by "the sun of the spirit."

The Oriental world is one where spirit has not broken out of nature yet but has established states, arts, and so forth. We see a conflict in Hegel's view here. On the one hand, he says that history begins with states. The Oriental world has formed many of the oldest states in history: China, India, Persia, and Egypt. To this extent, they are world-historical nations. On the other hand, because they are still immersed in the "natural spirit," they are not *truly* historical. Hegel's solution to this seeming contradiction in his philosophy of world history is to say that Oriental history is not *real* history, but what he calls "unhistorical history." In the Orient, "history is still predominantly unhistorical, for it is merely a repetition of the same majestic process of decline. The innovations with which courage, strength, and magnanimity replace the splendours of the past go through the same cycle of decline and fall. But it is *not a true downfall,* for no progress results from all this restless change. Whatever innovation replaces that has been destroyed must sink and be destroyed in turn; *no progress is made:* and all this restless movement results in *unhistorical history*" (1998, 199, emphasis added). The idea that no progress occurs in the Orient is the hallmark of orientalism, a viewpoint that Hegel shares.[5] By "true downfall," Hegel means a downfall that constitutes the ground for the next stage in the progress of world history. He credits Persia as being the first nation to experience such "true downfall"—that is, by laying the ground for the next, higher stage, the Greek. In his view, the Oriental world not only does not achieve progress over time but cannot even fall down productively. It simply rotates around the axis of the same recurrent "majestic ruin."

"The Oriental spirit is closer in its determination to the sphere of *intuition,* for its relationship to its object is an immediate one." And intuition is proper to childhood. "Such is the principle of the Oriental world: the individuals have

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the back of the entire world—true *progression, progressive development,* even if none in particular were to benefit from it!" (2004, 12, 13, 21, 31).

5. For a critique of orientalism, see A. Frank 1998; Said 1979; Tibebu 1990.

not yet attained subjective freedom within themselves, but appear as accidental properties of the underlying substance." This "substance" of the Oriental spirit "is not purely abstract;" it is rather "present to the natural consciousness in the shape of a head of state, and everything is seen as belonging exclusively to him" (1998, 199–200). Enter the domain of Oriental despotism. The state in the Oriental world is one of "natural communities patriarchically governed" (1967, 220). The Oriental state is a theocracy. "God is the secular ruler, and the secular ruler is God; the ruler is both of these simultaneously, and the state is ruled by a God incarnate." The "splendour of the Oriental way of life" is such that subjective freedom "has not yet come into its rights." There the "substantial forms . . . contain all the determinations of reason, but in such a way that the individual subjects remain purely accidental." Hegel subclassifies the Oriental states: the "theocratic despotism" of the Chinese and Mongolian empires; the "theocratic aristocracy" of India; and the "theocratic monarchy" of Persia (1998, 200–201).

The Oriental world is a world of contradiction: "On the one hand, therefore, we find permanence and stability, and on the other, a self-destructive arbitrariness." This world is the domain of "unrestrained arbitrariness," a "terrible unappeased arbitrariness" (1998, 201). In the *Philosophy of Right,* Hegel writes, "In the Oriental state nothing is fixed, and what is stable is fossilized; it lives therefore only in an outward movement which becomes in the end an elemental fury and desolation. Its inner calm is merely the calm of non-political life and immersion in feebleness and exhaustion" (1967, 220).

He sees the Oriental state, with all its alleged defects, as the beginning of world history. "A still substantial, natural, mentality is a moment in the development of the state, and the point at which any state takes this form is the absolute beginning of its history" (1967, 220). And yet "within these [Oriental] states, we do not find a purpose of the kind which we would describe as political." The Oriental state is a nonpolitical state, one in which subjective freedom is subsumed under substantial freedom, instead of being reconciled with it. In the Orient, "the state is an abstraction which has no universal existence for itself; it is not the universal end but the sovereign who constitutes the state. As already remarked, this phase [of world history] can be likened to that of childhood in general" (1998, 202). The state is so critical for the realization of full freedom that Hegel would write, "Man owes his entire existence to the state, and has his being within it alone." Furthermore, "only in the state does man have a rational existence." The

state is the institution in which "the spiritual Idea [is] externalised in the human will and its freedom. All historical change is therefore essentially dependent upon the state, and the successive moments of the Idea appear within it as distinct constitutional principles" (1998, 94, 120).

