Critical Historiography

Exiled from History: Africa in Hegel's Academic Practice

Tom C. McCaskie

Abstract: Many scholars, African and otherwise, have excoriated G.W.F. Hegel for his dismissal of Africa from history and progress in his lectures on the philosophies of history and religion. This has been done by quoting his texts and setting his words in the context of his influence on nineteenth-century European imperialism and racism. A different approach informs this paper. I treat Hegel, a complicated person, as a working university academic with a career to make and an overriding desire to publicize his own thought. I provide biographical insights relevant to these matters, and go on to examine specific texts about Africa that Hegel either sought out or chanced upon, read, misread, excerpted, used, and misused in support of his theorizing and apriorism. Attention is paid throughout to the construction, recording, and dissemination of Hegel's lectures, and to aspects of their reception and authority in the educational formation of selected modern African intellectuals. I argue that such persons and African studies more widely are still trying to come to grips with the long and enduring shadow cast by Hegel over both the past and present of the continent.

Résumé: De nombreux chercheurs africains et d'ailleurs ont vertement critiqué G.W.F. Hegel pour son exclusion de l'Afrique tant de l'histoire que du progrès dans ses conférences sur les philosophies de l'histoire et de la religion. Cette critique a été faite en citant ses textes et en plaçant ses paroles dans le contexte de son influence sur l'impérialisme et le racisme européens du XIXe siècle. Une approche différente informe ce papier. Je traite Hegel, un personnage compliqué, comme un

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universitaire de métier devant construire sa carrière et désirant très fortement faire connaître sa pensée. Je fournis des éclairages biographiques pertinents sur ces questions et analyse ensuite des textes spécifiques sur l'Afrique que Hegel a soit recherchés ou trouvés par hasard, lus, mal lus, extraits de leur contexte, utilisés ou utilisés à mauvais escient pour soutenir ses théories et préjugés. Une attention toute particulière est accordée à la construction, à l'édition et à la diffusion des conférences de Hegel, ainsi qu'aux aspects de leur réception et de leur autorité dans la formation pédagogique de certains intellectuels africains contemporains. Je soutiens que ces personnes et les études africaines plus largement tentent encore de s'attaquer à l'influence très vaste et durable des idées développées par Hegel sur le passé et le présent du continent.

Introduction

This essay is an African historian's account of Hegel's texts about that continent. These came late in his career, are scant in terms of his overall output, and are embedded in broader meditations on the nature of history and religion.[1]

Hegel (1770–1831) can become lost to sight in the expository minutiae of the forbidding textual industry that philosophers have erected around his work. This makes it important at the outset to reiterate some general points about the man and his project. It is acknowledged that Hegel stands at the creative foundation of modern European (or continental, as distinct from analytic or ordinary language) philosophy, and his post-Kantian reflections have been accurately summarized as a meditation on the nature of time and history.[2] All of Hegel's biographers, albeit with differences of approach and emphasis, reveal him to have been a man of vaunting and querulous if occasionally fragile certitude about his intellectual trajectory throughout his career in teaching and research.[3] He eventually acquired a

[1] A remote ancestral draft of this paper was first presented at the "Hegel in Africa" conference sponsored by the American Philosophical Association at Northwestern University in 2001. I thank here my fellow participants, Robert Bernasconi, Susan Buck-Morss, Bachir Diagne, Peter Fenves, Robert Gooding-Williams, Frank Kirkland, Terry Pinkard, and Olefemi Taiwo. Above all I thank John McCumber who organized the conference, and who has spent the intervening years since then coaxing me to put my thoughts into print; so, here they are, *potius sero quam nunquam*. Finally, both of the reviewers of this paper improved it with suggestions arising from their diligent reading.

[2] Thus, in John McCumber, *Time and Philosophy: A History of Continental Thought* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill University Press/Queen's University Press, 2011), 31–56, the relevant chapter is entitled "Hegel Discovers the Past."

[3] Most insightful on the man's life and career experience in relation to his thinking is Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See too: Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005). Horst Althaus, *Hegel: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000) contains controversial material, for example (at 579–581) that Hegel's quarrel with his amanuensis Eduard Gans hastened his own death. There are interesting insights in Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*

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deepening confidence in the value of his project, and in his tenure as an academic in Berlin (1818–1831) he came to hope that his hard earned esteem in a notably competitive university environment might attract acolytes and disciples who would disseminate his thinking throughout Germany and beyond. This was a slow and difficult road, as Hegel learned. As late as 1826, barely five years before his death, he identified university lecturing as his "principal vocation," adding with satisfied relief that it was only now that he was "beginning to see the fruit of this activity flourish in a number of well-trained and very promising followers."[4]

In a narrative that is too widely known to need recounting here it can be seen that Hegel succeeded, at least in as much as his presence has suffused a deal of subsequent theorizing across the human sciences.[5] Hegel is lauded or criticized but rarely ignored, and in some quarters his current status as a parent of such ills as European colonialism and Eurocentric racism has been rendered almost banal through constant repetition.[6] Here

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), in Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), and in Terry Pinkard, *Does History Make Sense? Hegel on the Historical Shapes of Justice* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017). For the ongoing history of the Hegelian project, see: Frederick Beiser, *After Hegel: German Philosophy, 1840–1900* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), and the contributions to James Kreines and Rachel Zuckert (eds.), *Hegel on Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[4] Hegel to Van Ghert, Berlin, 8 March 1826. All letters cited can be found under their year date in Johannes Hoffmeister and Friedhelm Nicolin (eds.), *Briefe von und zu Hegel: I (1785–1812), II (1813–1822),* and *III (1823–1831)* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1969 [reissued 2015]). See too the useful English translations excerpted from this German edition in: Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler, *Hegel: The Letters* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press for the Purdue Research Foundation, 1984).

[5] Recent introductory essays on the dissemination of Hegel's ideas are to be found in: Dean Moyar (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). On arguments within Germany about his intellectual legacy see, for example: Warren Breckman, *Marx, The Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: Dethroning the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Frederick Beiser, *Late German Idealism: Trendelenburg and Lotze* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); William Woodward, *Hermann Lotze: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[6] Very little I have read has equalled Pierre Tavarès, "Hegel, critique de l'Afrique: Introduction aux études critiques de Hegel sur l'Afrique," (2 volumes), thèse de doctorat, Panthéon-Sorbonne (Paris, 1990). Thoughtful recent work includes Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009) and Aakash Singh Rathore and Rimina Mohapatra, *Hegel's India: A Reinterpretation with Texts* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016). See: Robert Bernasconi, "Critical Philosophy of Race and Philosophical Historiography," and Frank Kirkland, "Kant on Race and Transition," both in:

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I am concerned with a more basically mechanical if still somewhat overlooked matter. Simply but precisely I interrogate Hegel as *homo academicus*, a man of his own time who functioned and operated as a university professor within an academic milieu. He labored in an environment, common historically to such scholarly institutions, that was systematized bureaucratically, but was also saturated in the highly labile currency of interpersonal patronage, clientelism, and intense competitive rivalry in the building of reputations and careers.[7] Hegel's correspondence is full of such worldly concerns, and, as he became more widely known and talked about in Berlin in the 1820s, he gave advice to those who sought his support. The seasoned university politician is evident in a letter he wrote to his sometime student Hermann Hinrichs, then a *Privatdozent* but ambitious for a salaried professorship at Heidelberg. Tenure, Hegel wrote, was in the gift of government functionaries and not of university office holders. Publication was essential to the gaining of preferment, but the crux of the matter was a public reputation acquired through lecturing to students and all other interested parties. The successful aspirant should free his mind "of all other demands" in order to pursue, construct and refine his own conceptual scheme through a relentless reading that would pay off in the lecture hall.[8]

Hegel: Lectures, Texts

Hegel included his observations on Africa in a series of professorial lectures on history and religion that he delivered in Berlin between 1822 and 1831. Those devoted to history were delivered five times in every second year between 1822–1823 and 1830–1831; those on religion were given four times at least, in 1821, 1824, 1827, and 1831. Hegel varied and revised these in oral presentation over the years as he read more about the subject at hand, inserted new illustrative details, or simply changed his mind about the emphatic stresses he placed on his arguments. Indeed, his modern editors are agreed that Hegel, in consonance with the supreme importance he accorded to the performative and pedagogical impact of speaking before an audience, only gave a concrete shape to his draft notes as he delivered

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Paul Taylor, Linda Martin Alcoff and Luvell Anderson (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Race* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 3–13 and 28–42. And consult Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[7] For the now classic application of the sociological hermeneutics of suspicion to university academics, see: Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1984 [reprinted with a new *postface* by the author, 1992]).

[8] Hegel to Hinrichs, Berlin, ? November 1819. In a subsequent letter of 7 April 1821 Hegel demurred at writing a preface to Hinrichs's first book on the grounds that, "This summer I am going to lecture on the philosophy of religion, and thus was already induced in any case to direct my thoughts in this direction."

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the lecture itself. Certainly, Hegel himself never prepared an authoritative text of these lectures for publication.

All of this material has a complicated provenance and in parts it has an equivocal authority. In terms of the lectures on history, the single surviving holograph manuscript by Hegel dates from 1830. His lectures of 1822 and 1828 were copied down while he spoke and/or redacted from his rough lecture notes and published after his death by his amanuensis Eduard Gans in 1837 and by his son Karl in 1840, but the original materials are now lost. Apart from that, notes on Hegel's lectures on history were taken by his students von Griesheim in 1822–1823, von Kehler in 1822–1823 and in 1824–1825, and Stieve in 1826–1827. A like situation obtains with the lectures on religion. In this case the sole surviving holograph manuscript text by Hegel dates from 1821, and his miscellaneous notes and papers on this subject are no longer extant. No fewer than eight sets of student lecture notes were used to supplement the redacted publication of the lectures on religion by Hegel's amanuensis Mahreinke in 1832, and again in 1840. Both of these cycles of lecture notes were printed with other notes and draft materials in a first posthumous assemblage of Hegel's *Werke* between 1832 and 1845. This was the *Freundesvereinsausgabe*, compiled as the title suggests by Hegel's followers and students. Even on their own terms, the *Werke* have varying degrees of editorial accuracy, and in consequence of this they have gone through multiple editorial emendations and revisions as well as additions from source materials unearthed over the nearly two hundred years since Hegel's death in 1831. This paper makes use of the current standard German edition in twenty volumes put together by Moldenhauer and Michel; the relevant volumes are number 12 (lectures on history) and numbers 16 and 17 (lectures on religion.).[9]

There are obvious problems with these texts. By way of brief illustration let us look more closely at the lectures on history. Von Griesheim wrote two volumes of notes at the lectures delivered in the winter semester of

[9] Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (eds.), *G.W.F. Hegel: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* and *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, I und II*, volumes 12, 16 and 17 of *Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969 [reprinted 1986]). I have also consulted pre-existing English translations of earlier German language versions of the relevant texts. Hugh Barr Nisbett (trans.) with an Introduction by Duncan Forbes, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Peter Hodgson (ed.), *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. I-III, by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1984/1985/1987). Both books translated the work of Eduard Gans, Karl Hegel, and Georg Lasson (1862–1932). The last named was founding editor of the so-called Meiner edition of Hegel's *Sämtliche Werke* which appeared between 1913 and 1944. There are new German and Spanish editions of the lectures on religion by Jaesche and Ferrera respectively. Editors and translators now work with the methods and protocols established by the Hegel Archive in Bochum.

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1822–1823. Successive editors have judged these to be painstaking and diligent. Von Kiehler also attended these same lectures, but he penned only twenty-three quarto pages of notes, and these are vivid but hurried although they do not differ much from von Grieshem's account. He took notes again in the winter semester of 1824–1825, albeit only until February. These are even more hastily written and harder to decipher than his earlier effort, but editors think they are faithful to Hegel's mode of expression. Finally, Stieve took down lecture notes in the winter semester of 1826–1827. These have unique sections in them and the editorial consensus is that by then Hegel had revised and added to his observations. All three of these students grew up during the heady revival of Prussian nationalism that turned the tables on Napoleon at Leipzig (1813) and Waterloo (1815), and after university all of them went on to careers in Prussian state service.[10] As with all such note taking, the pertinent question naturally arises as to what these students were hoping and looking for in these lectures and writing down? Obversely, what did lack of interest or simple inattention cause them to omit? There is no answer to be given, except to say that Hegel himself was warily sceptical of the accuracy with which his lectures were copied down. In 1829 he informed a correspondent that "notebooks" of his lectures were "circulating" among his students, but that he had seen only a few of these and they were "not always exactly to my satisfaction."[11] Ultimately, however, such issues pale into insignificance before a larger matter. To put things plainly, and whatever the inconclusive debates that surround them, Hegel's lectures on history and on religion have enjoyed a huge potency in the realms of ideology and history. They damned Africa as ahistorical, and in the era of European colonialism and its postcolonial aftermath they still possess the power to traduce and exclude.

After years of struggle Hegel eventually and with great effort rose to a triumphal public prominence in Berlin. Plans for the university of Berlin (now the Humboldt-Universität) were drawn up in 1807, a year after Napoleon had humiliated Prussia at the battle of Jena; funding and the first building were provided in 1809; the first student intake arrived in 1810; and Hegel removed to Berlin in 1818 where he gave his inaugural professorial lecture on 22 October. This new university was at once a site of Prussian, and German, national renewal, and a place of consciously high ideals. It was intellectually dedicated to the systematic pursuit of learning, scholarship, and the dissemination through lectures of knowledge and the methods for pursuing it. In Berlin the realization of these ideals of excellence followed two main paths.

[10] Von Griesheim rose to be a Major General in the Prussian army and commandant of the Koblenz garrison; Von Kehler also joined the army and became a Captain; Stieve joined the Prussian Ministry of Education and became a state Privy Councillor.

[11] Hegel to Ravenstein, Berlin, 10 May 1829.

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One path was espoused, led, and propagated by the influential liberal theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). Already widely known and esteemed, he was among those who helped create the university of Berlin, and upon its opening he was appointed to a professorship in theology there. When Hegel arrived Schleiermacher had been a leading figure in shaping the curriculum for eight years. Schleiermacher was a key founding figure of hermeneutics in the effort to reconcile Enlightenment critical reason with the revealed truths of biblical Protestant Christianity. Central to this was his understanding of the person as an individualization of universal reason that sought and found expression in self-consciousness, an idea that had a certain consonance with Hegel's thinking. Pedagogically, Schleiermacher thought that philosophy, capaciously construed, was at the core of the university curriculum, and that lecturing about one's personal reading and research was the sovereign means of reaching out to and shaping the young. Indeed he held the view, originating with Fichte (1762–1814) and practised by him as a university professor in Jena in the 1790s, that the reading, researching, and, above all, teaching academic enjoyed a heroic status as an exemplar of modern man. He also took from Fichte the understanding that historical evidence remained inert until it was instrumentalized so as to serve higher intellectual and social purposes. Much of this programme was personally and intellectually congenial to Hegel, and this was the strand in Berlin university life that he felt most comfortable with.[12]

The second strand in the intellectual life of Berlin university was the relatively new and potent practice and method of source criticism (*Quellenkritik*), first formalized at Göttingen university by a cohort of quite remarkable scholars led by Heyne, Meiners, Spittler, Gatterer, and others. In 1738, a year after that university's creation, the famous Göttingen Philological Seminar was inaugurated. Drawing all at once on classical philology, biblical criticism, and legal history, this group came to apply the