Having explained the state in these various ways, how does Hegel define that institution in the Orient and elsewhere other than western Europe? In the Orient, because the individual is not conscious of his essential freedom, the Oriental state is not a true state. As he puts it in *Philosophy of Right,* "an oriental despotism is not a state, or at any rate not the self-conscious form of state which alone is worthy of mind, the form which is organically developed and where there are rights and a free ethical life." The "state has a life-giving soul, and the soul which animates it is subjectivity, which creates differences and yet at the same time holds them together in unity" (1967, 173, 283). The Oriental state is bereft of such "life-giving soul."

The transition to the second phase of world history, the Greek stage, passes through Persia and Egypt. In a fine example of the Eurocentric construction of world history, Hegel states, "While China and India remained fixed in their principles, the Persians form the true transition from the Orient to the west." As Persia is "the outward transition, so also is *Egypt* the inner transition to the free life of Greece." With bold arrogance, he declares: "In Egypt, we encounter that contradiction of principles [between freedom and despotism, spirit and nature] which is *the mission of the west to resolve*" (1998, 200–201, emphasis added).

Greece represents the original foundation of the "mission of the west." Greece, with its "noble paganism," represents "adolescence." This adolescence is the domain of "beautiful freedom"; the "principle of individuality, of subjective freedom, has its origin here, although it is still embedded in the substantial unity." In the Greek world, the "two extremes of the Oriental world—subjective freedom and substantiality—are now combined; the kingdom of freedom—not that of unrestrained and natural freedom but of ethical freedom—is now realised." The end the Greek world aspires to "is not arbitrary or particular but universal, for it takes the universal end of the nation as the object of its will and its knowledge" (1998, 129, 202).

The Greek world is "truly harmonious; like a lovely but ephemeral and quickly passing flower, [it] is a most serene yet inherently unstable structure." Although the Greek world unites that which is separate in the Orient—substantial

and subjective freedom—"their union cannot survive in the form it assumes in Greece." The "ethical life of Greece will therefore be an unstable one which works towards its own dissolution." This brings about the "downfall of the entire realm" (1998, 202, 203). Let us remind ourselves that Hegel considers downfall as good; it denotes historicity. By contrast, the Orient is impervious to such downfall—hence, its "unhistorical history." After the downfall of the adolescence of world history comes the Roman Empire.

The Roman Empire constitutes the third stage of world history, that of "the manhood of history." "Manhood follows neither the arbitrary will of a master, nor its own aesthetic arbitrariness; its life is one of arduous labour and service, not of the free and happy pursuit of its own end." The Roman world is an imperial state. This imperial state makes abstract universality possible. Here "free individuals are sacrificed to its rigorous demands, and they must dedicate themselves to it in the service of the abstract universal." The contribution of the Roman world lies in the elaboration of the principle of personal rights. "The universal subjugates the individuals, who must surrender themselves to it; but in return, their own universality, i.e. their personality, is recognized: they are treated as persons with rights of their own in their capacity as private individuals." As the "principle of abstract universality is developed and realised, the individual is absorbed into it; and from this process, the subject emerges as a distinct personality. As a result, the individual subjects become isolated from one another." It was this atomistic world that entailed a universal power in the form of the imperial state. Roman abstract universality created the "world of formal abstract right, the right to property." Therefore, "the individual personality gains the ascendant with the progress of history and the disintegration of the whole into atoms can only be restrained by external force" (1998, 203–5). This "external force" was the Roman imperial state.

It should be noted that although the Roman epoch represents the third stage of world history, it is not the sublation of the previous two stages—the Oriental and the Greek. It is not the negation of negation. The Roman phase is one of *abstract* universality, not *concrete* universality. It therefore cannot be the sublation of the preceding two stages of world history.

Hegel identifies the fourth phase of world history: "the empire of self-knowing subjectivity marks the rise of the *real* spirit; this is the beginning of the fourth phase in history, which in natural terms, would correspond to the old age of spirit" (1998, 205, emphasis added). The "rise of the *real* spirit" is a telling turn

of phrase—as if what occurred previously in world history, from the Oriental through the Roman stages, were the realm of the *spurious* spirit.