[12] In writing this section I have plundered the items cited at note 3 above and also consulted: Bernd Henningsen (ed.), *Humboldts Zukunft: Das Projekt Reformuniversität* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag, 2008); Rüdiger vom Bruch (ed.), *Die Berliner Universität im Kontext der deutschen Universitätslandschaft nach 1800, um 1860 und um 1910* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2010); and for the specific disciplinary case Volker Gerhardt, Reinhard Mehring and Jana Rindert, *Berliner Geist: Eine Geschichte der Berliner Universitätsphilosophie bis 1946* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999). Fichte's lectures in Jena were hugely successful and published in 1794 as *Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten*, for which see: William Smith (ed.), *The Vocation of the Scholar* (London: John Chapman, 1847). See: David James, "Fichte on the Vocation of the Scholar and the (Mis)use of History," *Review of Metaphysics* 63–3 (2010), 539–566; Jacqueline Marinã, *Transformations of the Self in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Matthias Wolfes, *Öffenlichkeit und Bürgergesellschaft: Friedrich Schleiermachers politische Wirksamkeit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

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tools of exact, and exacting, source criticism for the first time in a systematic way to historical evidence. Gatterer took the lead in working out a sophisticated methodology for the writing of history based on the careful evaluation of sources. The Göttingen academics were not alone. Mascov, a law professor at Leipzig university, was concurrently writing books on Rome and early Germanic history that integrated critical source reading with narrative history. The leading light in this movement at Berlin was the Roman historian Niebuhr (1776–1831), a sometime patron of Hegel, until the arrival of von Ranke in 1825. Intensive seminars on the Göttingen model taught critical methodology to apprentice historians, the ultimate aim of this being to assert and establish the autonomy of history as a discipline, and to make it quite irreducible to any other academic practice, and especially philosophy. Of course, this stood at the opposite pole from Hegel's project to unify all of the human sciences under the banner of philosophy, and he disdained this approach. This was reciprocated by the historians who were suspicious of all post-Kantian philosophical systems.[13]

Hegel: Academic Practitioner

After 1820 Hegel published little that was substantial other than a second edition (1827) of a teaching guide to his own philosophical method that first appeared in 1817 when he was still employed at Heidelberg university.[14] Instead, he devoted himself to the dissemination of his ideas and influence through what he regarded as the sovereign practice of lecturing. In the end Hegel's Berlin lectures attracted large and enthusiastic audiences and he became a public celebrity in Brandenburg-Prussia and beyond, even suffering the attentions of autograph seekers. In one very real sense this was Hegel's hardest won triumph, for whatever his own exalted pedagogical estimation of teaching by lecturing the fact of the matter is that he had no natural gift for it, and he himself knew this to be the case.

[13] Overviews include: Markus Völkel, "German Historical Writing from the Reformation to the Enlightenment," in: José Rabasa, Masayuki Sato, Edoardo Tortarolo and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 3: 1400–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 324–346; and Georg G. Iggers, "The Intellectual Foundations of Nineteenth-Century German 'Scientific' History," in: Stuart Macintyre, Juan Maiguastica and Attila Polk (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 4: 1800–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 41–58. See too: Johnson Kent Wright, "History and Historicism," in: Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Science: Volume 7: The Modern Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 113–130. Still useful for orientation is: Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[14] Moldenhauer and Michel, *Werke*, volumes 8–10, *Enzyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenshaften.*

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As far back as 1801 Hegel was employed to lecture in Jena. There he had several encounters with Goethe, who was in effect the Minister of Education in Weimar. In 1803 Goethe told Schiller that Hegel was "a perfectly excellent man," but that he had no "technique in the art of delivery," and that "too much stands against him with respect to his expression." Schiller replied that he thought Hegel would find it difficult to overcome his "deficiency in the gift of self-expression," and so he would "have to think about a teaching method to make his idealism understood."[15] Hegel acknowledged in retrospect that his lectures in Jena had been "timid and incomplete," and that because he was then "strictly bound to the letter of my notebook" he struggled to attain any fluency or "freedom and clarity" in verbal presentation.[16] His deficiencies as a public speaker became widely known, and when he was first considered for university employment in Berlin in 1816, the Prussian Minister of the Interior commented to him that "doubt has arisen in several quarters" as to whether Hegel was "fully" able to "command the skill to teach your science in a lively and penetrating manner." This was a vital matter, for "it is precisely in this science essential that the spirit of young people be especially awakened and guided by lively teaching."[17]

More needs to be added here in biographical terms. Those who have documented Hegel's life, and most notably Pinkard, paint a picture of a singular man. He suffered from asthma and had a speech impediment, so his lectures were punctuated by coughs, gasps, and stuttering. His delivery of lectures at Jena was described by one listener as being "as it were tubercular." His nervous reliance on his notes made his lecturing style wooden and disjointed, with an over reliance on connectives like "therefore" and "thus," and with sudden silences punctuating his speech when he lost his thread and had to shuffle through his notes. Hegel also waved his hands around and sometimes paused in speaking to take snuff. Furthermore, Hegel was an unassuming figure. He suffered from hypochondria, nerves, and anxieties.[18] Until he was appointed to Berlin in 1818 his employment was insecure and peripatetic, with recurring concerns about money, and all of this in a Germany devastated and disoriented by the everyday military violence of the Franco-Prussian wars. In Berlin in the 1820s Hegel mastered some but not all of his unfortunate mannerisms in his lectures. Public audiences became habituated to *le style Hegelien*, and paradoxically he became chic and popular. What Hegel represented now, in a resurrected

[15] Goethe to Schiller, Jena, 27 November 1803, and Schiller to Goethe, Jena, 30 November 1803. The whole Goethe-Schiller Correspondence is now available online at the *Archivdatenbank* of the *Klassik Stiftung Weimar*.

[16] Hegel to Paulus, Nuremberg, 2 May 1816.

[17] Von Schukmann to Hegel, Berlin, 14 August 1816, and Hegel to Von Schuckmann, Nuremberg, 28 August 1816.

[18] Pinkard, *Hegel*, especially 371, 456, and 611–612.

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Germany become self-consciously victorious, nationalist, and romantic, was a palpable authenticity. Compared to the urbane and polished Schleiermacher, in style a figure of the eighteenth-century *Aufklärung*, Hegel seemed to incarnate the electric excitement of the professor who was struggling to give birth to his thoughts even as he spoke them. Celebrity followed this vision of thinking embodied in oral performance, and suddenly and unexpectedly Hegel was famous. He learned to overcome his remaining disadvantages by incorporating them as traits and tics necessary to the birth and acting out of his ideas in utterance. It is not overstating things to say that Hegel now learned to play to his audience. One commentator, who interestingly enough acquits Hegel of racism, nonetheless concedes that "the histrionic temptations of the lecture theatre" may have led him to select "the most lurid and blood-curdling of the tales available to him" in his lectures.[19]

Hegel's correspondence from his years in the university of Berlin illustrate the minefield of professorial competition, personality clashes, and rivalrous backbiting that formed the mood music to the pursuit of advantage, power, and status. One other thread that runs through these letters is Hegel's relentless questing after books to consult in order to prepare his lectures. Thus, in 1822 he asked the Berlin university library to acquire the forthcoming volumes by Müller on Hinduism and Steudel on morality.[20] In 1823 he asked the bookseller Nicolai to get him Beck's forthcoming guide to world history (but it remained unpublished). In the same year he reminded the university librarian that he had already asked for Tuckey's African travels, waspishly remarking that his colleague the geographer Carl Ritter (1779–1859) had told him the book had been acquired five years earlier when it was first published.[21] All through the letters we can see the strain on Hegel of all of this omnivorous erudition. In 1822 the histories of India and China passed in review before his eyes, but he confessed he still had much reading to do on these subjects. In 1823 he bewailed the

[19] Joe McCarney, *Hegel on History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 143. See too: Robert Bernasconi, "The Challenge of Enlightenment Racism to the Study of the History of Philosophy," *Radical Philosophy* Series 1, 117 (2003), 13–22; and the subsequent exchange between Joe McCarney, "Hegel's Racism: A Response to Bernasconi," and Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel's Racism: A Reply to McCarney," *Radical Philosophy* Series 1, 119 (2003), 32–36.