The principle of the fourth epoch of world history is "spiritual reconciliation." This epoch consists of "two parts.": abstract spirituality and concrete spirituality. The first phase of the fourth epoch of world history is one of "spiritual abstraction" in which "worldly existence is at odds with itself, and is given over to savagery and barbarism; it is accompanied by a total indifference towards worldly things." This phase is represented by Islam, which Hegel calls "the Mohammedan world." In Islam, "the Oriental world reaches its highest transfiguration and its highest perception of the One."[6] In empirical history, Islam came *after* Christianity, but in the progress of history toward absolute freedom, in the Idea, Islam comes *before* Christianity. As such, Islam is "a more primitive system than that of Christianity" (1998, 206). By "primitive," Hegel means "prior to" but also relatively undeveloped.

In the tripartite classification of the stages of world history, Islam belongs to the second stage, although it is categorized as belonging to the first phase of the last (fourth) stage in the quadruple classification. In *The Philosophy of History,* Hegel discusses Islam under the fourth stage of world history, right before he examines Charlemagne (1956, 355–60). Hegel argues that it was with Charlemagne that Christianity achieved world importance (1998, 206).

The second phase of the fourth stage of world history Hegel calls "Germanic," a name that he uses interchangeably with "Christian." He uses the term *Germanic world* in that "those nations on which the world spirit has conferred its true principle may be called the Germanic nations" (1998, 206). In his *Philosophy of Right,* he calls this Germanic phase the "principle of the north, the principle of the Germanic peoples." It is the phase of "the reconciliation and resolution of all contradiction," the actualization of "self-conscious rationality" (1967, 222). In *Faith and Knowledge,* he describes this phase thus: "the principle of the North, and from the religious point of view, of Protestantism. This principle is subjectivity for which beauty and truth present themselves in feelings and persuasions, in love and intellect" (1977a, 57). Unlike in the world of Islam with its abstract universality, in Christianity "the spiritual principle has translated itself into a

6. For Hegel's view on Islam, see Tibebu 2008.

concrete world." This principle is the "consciousness and volition of subjectivity as a divine personality" (1998, 206).

Hegel explains the principle of the Germanic or Christian phase of the "realm of the real spirit." "The realm of the real spirit has as its principle the absolute reconciliation of subjectivity which exists for itself with the diversity which exists in and for itself, i.e. with that true and substantial condition in which the subject is free for itself in so far as it accords with the universal and has an essential existence: in short, the realm of concrete freedom" (1998, 206). The realm of the real spirit is the realm of concrete freedom; concrete freedom is Protestant-bourgeois modernity, the most complete account of which is given in the *Philosophy of Right* (1967, 160–61).

The fourth stage of world history and the Germanic phase are thus not exactly identical. The Germanic phase constitutes the second, higher, consummated phase of the fourth stage, whereas Islam occupies the first, lower stage.

Hegel explains the different stages of world history by analogy with the development of a human being. The "child starts out with sensory emotions; man next proceeds to the stage of general representations, and then to that of comprehension, until he finally succeeds in recognizing the soul of things, i.e. their true nature." The fourth phase corresponds to the "old age of the spirit": "In the natural world, old age is equivalent to weakness. But the old age of the spirit is the age of its complete maturity, in which it returns to a condition of unity while retaining its spiritual nature" (1998, 205).

The Dialectic of Geography and History

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History,* Hegel discusses the relationship between the natural environment and history. Hegel, like Aristotle (1958), Montesquieu (1999), and Ibn Khaldun (2005), the latter of whom he was unaware, saw the natural environment as enhancing or inhibiting the "progressive liberation" of spirit from its immersion in nature. His philosophy of history can be called "cautious environmental determinism."[7]

7. Chiekh Anta Diop (1990) articulates a geographical-environmental perspective in the understanding of world history. He classifies world history into two "cradles": the "northern cradle"

Hegel sees the natural environment as having effects on history and social organization. Its influence should not be overrated, though. However "necessary the connection between the spiritual and the natural principle may be, we must not rest content with everyday opinions and ascribe over-specific effects and influences to climate." Relating to the idea that the "mild Ionic sky" produced a Homer, Hegel says that although "[the coast of Asia Minor] did undoubtedly contribute much to the charm of the Homeric poems," "[it] has always been the same, and is still the same today; nevertheless only *one* Homer has arisen among the Ionic people" (1998, 154).