[20] Hegel to Berlin Royal Library, Berlin, 10 January and 7 June 1822. The books requested were Niklas Müller, *Glauben, Wissen und Kunst der alten Hindus* (Mainz: Florian Kupferberg, 1822), and Johan C.F. Steudel (ed.) *Vorlesungen über Christliche Moral* (Tübingen: Ludwig Fues, 1823).

[21] Hegel to Nicolai's Bookshop, Berlin, 14 February 1823, and to Berlin Royal Lbrary, Berlin, 26 May 1824. James Hingston Tuckey, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire Usually Called the Congo, in South Africa, in 1816* (London: John Murray, 1818).

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strenuous exertions of preparing for his lectures that left his mind wearied and his body fatigued.[22]

What kind of reader was Hegel? It is instructive to compare him here with his colleague the geographer Ritter. In social scientific terms Ritter practised induction. He read hugely in order to drip feed what he learned into the generation of new theory. If he ended as something of a climatic determinist, then the method he used meant that his master work *Die Erdkunde im Verhältniss zur Nature und zur Geschichte* remained unfinished at his death, although nineteen volumes of it (beginning with Africa) were published between 1817–1822 and 1850–1852. By contrast, Hegel practised deduction. He read equally extensively in order to gather illustrative evidence to support a theory that had already been formulated. Hegel began by identifying three modes of doing history. These were original, written by eyewitnesses or near contemporaries, such as Thucydides or Herodotus; reflective, written by those at a temporal distance from what they described, and in Hegel's view often disfigured by the imposition of current views onto the past; and philosophical, the only truly Hegelian history, in which the thinker reflects on the past so as to discern the driving ideas and the overall sense of its being. Hegel's philosophy was a theodicy, whatever the terms he used, an attempt to reconcile divine providence with the evils of history. If it was established what the design of the world really was, then it would be seen that this design had been realized. To see the reason in history was to be able to account for the evil within it and to hold it at bay. Hegel described the unfolding of events over time as *Geschichte als Schlachtbank*, "the slaughterhouse of history." Some philosophers defend him by arguing that unlike most conventional historians he openly exposed the framework that underpinned and guided his thought. It can be riposted with justice that Hegel's intellectual project was *a priori*, and that he brought to what he consulted for illustrative material the experiences and prejudices of the man as well as the intellect and training of the scholar.

Hegel on Africa: Dahomey, Kongo

In the lectures on the philosophy of history and religion Hegel characterized the African as a being generically remote and alien, a savage and lawless animal-man with no concept of any Absolute Being distinct from and above his own sensual and material needs. He went on to assert that nothing had changed since the time of Herodotus, and that the ancient author's perception that Africans were in thrall to and ruled over by sorcery (*Zauberei*) still held true in all modern accounts. To Hegel, sorcery was a practice wholly bereft of conceptions of god or morality, and this was why African man saw himself as the highest power commanding nature. This was a

[22] Hegel to Duboc, Berlin, 22 December 1822, to unknown, Berlin, end March 1823, and to Van Ghert, Berlin, 7 April 1823.

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condition in which Africans were condemned to an endless ahistorical repetition of brute acts without any source of philosophical or ethical restraint. Hegel's materials in illustration of his thesis were not hard to find after centuries of the Atlantic slave trade, and its justification by Europeans in terms not unlike his own. However, it should be noted that Hegel seems to have had little or no interest in abolitionist literature, evangelical or otherwise, and used only those sources consonant with his overriding thesis of African barbarity. It is also not inappropriate to suggest, in the light of what has been said here about Hegel's concern with the reception of his lectures in relation to his public fame and status, that he deliberately chose materials that he thought would engage and involved his student listeners through the shock of horror and/or titillation.

Hegel had both a willed and wilful practice of taking his sources selectively and at face value, for their purpose was to garland his *a priori* thesis. This can be seen in the use he made of Dalzel's book of 1793 about the West African kingdom of Dahomey, among other things an account of Atlantic slave trading that exculpated Europeans by normalizing servitude within a complex but allegedly superstitious, barbaric, and bloody African culture.[23] It was only this last that interested Hegel and he made no attempt to contextualize the book. Archibald Dalzel (1740–1811) was a member of that eighteenth-century Scottish diaspora that sought to make money in Britain's expanding empire so as to support an enhanced status upon their return home.[24] He qualified as a medical doctor at Edinburgh university, and then served as a physician in the Royal Navy until he was decommissioned and left penniless at the close of the Seven Years War in 1763. Connections helped him to secure employment as a Royal African Company surgeon at Anomabo on the Gold Coast. He became a factor and then was made resident in charge of the RAC trading fort at Ouidah in Dahomey. He returned to London in 1771 where he invested his accumulated capital in the African trade, until he went bankrupt in 1778 due to faulty credit arrangements and losses of cargo to privateers. During the 1780s he engaged in what has been called an "outrageous variety" of money making schemes. By the close of that decade he was supplying evidence to government committees on the slave trade, and engaging in the anti-abolitionist propaganda war in return for payment. This paid off handsomely. Just as he had finished writing the text of his pro-slave trade history of Dahomey, he was again sent out to Cape Coast on the Gold Coast.

[23] Archibald Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy, An Inland Kingdom of Africa; Compiled from Authentic Memoirs; with an Introduction and Notes* (London: T. Spilsbury, 1793 [second printing with a new Introduction by John Fage, London: Frank Cass, 1967]).

[24] In this Scottish context see, on the Johnstone family of Dumfries: Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

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There he served as Governor (1792–1802) and head of all RAC operations in western Africa. He retired again to England where he lived until his death.[25]

Dalzel's history of Dahomey is a complicated and slippery text, not least because he abstracted, plagiarized, rewrote, and included materials from a book published by an acquaintance of his in 1789. This was Robert Norris, a slave trader who had visited and written about Dahomey but who died in 1791, two years before Dalzel's own volume was published.[26] Norris too was an anti-abolitionist, and he portrayed Dahomey as "an aggressively militaristic and despotic state, practicing human sacrifice on a large scale." Much might and indeed has been written about the historic place of bloodletting within Dahomeyan culture, but Hegel had no interest in pondering this sort of contextualization. He was similarly uninterested in Dahomeyan opinions of slavery and of the slave trade, although Dalzel included a long and reasoned speech on the matter of abolition spoken by king Adauzou (Kpengla) in 1775 and recorded in the presence of Norris.[27] Equally if predictably, Hegel never considered where and how the conjoined Norris-Dalzel text acquired its information and from whom. He took the book at face value, and extracted from it bloody and barbaric impressionistic snippets to support his deterministic view of the irredeemably abandoned condition of Africa and its peoples.[28]

In a like manner Hegel consulted and excerpted James Bruce's epic account of his quest to find the source of the Nile, taking from it materials that could lend credence to his arguments about incoherent African

[25] Important on the Scottish background and on Dalzel's career is C. Duncan Rice, "Archibald Dalzel, the Scottish Intelligentsia, and the Problem of Slavery," *The Scottish Historical Review* 62–2 (1983), 121–136. For the African context, consult: Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550–1750: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving "Port," 1727–1892* (Oxford/Athens OH: James Currey/Ohio University Press, 2004).

[26] Robert Norris, *Memoirs of the Reign of Bossa Ahadee, King of Dahomey, An Inland Country of Guiney, to which are Added the Author's Journey to Abomey, the Capital, and A Short Account of the African Slave Trade* (London: W. Lowndes, 1789).

[27] Dalzel, *History*, 216–221, "Adahoonzou's speech, upon hearing what had passed in England upon the subject of the Slave-trade."