As Hegel sees it, "all development involves a reflection of the spirit within itself in opposition to nature, or an internal particularization of the spirit as against its immediate existence, i.e. the natural world." Indeed, "nature is therefore the original basis from which man can achieve inward freedom. . . . But where nature is too powerful, his liberation becomes more difficult." As a consequence, extreme environments lack the natural basis for spiritual development. "Climate does have a certain influence, however, in that neither the *torrid* nor the *cold region* can provide a basis for human freedom or for world-historical nations." It is accordingly "essential that man's connection with nature should not be too powerful in the first place." A critical passage reads: "Extreme conditions are not conducive to spiritual development. *Aristotle* has long since observed that man turns to universal and more exalted things only after his basic needs have been satisfied. But neither the torrid nor the frigid zone permits him to move freely, or to acquire sufficient resources to allow him to participate in higher spiritual interests." Hegel continues: "Man uses nature for his own ends; but where nature is too powerful, it does not allow itself to be used as a means. The torrid and frigid regions, as such, are not the theatre on which world history is enacted. In this respect, such extremes are incompatible with spiritual freedom" (1998, 154, 155).

Because extreme zones are not conducive to the rise and development of civilization, "all in all, it is therefore the *temperate zone* which must furnish the

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and the "southern cradle." He calls the regions where the two cradles overlap the "intermediate zone." He accordingly classifies Euro-Asia as the northern cradle, Africa as the southern cradle, and the Middle East as the intermediate zone. He sees these two cradles as being essentially different from each other in all aspects of social organization, including in gender relations.

theatre of world history." Within the temperate zone, Hegel singles out the northern part as "particularly suited for this purpose, because at this point, the earth has a broad breast (as the Greeks put it), i.e. the continents are closely connected" (see Aristotle 1958, 296; for a critique, see Blaut 1993). Hegel says further, "In terms of botany and zoology, the northern zone is therefore the most important one; the largest number of animal and vegetable species is found in it, whereas in the south, where the land is broken up into separate points, the natural forms also diverge widely from one another" (1998, 155).

In the realm of the impact of geography on history, "the universal relation which is of most importance to history is that of *land and sea*." Hegel classifies the land aspect as having three "fundamental distinctions": the "waterless uplands; secondly, valley formations which are watered by rivers; and thirdly, the coastal regions." These "three moments are the most essential of those which admit of conceptual differentiation, and to which all other determinations can be reduced" (1998, 156).

The first moment—that is, the waterless uplands—consists of "that solid, metallic element which remains indifferent, enclosed, and amorphous—the *uplands* with their great steppes and plains. They may well furnish impulses to activity, but such impulses are of a wild and mechanical nature." These "waterless plains are primarily the abode of nomads, as of the Mongol and Arab nations in the Old World. The nomads are in themselves of a mild disposition, but their principle is an unstable and volatile one" (1998, 156).

Nomads "are not tied to the soil, and they know nothing of those rights which, in an agricultural society, oblige men to live together." The "restless principle" of nomadic life entails patriarchal political structure, wars and depredations, and "even assaults on other peoples." The people assaulted are "at first subjugated, and then the invaders become amalgamated with them." Hegel goes on to describe the "restless principle" of the nomadic people: "The wanderings of the nomads are purely formal, because they are confined within uniform and circumscribed paths. But this limitation is merely factual; the possibility exists for them to sever their ties." In other words, "the spirit of restlessness does not really lie in the nations themselves." Nomadic life by its nature "fosters the individual personality and an unruly and fearless independence, but also the abstract quality of fragmentation." The mountains of Asia are the "the seat of pastoral existence; but their varied soil also makes agriculture possible." Mountain life is

too restricting and isolating. "If such a [mountainous] nation finds the locality too restricting, it only needs a leader for it to swoop down on the fertile valleys and plains." The "natural conflicts which occur in Asia are invariably based on antithesis of this kind" (1998, 156, 157).