[28] The quotation is from the authoritative Robin Law, "The Slave-Trader as Historian: Robert Norris and the History of Dahomey," *History in Africa* 16 (1989), 219–235, material cited at 220. See too: Robin Law, "Dahomey and the Slave Trade: Reflections on the Historiography of the Rise of Dahomey," *Journal of African History* 27–2 (1986), 237–267. Two recent and interesting contributions are: J. Cameron Monroe, *The Precolonial State in West Africa: Building Power in Dahomey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Silke Strickrodt, *Afro-European Trade in the Atlantic World: The Western Slave Coast c.1550–c.1885* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2015).

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fanaticism and violence.[29] More precisely, for his reference to the Asante assault on the British fort at Cape Coast in 1807 Hegel appears to have looked at Meredith's eyewitness testimony about furious and sustained attacks heedless of casualties, but of course he ascribed these to innately brute African lack of regard for any life, including their own, and not to resolute military bravery under the watching eyes of the king of Asante.[30] It would be otiose to list all of Hegel's selective borrowings except to note that a hint of prurience is threaded through them, and his audience heard him linger over his tales of butchery, sexuality and cannibalism even as he deplored them.

It appears from the lectures that two books on Africa resonated above all others with Hegel. Like many another European, he may have been led on to reading the first of these by an acquaintance with Filippo Pigafetta's *Relatione del Reame di Congo et delle circonvicine contrade tratta dalli scritti & ragionamenti di Odoardo Lopez*, first published in Rome in 1591, but almost immediately available in translations into Dutch (1596), German (1597), English (1597), and Latin (1598), and severally and variously reprinted thereafter. Pigafetta's book made use of an account of the kingdom of Kongo by Duarte (Odoardo) Lopez who made two visits there in 1578 and 1589. The book was widely known, and although sections of it bordered on the fabulous its discussion of the effects of heat and cold on human culture would have interested Hegel or his colleague Ritter. Whatever the relationship to his possible reading of Pigafetta, Hegel definitely paid close attention to Fr. Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi de Montecuccolo's seventeenth-century account of Kongo and Angola, published after its author's death.

The matter is complicated. This text was completed in manuscript in 1671, and was edited and printed in Bologna by direction of the Holy See in 1687, nine years after Cavazzi's death. A second edition was published in Milan in 1689; an abridged German edition was published in Munich in 1694; and later still a French adaptation, including fanciful interpolations not in the original volume, in Labat's five volume compendium of travelers's accounts printed in Paris in 1728–1732; Labat's version was translated from French into German and published in Munich in 1794. The book itself - *Istorica descrizione de' tre regni Congo, Matamba et Angola* – has long been

[29] James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile: In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 and 1773* (5 volumes) (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1790). For a recent biography see: Miles Bredin, *Pale Abyssinian: The Life of James Bruce, African Explorer* (London: Flamingo, 2001).

[30] Henry Meredith, *An Account of the Gold Coast of Africa: With a Brief History of the African Company* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1812). For context see: Tom C. McCaskie, "Telling the Tale of Osei Bonsu: An Essay on the Making of Asante Oral History," *Africa* 84–3 (2014), 353–370 (reprinted in my *Asante, Kingdom of Gold: Essays in the History of an African Culture* [Durham NC: Carolina Academic Press 2015], 967–983).

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recognized as an important source by modern historians of central Africa. However, scholars continue to be engaged today with reconciling the printed version(s) with manuscript drafts that have come to light in the past century and that date to 1665, some five years before the manuscript was completed by Cavazzi.[31] In the absence of conclusive evidence, there is a deal of speculative disagreement as to which edition (or editions) of Cavazzi was read by Hegel, and in what language.[32] Here let us adopt the Occamist solution that Hegel probably had access to more than one edition, and in more than one language. A more interesting question is Hegel's choice of this particular book as a source. He knew and said it was old and dated and that alternatives existed, but, as we shall see, it suited his purposes eminently.

From 1654 until 1667 Cavazzi served as a Roman Catholic missionary in Angola and Matamba, and later became the Capuchin Prefect of Luanda. His accounts of these places are richly first hand, and his work is acknowledged to be an important source for modern historians.[33] However, in his description of Kongo he made use of missionary archives and other sources following his return to Europe. It needs to be recalled here that Cavazzi was an involved Christian actor, a member of an order of missionary friars that saw themselves as spiritual warriors engaged in a ceaseless struggle for human souls against indigenous beliefs, customs and practices. Thus, throughout his writings Cavazzi anchored what he saw or heard of in the certainties of a Capuchin spirituality that played out before him in deeds,

[31] For the tangled history of Cavazzi's book and manuscript drafts, and for ongoing efforts to secure an authoritative English translation, consult: John K. Thornton, "Cavazzi, Missione Evangelica," online at the African American Studies, Boston University website. See too: John K. Thornton, "New Light on Cavazzi's Seventeenth-Century Description of Kongo," *History in Africa* 6 (1979), 253–264; Beatriz Heintze, "The Extraordinary Journey of the Jaga through the Centuries: Critical Approaches to Precolonial Angolan Historical Sources," *History in Africa* 34 (2007), 67–101. Friends who read Portuguese tell me that recent and interesting essays on aspects of Cavazzi's life and text are in Inocência Mata (ed.), *A Rainha Nzinga Mbandi: História, Memória e Mito* (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2012) and in Selma Pantoja, Edvaldo Bergamo and Ana Claudia da Silva (eds.), *Angola e as Angolanas: Memória, Sociedade e Cultura* (São Paulo: Editoria Intermeios, 2016).

[32] For example, Walter Jaesche, an esteemed scholar of Hegel on religion, thinks that Hegel read the German edition of 1694. Peter Hodgson, Jaesche's translator into English, surmises that Hegel read the Italian editions of 1687 or 1689. And Robert Bernasconi, who has paid more attention to Hegel's sources on Africa than any other philosopher, detects the French edition of 1728–1732 by Labat in nearly all of Hegel's references.

[33] Consult here Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles and the Making of the Americas, 1580–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and also Linda M. Heywood, *Njinga of Angola: Africa's Warrior Queen* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

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signs and wonders. He took note of divine portents in the sky and the weather, and celebrated a "miracle" in the 1650s when a fellow friar "exorcised" a plague of locusts that were afflicting São Salador in Kongo. This was a shared, contested and ambiguous terrain, for Africans looked to the same signs and like Cavazzi they interpreted them by filtering them through their own belief system. Before the battle of Mbwila (1665), for example, night birds cried in the sky, and while some thought this a sign of the Christian deity's favor, others claimed it in a reciprocal way for Kongolese belief. As a vigilant if fretful policeman on this frontier between spiritual realms Cavazzi reported interestedly and extensively on local customs, but always with eyes and ears open for anything about the African world view that might be interpreted negatively as compared with revealed Christian truth.

Hegel made particular use of Cavazzi's discussions of the Jaga, for this chimed with his dismissal of the very concept of culture and civilisation in Africa. For Hegel the Jaga illustrated the fatal grip of incoherent sorcery and fetishism over all Africans, producing a delirium of the individual self and its senses that had no concept of a deity. He used Cavazzi, and probably Labat's inventive glosses on the Italian missionary, in lurid, shocking and prurient detail to cast the social order of the Jaga as an unnatural, or even satanic, entity allegedly ruled over by female Amazons who had expelled all their menfolk. The result was perpetual havoc and chaos marked by everything that was *contra natura*: idolatry, polygamy, warfare, predation, human sacrifice, cannibalism, infanticide. The Jaga had neither a settled society nor any kind of agriculture. Instead, they were predators, supporting themselves by incredibly violent plunder and the eating of human flesh.

Moreover, Hegel's Jaga underscored the deficient moral sentiments of Africans, for they did not possess even the rudimentary ethical value of family. Slavery ceased to exist within all rationally evolved societies and states, but the Jaga readily sold their kin into servitude and even into the Atlantic slave trade. Europeans had progressed beyond the slave trade, but the moral nullity of Africans meant that they were trapped in it forever. This line of argument gives a strong hint that Hegel ultimately blamed backward and ahistorical Africa for the very existence of the transatlantic commerce in people. Tales of the sort just described must have produced a *frisson* in those who heard Hegel's lectures, but they may have had an ancillary purpose other than the denigration and dismissal of Africans. In Cavazzi's writings there is a sense in which missionaries and Africans share a kinship in their common if antagonistic foregrounding of public ritual observances as the cornerstone of belief systems. Read closely, one can see that the undercurrent of Hegel's lectures is strongly anti-Catholic. Indeed, when a Catholic priest complained about remarks made in the 1825–1826 cycle of lectures, Hegel robustly asserted his own Lutheran background and talked of the Host in terms of rank papal idolatry and superstition.[34]

[34] On this matter see: Hegel to von Altenstein, Berlin, 3 April 1826.

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Reports and fantasies about the Jaga were accompanied by a lack of clarity about exactly who they were or where they had come from. It has been argued that the word itself derived from the Kongolese term *aka*, meaning "the other" and connoting violence and brigandage. In 1568 the so-called Jaga swept over the Kongo with unprecedented levels of violent destructiveness. In due course the Portuguese suppressed but by no means extinguished them. Indeed, Jaga as an epithet passed into the oral cultures of southern Africans and into local Portuguese discourse as a label to describe those who practised a seemingly irrational ferocity. From the 1970s on historians have debated the identity of the Jaga at length, and have explored their destructive behavior and its consequences in detail.[35] However, for our purposes here this fine scholarship is almost beside the point. Surely for Hegel the seductive appeal of Cavazzi was the horrified and horrifying accounts of radical violence in central Africa. If Africans regarded the Jaga in terms of an extreme disruption of life and social order, then Hegel elected to portray them as a normative expressions of ahistorical and incoherent African barbarism.

Hegel on Africa: Asante

The second book that Hegel relied on, and in fact more than on any other for his calculatedly partial excerption of evidence about Africa, appeared first in English in 1819. It was translated into German in 1820, and then reprinted in Vienna in 1826, just as Hegel focused his attention fully on the contents of his Berlin lectures. This volume was Thomas Bowdich's *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*.[36] Bowdich's account is a lengthy report of the first British embassy to the Asante capital of Kumase in 1817. However, it is much more than simple reportage. Bowdich and his colleagues were certainly sent to Asante for immediately political reasons, but also with the

[35] Multiple contributions, far too numerous to list here, have been made by Joseph Miller, John Thornton, Beatrix Heintze, Anne Hilton, Mariana Candido, and others. In extension, see the recent overview in José Rivair Macedo, "Jaga, Cannibalism and the 'Guerra Preta:' The Mbangalas between the European Myth and the Social Realities of Central Africa in the XVII Century," *História (São Paulo)* 32–1 (2013), 53–78. For possible far-flung repercussions and/or echoes consult Eric Allina, "The Zimba, the Portuguese, and Other Cannibals in Late Sixteenth Century Southeast Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37–2 (2011), 211–227; Jared Staller, "Rivalry and Reformation Politics: Reflections on Andrew Battell's Jaga Materials Printed by Samuel Purchas from 1613 to 1625," *History in Africa* 43 (2016), 7–28.

[36] Thomas Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Catle to Ashantee* (London: John Murray, 1819) – translated into German as *Mission der Englisch-Afrikanischen Compagnie von Cape Coast Castle nach Ashantee* (Weimar: Verl. D. Landes-Industrie-Comptoirs, 1820); reprinted under the same title by Kaulfuss und Krammer: Vienna, 1826.

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widest of scientific briefs to gather as much information as possible on Asante and its people. The result is a book that approximates to an encyclopaedic account of the country at the time of the embassy's visit, and it is now acknowledged to be one of the richest sources for any precolonial African society. Since my own research is primarily about Asante I have known Bowdich's book for half a century, and have written much about both the author and his work.[37] Bowdich himself aspired to be a serious and committed student of Africa, and he worked with Baron Cuvier and his circle in Paris on his Asante and other materials. Both men were enthusiastic about the German historical methodology of *Quellenkritik* that Hegel disdained in Berlin.[38]

In 1998 Robert Bernasconi published an essay on Hegel and Africa in which he put Bowdich's Asante at the heart of his exegesis. This is an estimably suggestive paper and it deserves to be better known among Africanists than it appears to be. Bernasconi is a philosopher who has written books on Heidegger and Levinas, but the occasion for his writing of this particular essay was as a contribution to a collection that considered Hegel in the light of Derrida's engagement with his towering German predecessor in his opaque and often puzzling book *Glas*.[39] This book, which also discussed the autobiographical writings of Jean Genet, caused something of a furore in literary and deconstructionist circles, but that is by the way. Bernasconi explained this his notably readable paper was "part of an ongoing research project in which I attempt to show that the travel literature of the 17th and 18th centuries was transformed by academicians into a discourse of race that, when tied to the philosophy of history, was used to legitimate the violent and destructive character of nineteenth-century colonialism."[40] As is

[37] Most recently Tom C. McCaskie, "'The Art or Mystery of Physick:' Asante Medicinal Plants and the Western Ordering of Botanical Knowledge," *History in Africa* 44 (2017), 27–62.

[38] Tom C. McCaskie, "Asante Origins, Egypt, and the Near East: An Idea and Its History," in: Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macola (eds.), *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 125–148 (now reprinted in my *Asante, Kingdom of Gold*, 877–896).

[39] Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (Paris: Galilée, 1974). See too the English translation of John P. Leavey Jr. and Richard Rand, *Glas* (Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); accompanying this book was a simultaneously published *Glossary* by Leavey, with a preface by Derrida. Those seeking some guidance might consult Benoît Peeters, *Derrida: A Biography* (Cambridge/Malden MA: Polity Press, 2013), especially 256–266.

[40] Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti," in: Stuart Barnett (ed.), *Hegel After Derrida* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 41–63, quoted material at note 3, 299–300. See further: Stuart Barnett, "The Ruling Categories of the World: The Trinity in Hegel's Philosophy of History and the Rise and Fall of Peoples," in: Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Hegel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 315–331.

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very well known, this last is now a subject pursued by numbers of scholars. Here I concentrate on what Hegel said and did not say about Bowdich and the Asante.

Let us start with a canard that runs through Hegel's observations on Asante. He asserted on the authority of Bowdich that the Asante, like other Africans, ate human flesh because it was purely an object that presented itself to the senses and possessed no mental or psychological resonance. Hegel then qualified and elided his argument by claiming that human flesh was not food *per se*, but was consumed at festivals, so much so that it was even offered for sale in markets. This allowed him to go on to claim that this blank nullification of human life was the reason why the master-slave relationship was the only operational legal relationship in Asante, as in the remainder of Africa. In denying knowledge of any of the rational economic calculations involved, he (mis)used Bowdich to say that the Asantehene Osei Tutu Kwame (1803–1824) asked that British abolition of export slavery be reversed, for he wanted to continue selling captives, which he did, and his own subjects, which he did not. This misreading was scaffolding upon which to raise and foreground Hegel's main point. This was that the Asante and other Africans had no consciousness of freedom, and so the difference between master and slave was a purely arbitrary construct mediated by force, and in consequence slaves might be better off in the Americas than in Africa. Hegel's reasoning here is almost a *reductio ad absurdum*, a directed misreading of Bowdich for his own ends. Bowdich noted that during some Asante festivals tiny pieces of human flesh were sometimes lifted to the mouths of executioners for ritual purposes, but there was no cannibalism. It is also the case, as many other readers of Bowdich have discovered and reported, that it is a parody of what he says about the sophisticated complexity of Asante political, legal, and social arrangements to impose on them as explanandum a simplistically mechanical master-slave dialectic.[41]

Hegel is at his weakest and most solipsistic on the nature of Asante governance. First, and predictably, he argued that Asante had no constitution *sensu stricto*, at least as he conceived of such a thing in Prussian and European terms. He went on to ignore the basic fact, severally reported by Bowdich, that Asante women enjoyed a particular status. This was because descent, the fundamental machinery of kinship and sociability, was grounded in exogamous matrilineages (*mmusua*). Hegel stated, however, that male office holders in Asante constituted a patriarchy of force, in which atomised individuals throughout society had no affect for one another.