The second natural region consists of the "broad river valleys" (emphasis omitted). In these major river valleys, the "gradual accumulation of silt has made the soil fertile, and the land owes its entire fertility to the rivers which have shaped it. It is here that centres of civilisation, which brings with it internal independence, first arose." This independence is not, however, the "unenlightened independence" of the nomadic life but rather that of a "differentiated state," which "leads instead to a process of internal development." In a description that could easily read as Marxist historical materialism, Hegel states of the first civilizations: "The river plains are the most fertile lands; agriculture becomes established there, and with it, the rights of communal existence are introduced. The fertile soil automatically brings about the transition to *agriculture*, and this is in turn gives rise to understanding and foresight" (1998, 158–59). "Understanding and foresight," the domain of bifurcated consciousness, in which spirit emerges out of its immersion in nature, began in Asia, the land of the beginning of agriculture. Thinking becomes a vocation with the emergence of a thinking class. The separation of manual and mental labor ensues. Class division comes into the scene.[8]

The agrarian revolution in the procuring of the means of subsistence is "not a question of gaining immediate satisfaction for individual needs, for these are now satisfied in a universal manner." This universal satisfaction brought about by the introduction of agriculture means that the "cares of man are no longer confined to a single day, but extend far into the future." For this future-oriented satisfaction of needs, "tools have to be invented, and practical ingenuity and art develop." Legal systems also arise. "Fixed possessions, property, and justice are instituted and this in turn gives rise to social classes." With the agrarian revolu-

8. In "Who Thinks Abstractly?" Hegel writes that those who think abstractly are the "uneducated, not the educated. Good society does not think abstractly because it is too easy, because it is too lowly (not referring to the external status)—not from an empty affection of nobility that would place itself above that which it is not capable, but on account of the inward inferiority of the matter" (2002, 285).

tion, the "demand for manufactured implements and the need to conserve provisions lead to a settled existence, confined to a specific locality." In this way, "natural isolation is overcome by this mutually determined and exclusive . . . independence; a condition of universality prevails, and the purely particular is excluded from it." This economic foundation of settled agrarian life "opens up the possibility of a universal sovereign—and, what is more important, of the rule of law." Nomadic "aimless expansion" comes to an end. "Great empires grew up in such countries, and the foundations of powerful states are laid. This process of finite development, therefore, is not one of aimless expansion, but adherence to the universal." In sum, "in Oriental history, we shall encounter states which have only just attained this condition, i.e. the empires on the banks of the rivers of China, and the Ganges, the Indus, and the Nile" (1998, 159).

Hegel states the extent to which water and land facilitate or hinder interdependence and communication. We "have become accustomed to look on water as a creator of divisions. The main objection to this is that nothing unites so effectively as water, for the civilized are invariably river territories. Water is in fact the uniting element, and it is the mountains which create divisions. If countries are separated by mountains, they are separated far more effectively than they would be by a river or even by the sea." In other words, "it is far more difficult to communicate by land than it is by water." Communications "between America and Europe are much easier than in the interior of Asia or America." Europeans, who have gone around the world since the "discovery of America and the West Indies," have scarcely ventured into the interior of Africa and Asia (1998, 159–60).

The third division consists of the "coastal countries" (emphasis omitted). These coastal countries "are linked with the sea, and have expressly developed this relationship." Hegel sees the relation to the sea as being of critical importance in world history. "The *sea* in fact always gives rise to a particular way of life. Its indeterminate element gives us an impression of limitlessness and infinity, and when man feels himself part of this infinity, he is emboldened to step beyond his narrow existence." The sea contrasts with the land (as it does also with city life). The sea is "limitless, and it is not conducive to the peaceful and restricted life of cities as the inland regions are." Land-bound life entails the restriction of freedom, whereas sea-bound life enhances it. "Land—in the sense of the broad river valleys—binds man to the soil; consequently a whole series of ties attaches

him to the locality he lives in. But the sea lifts him out of these narrow confines. The sea awakens his courage; it lures him on to conquest and piracy, but also to profit and acquisition" (1998, 160). The Somali pirate is courageous in his brazen attack on the high seas, but the Amhara peasant in neighboring Ethiopia worries when the rivers fill up during the summer rainy season. Per Hegel, then, the Amhara peasant is cowardly.

The sea is hazardous terrain to navigate. Those who venture on the high seas may well have adventure in mind, but they face grave danger, too. However, they also profit by going to sea. Their adventure is of "a courageous quality, and gives the individual a consciousness of greater freedom and independence. It is this which elevates acquisition and trade above their usual level and transforms them into a courageous and noble undertaking" (1998, 161).