[41] By way of brief illustration consult Tom C. McCaskie, "Custom, Tradition, and Law in Precolonial Asante," in: E. Adriaan B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and Werner Zips (eds.), *Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and Power in West African Societies: Perspectives from Legal Anthropology* (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1998), 25–47 (now reprinted in my *Asante, Kingdom of Gold* [2015], 465–482).

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This anomic order was an expression of arbitrary will, and so the so-called government of Asante was a brute male despotism rooted in an arrogated right and ready willingness to kill and enslave. This arrangement he continued was subject to usurpatory disorder at the will of countervailing forces. An Asantehene, he opined, might simply be done away with by the aristocrats around him, and that was the reason why Bowdich reported that the monarch was careful to consult his advisers and to cultivate a multitude of subordinate noblemen. Bowdich's attempts to understand and explicate the alien rationality of Asante were reinterpreted, subsumed, or simply ignored in Hegel's retelling.[42]

Hegel selected items from the journal kept by William Hutchison in Kumase that was printed in Bowdich's book. Directed misreading produced titillating fictions, such as the claim that the kin of a deceased man consumed the bodies of his slaves after they were killed at his funeral. This is representative of Hegel's academic practice, in that he looked into Bowdich's book and found what he was looking for, even when this meant wilful misinterpretation to underline the savage, bloodletting, cannibalistic, and above all ahistorical nature of African societies. This is starkly underlined when we consider what Hegel must have read in Bowdich, but did not address or engage with and indeed omitted. The narrative of events during the British mission occupied one hundred and fifty-five pages in Bowdich's text. The larger part of two hundred and nineteen pages contained chapters on geography, history, constitution and laws, superstitions, customs, architecture (including arts and manufactures), climate (embracing population, capital city, markets and revenues), trade, language, music, and *materia medica* and diseases. Hegel must have looked over all of this, but in his ferreting around for the backward irrationalities that underpinned his project on Africa, and separated it out from human (European) progress, he ignored what did not fit. Even worse than that, he bent to his own purposes whatever in Bowdich he thought might serve his own ends.

Hegel was not to be diverted from his purposes. In truth, he asked few if any questions of his sources that were not driven by the needs of his own philosophical theses. Thus, he extracted, condensed and included in his lectures on history a passage from Bowdich concerning the self-imposed exile from Kumase and eventual removal from office of Asantehene Osei Kwame in 1800–1804.[43] Hegel deployed this episode as an illustration of

[42] From what is now a very large modern historical literature, see: Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975 [reissued with a new Preamble, 1989]); Tom C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, *"I Will Not Eat Stone:" A Women's History of Colonial Asante* (Portsmouth NH/Oxford/Cape Town: Heinemann/James Currey/David Philip, 2000).

[43] Bowdich, *Mission*, 239–240.

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the workings of arbitrary power in Africa. However, even in the story as recounted by Bowdich there are inexplicable lacunae, aporias and loose ends. It is hard to believe that when Hegel read this he was not struck by these features, for anyone reading the relevant pages of Bowdich's text is immediately brought up short by the explanatory gaps and problems in the narrative. Now the matter of Osei Kwame is recalled in detail in Asante oral historical tradition, but we cannot censure Hegel for being unaware of that.[44] What we can criticize him for is his absolute lack of empirical interest in the materials before his eyes, for at the very least Bowdich's account raises many issues and poses as many questions as it answers. However, as has been seen, Hegel was only interested in such materials for their exemplary value in fleshing out his *a priori* modeling. This particular case from Bowdich also serves to highlight Hegel's unprogrammatically haphazard investigation of African source materials. Thus, in 1820 Joseph Dupuis was sent as British consul to Kumase. He too left a published account of the removal of Asantehene Osei Kwame that adds detail to and complicates Bowdich's version. Hegel never mentions Dupuis or his valuable book, and we must conclude that he simply overlooked or dismissed it because Bowdich had supplied him with sufficient illustrative material to buttress the thrust of his lectures.[45]

Was Hegel unusual for his time in his views of Asante and Africa? Certainly, his dismissive attitude was prevalent in the Europe of his day, but it was beginning to be challenged. Let us return here to Bowdich. The youthful author of the *Mission* had the course of his life changed by book reviewers. In 1819 the influential *Edinburgh Review* printed an appreciative notice of the *Mission*, proclaiming it to be a work of revelatory significance. However in 1820 the *Quarterly Review*, the grandest of all serious English language periodicals, devoted no fewer than thirty pages of ridicule to Bowdich's book, berating it for its exaggeration of the cultural attainments of the "savage" Asante.[46] The anonymous reviewer was in fact Sir John Barrow, Secretary to the Admiralty, a famous explorer, naturalist and author, and a powerful figure in the London patronage networks that funded exploration and its scientific objectives. Barrow had traveled in the Cape Colony in South Africa shortly after the British takeover from the Dutch in the 1790s. In his account of his time there the dominant motif is the natural world. He thought Africans, in this particular case the San

[44] Tom C. McCaskie, "Dreamworlds: Cultural Narrative in Asante Visionary Experience," in: Toby Green and Benedetta Rossi (eds.), *Landscapes, Sources and Intellectual Projects of the West African Past: Essays in Honour of Paulo Fernando de Moraes Farias* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 353–376.

[45] Joseph Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (London: Henry Colburn, 1824), especially 245.

[46] *Edinburgh Review* 64 (October 1819), 389–399; *Quarterly Review* 22 (January 1820), 273–302.

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"bushmen," then and subsequently the victims of European settler massacres, an element in the landscape. Without history or culture, the San needed "nothing but kind treatment and instruction" by the British.[47] Unlike Hegel then, Barrow was a liberal paternalist, but his South African experience counted decisively against any acceptance that Asante society was the complex entity portrayed by Bowdich. So, with realistic hopes of further patronage dashed, Bowdich removed from London to Paris. Once there he wrote, among other things, a response to Barrow's review. He also produced a work, bristlingly footnoted in the manner of *Quellenkritik*, that discussed possible links between Asante and ancient Egypt and Ethiopia. This would have an influential presence in later scholarship.[48]

Hegel selected and deployed details from his reading about Africa to fit with his theoretical apriorism. Standing in the wings as both a backstop and a filter of his understanding about Africa and Africans was his view of human geography. In Hegel's opinion Africa was physically isolated and closed in on itself. It was in three parts. North Africa embraced the Nile valley and the higher if now surpassed civilizations of Pharaonic, Hellenistic and Muslim Egypt. South of this was Africa proper, the land of black Africans. In this huge space were enormous tracts of land unknown to outsiders, and people living there who led a hermetic and unchanging existence. The third and last part comprised narrow coastal strips, inland swamps and mountains. Hegel thought parts of this the fabled land of gold, but also the land of perpetual childhood in terms of any kind of human progress. It was out of this vast unknown that mindless hordes like the Jaga erupted from time to time. Here history did not exist, for it was simply out of the question. Hegel took these ideas from his Berlin colleague Ritter's geographical writings, briefly encountered in another context above, and modified them to his own purposes.