To take on the high seas is take on death itself. The man who goes to the sea is risking his life in a different kind of "struggle for recognition": fame, fortune, and fidelity to king and country. Only the brave take on such a charge. "The sea awakens men's courage; those who sail on it to earn their livelihood and wealth must earn them by hazardous means. They must be courageous, and they must put their lives and riches at stake and treat them with contempt. The quest for riches . . . is elevated into a courageous and noble activity in so far as it is directed towards the sea" (1998, 161).[9]

The sea awakens not only men's courage, but also their cunning. Courage and cunning need to form a united front to achieve success on the high seas because "bravery in face of the sea must be coupled with cunning; for the element which confronts such bravery is itself cunning, and the most unstable and treacherous of all the elements." The ship is the means to navigate the high seas, the instrument through which man neutralizes the destructive forces of those seas in his courageous, noble, and cunning undertaking. The ship, "this swan of the seas," is "an instrument whose invention does the highest credit both to man's boldness and to his understanding" (1998, 161).[10]

9. For a detailed account of the horrors of the lives of sailors on slave ships, see Rediker 2008. Rediker shows that many sailors took on the challenge of working on the slave ships not out of a sense of courage or adventure, but because they were forced and tricked into it. In many cases, they were made drunk and indebted so that they would have to sign their way on to a ship of the high seas.

10. For a discussion of the slave ship as a floating dungeon, see Rediker 2008.

Hegel compares the sea-bound civilizations of western Europe with civilizations that are land bound. "The Oriental states, splendid edifices though they are, lack this maritime outlet from their *limited landbound existence,* even if—as in the case of China—they are themselves situated on the sea." For these states, the sea "is merely the termination of the land, and they have no positive relationship with it. The activity which the sea inspires is of a wholly peculiar nature, and it breeds a wholly peculiar character" (1998, 161).

Hegel sees the relationship between Africans and the sea as being similar to that of Asians and the sea. In the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit,* he writes, "In the interior of Africa proper, cut off as it is from the free element of the sea in that it is surrounded by high mountains close to the coast, the spirit of the natives is unexpressed, feels no impulse towards freedom, suffers universal slavery without resistance" (1979a, 2:69).

Proximity to the sea is not sufficient by itself for the aspiration toward and attainment of full freedom. Hegel cites India as a case in point:

> Spirit cannot however be liberated solely by the proximity of the sea. The Indians are evidence of this, for since the earliest times, although they have had natural access to it, they have slavishly observed the law which forbids them to navigate. Cut off by despotism from this wide, free element, from universality in this its natural existence, they consequently display no capacity for liberating themselves from the ossification of social divisions intrinsic to the caste relationship. This ossification is fatal to freedom, and would not be tolerated by a nation given to the free navigation of the sea. (1979a, 2:69)

The Oriental civilizations' allegedly "limited and landbound existence" generates their lack of courage; lack of courage implies fear of taking risk; fear of taking risk engenders lack of development and progress. Hegel must not have been familiar with Admiral Cheng Ho's famous expedition in the early fifteenth century. Even if he was, he probably would have focused on the later cancellation of those expeditions rather than on their having taken place. Bent as he was on proving the fearless, courageous, cunning, and noble undertaking of the rising European bourgeois world, he would have justified in any way possible the "peculiarities" of the Western man's adventures compared with the lack of such adventures in the most advanced Oriental civilizations, such as China and India.

As noted earlier, Hegel critiques those who see Homer in light of the Ionic sky and rightly says that the "coast of Asia Minor has always been the same, and is still the same today; nevertheless only *one* Homer has arisen among the Ionic people" (1998, 154). If only *one* Homer emerged out of the land of the Ionic sky, why would it be such a big deal that no one emerged in India? Hegel here, of course, is ignoring the empirical, real history of India: that Indians have taken on the high seas for millennia. The monsoon winds testify to Hegel's ignorance.

In the *Philosophy of Right,* he addresses the question of land–sea relations *within* European history, this time with particular reference to the family–civil society–state triad. Contrasting the family with civil society, he writes, "The principle of family life is dependence on the soil, on land, *terra firma.* Similarly, the natural element for industry, animating its outward movement, is the sea. Since the passion for gain involves risk, industry though bent on gain yet lifts itself above it; instead of remaining rooted to the soil and the limited circle of civil life with its pleasures and desires, it embraces the element of flux, danger, and destruction" (1967, 151).

The sea makes possible "the greatest means of communication," creating "commercial connexions between distant countries and so [creating] relations involving contractual rights." Commerce "of this kind is the most potent instrument of culture, and through it trade acquires its significance in the history of the world." As opposed to Europe, the land-based civilizations of Egypt and India "have become stagnant and sunk in the most frightful and scandalous superstition" (1967, 151).

In the *Philosophy of Right,* Hegel identifies three classes in modern bourgeois society: the *substantial* or immediate class, the reflecting or *formal* class, and the *universal* class (1967, 131). The substantial (agricultural) class is the immediate class incapable of articulating the universal, tied instead to land and family. This class lives what Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* call the "idiocy of rural life" (2001, 40). The formal (business) class is the reflecting class—articulating, willing, and living that which is the universal. This class became the embodiment of freedom, just as the peasantry was that of immersion in nature. Spirit coming out of nature is the bourgeoisie coming out of its precapitalist social setting. *Spirit in its most developed form is thus capital.*

The distinction between the immediate class and the reflecting class is related to that between town and country and, more important, between land and sea.

The immediate class is *land* based, whereas the business class is *sea* based. The town in modern bourgeois society, says Hegel, is "the seat of the civil life of business," whereas the country is "the seat of an ethical life resting on nature and the family." The substantial class, tied to the soil, is of "comparatively little reflection and independence of will." Its "mode of life is in general such that this class has the substantial disposition of an ethical life which is immediate, resting on family relationship and trust" (1967, 154–55, 131).

For Hegel, European history is essentially a history of the relation with the sea, or it is not European. "The European state is truly European only in so far as it has links with the sea. The sea provides that wholly peculiar outlet that Asiatic life lacks, the outlet which enables life to step beyond itself. It is this which has invested European political life with the principle of individual freedom" (1998, 196).

In his paradigm of land–sea relations, civilizations such as Egypt and India, by virtue of their alleged fear of the high seas, are *conceptually* on the same plane as the immediate class of European society. Whereas Egypt and India were sea-*fearing,* immediate, particularistic, and timid civilizations, modern bourgeois Europe was a sea-*faring,* adventure-driven, universality-reflecting, world civilization. The distinction between East and West becomes a distinction between "fear" and "fare," respectively. This is Hegel's *fanfare* theory of world history.

Hegel sums up what he calls the "three departments of the natural world" by reiterating that the "greatest contrast is that between the inland principle and that of the coastal regions." He further notes, "More highly developed states combine the distinct attributes of both; the stability of the inland regions and roving character of coastal life with all its contingencies" (1998, 161, 162).

Coastal Europeans have lived by the sea for millennia, yet it was only in the past half-millennium that they took to the high seas. Why? Did "other" people such as the Chinese, the Indians, the Arabs, and so on take to the high seas before the Europeans did? If the answer is yes, which is the case historically, how, then, does one explain this time difference? Hegel's Eurocentrism prevented him from seeing that modern Europeans followed the path of the high seas as traversed by "other "peoples before them, that it was the magnetic compass invented by the Chinese that Europeans used in their "fearless" and "courageous" venture onto the high seas, and other such historical details. Hegel makes it sound as if Europeans had always been sea-faring people, which they were not (Blaut 1993). Yet he was very much aware of the isolated "darkness" of the European Middle

Ages and the contrasting maritime adventures of Islamic civilizations elsewhere. During these European Middle Ages, no "brave white men" took on the high seas. Instead, Europe was enveloped in what its critics called the "Dark Ages." Although this designation, too, is a misnomer, the point is that Hegel never acknowledges this reversed situation and completely misrepresents both the East and the West in his history.

He extrapolates from a specific historical epoch—Western-dominated capitalism based on sea power—an absolute and ahistorical depiction of Europe as the continent that took on the high seas, whereas other civilizations remained shy and timid (Blaut 1993). His philosophy of history is thus profoundly bourgeois in the Marxist sense, among many others. That is, the specific historical epoch of capitalism is presented as if it were eternal.