In 1819, Hegel wrote in praise of Ritter, saying that he had only discovered the latter's work since his own arrival in Berlin. However, he was now reading the proofs of Ritter's latest book.[49] This was the second volume of Ritter's *Die Erdkunde*, a work that engaged its author for the remainder

[47] John Barrow, *An Autobiographical Memoir of Sir John Barrow Bart., Late of the Admiralty* (London: John Murray, 1847), 247. The full account is John Barrow, *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa*, 2nd revised edition, 2 volumes (London: T. Cadell and W. Davis, 1806). On Barrow, see: Mary Louise Pratt, "Scratches on the Face of the Country: Or, What Mr. Barrow Saw in the Land of the Bushmen," *Critical Inquiry* 12–1 (1985), 119–143. For the historical context, see: Mohamed Adhikari, "A Total Extinction Confidently Hoped For: The Destruction of Cape San Society under Dutch Colonial Rule, 1700–1795," *Journal of Genocide Research* 12–1/2 (2010), 19–44; Nigel Penn, "The British and the 'Bushmen:' The Massacre of the Cape San, 1795 to 1828," *Journal of Genocide Research* 15–2 (2013), 183–200.

[48] For a detailed account consult: McCaskie, "Asante Origins."

[49] Hegel to Creuzer, Berlin, 30 October 1819.

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of his life, and which remained unfinished in nineteen volumes of twenty thousand pages when he died in 1859. In fact, discussion in *Die Erdkunde* never reached much beyond Africa and Asia. Influenced by Humboldt and Herder, Ritter saw geography as a kind of physiology. The earth's physical features were analogous to human organs, and just as the latter arbitrated and determined human lives, so the former functioned in a like manner in terms of historical and civilizational possibilities.[50] From Ritter's thinking, Hegel took as an insight the suggestion that history could never be an uncontaminated unfolding of itself as idea, or Hegelian Idea, for it was ever and always at the mercy of environmental contingencies external to itself that were imposed by the brute facts of geography. This is sometimes claimed to have encouraged Hegel to take geographical circumstances in history and progress into account, but if it did so it was as a determinism that permanently disabled Africa and advantaged Europe. In short, a geographically defined abyss lay between the stagnation of Africa and the progress of Europe, and this was a perpetual and immovable fact of life.

Conclusion

Let us attempt to sum up. Hegel's treatment of Africa – historically, empirically, interpretively – is negligent and slipshod. He read haphazardly in an adventitious array of sources both old and new, and selected passages from them that either fitted with his apriorism or might be made to fit with it by misreading, elision or invention. In the strictest sense of the term, racism is defined as the claim that biology is destiny. Hegel never voiced that claim explicitly, but his writing is steeped in beliefs and orthodoxies current in his time about the backwardness of Africa and Africans, and his theorizing barred him from ever admitting that continent and its people to history as he construed it. What can be said is that Hegel was Eurocentric, and fixated on hierarchy through concepts of advance and progress. He helped to author a cultural imperialism that was used after his death to justify and to condone its expansionist material expression. This is an old story now, much and still written about.

Hegel's work also proposes a philosophical agendum for the unilateral or one way appropriation of the other as an object of knowledge. This too has been written about, but it is an altogether more subtle mechanism than outright racial disdain. This is because it has operated in and over the field of western intellectual capital, a way of knowledge and knowing so confident in its own hegemonic power that it trains people up in its methodologies but

[50] Ritter was the first to use the term *Lebensraum*, which was picked up by geostrategists like Friedrich Ratzel as a "natural" justification for expansionary conquest, and then went on to become assimilated and reconfigured by Hitler for his own purposes. For some context, see: Timothy Ryback, *Hitler's Private Library: The Books that Shaped his Life* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

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then allows some space for licensed critics. Here we must spare some space to address matters of reception and pedagogy. In the eyes of ordinary language philosophers in both Britain and the United States, Hegel does not enjoy the prestige he still commands across much of continental philosophy. His reception and transmission in France, a major colonial power in Africa, and in the broader community of French speakers, may stand as brief illustration of the mechanism just described.

For various philosophical and nationalist reasons the French language reception, study, and teaching of Hegel did not begin until the 1920s. A crucial passage in this process was the celebrated Paris seminar taught from 1933 until the outbreak of war in 1939 by Alexandre Kojève (1902–1968). This was principally concerned with Hegel's phenomenology. Then, in 1941 Hegel's phenomenology was translated into French by the philosopher Jean Hyppolite (1907–1968), and he followed this five years later with his commentary on the text.[51] What Kojève and Hyppolite introduced to their fellow French speakers was a Hegel of the concrete, of selfhood, and of responsibility before history. All this became a site of encounter in the shaping of those "fraternal enemies" existentialism and Marxism.[52] With the dam now breached, Hegel's *œuvre* became widely known and intensively discussed.[53]

Among the colonized, Fanon's writings about the dialectical creation of the racial other, and of the active realization of independent black selfhood, constituted a crucial early reading of Hegel against himself.[54] Many Francophone African philosophers and intellectuals ingested Hegel as a part of their educational formation, and whatever their later conflicted relationship to his work they still wrote back to him from beneath his very considerable shadow. The influential Congolese intellectual Valentim Mudimbe (born 1941), for example, foregrounded the specifically African experience but feared any loss of the core values of the Enlightenment, despite their contradictory Hegelian gloss. This was so much the case that

[51] Jean Hyppolite, *Gènese et structure de la Phénomonologie de l'esprit de Hegel* (Paris: Éditions Montaigne, 1946). See too: Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit"* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), which has an illuminating Introduction, xv-xli containing interviews with relevant French witnesses.

[52] Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 236.

[53] For a useful summary, see: Gary Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 102–117. Members of Kojève's seminar included Queneau, Bataille, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty, and intermittently Breton, Aron, and Sartre; at ENS in Paris Hyppolite taught Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, and Derrida.

[54] Consult: Rafey Habib, *Hegel and Empire: From Postcolonialism to Globalisation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

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Mudimbe rejected countervailing academic sub-disciplines, such as Black Studies, as no more than a renewed embrace of a form of Hegelian marginalization of Africa.[55] The Béninois philosopher Paulin Hountondji (born 1942) saw Hegel as a master theoretician of European self-affirmation, certainly a malign influence on Africa, but a thinker immune to the puny critiques implicit in the lack of rigour of African "ethno-philosophy."[56] Even with the Cameroonian Achille Mbembe (born 1957), writing after the fact of territorial European colonialism, the French reception of Hegel inaugurated by Kojève and Hyppolite still inflects his highly influential writing "on the postcolony."[57]

Finally, a deal of philosophy was consulted in the preparation of this essay. I was much struck during this process of reading by, and I use the term advisedly, an almost schizophrenic rupture in philosophical writing. There are those, perhaps the minority, who are prepared seriously to interrogate and reflect upon their illustrious predecessors like Hegel as embedded historical actors. There also those who seem to think that they can abstract and somehow isolate, or insulate, the thinking from the man who thought it. Of course, the best known recent instance of this is that of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). The publication of his private "black notebooks" (*schwarze Hefte*), written in the 1930s–1940s, raised in a heightened and quarrelsome manner the relationship between Heidegger the historical actor and Heidegger the philosopher. The schizophrenia I have mentioned was fully on display as partisans on either side debated the objective public value of his writings in the light of new revelations about his subjective commitment to Nazism and antisemitism.[58] Like Heidegger, however, Hegel was a knowing actor in a given time and milieu, and his thinking is only fully comprehensible when this fact is given all due attention.

[55] Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, "African Philosophy as an Ideological Practice: The Case of French-Speaking Africa," *African Studies Review* 26–3/4 (1983), 133–154; Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1988); Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *On African Fault Lines: Meditations on Alterity Politics* (Pietermaritzburg: KwaZulu-Natal University Press, 2013).

[56] Paulin Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1996); Paulin Hountoundji, *The Struggle for Meaning: Reflections on Philosophy, Culture, and Democracy in Africa* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2002).

[57] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2001). And for autobiographical and other reflections, see: Achille Mbembe, *Sortir de la grande nuit: Essai sur l'Afrique décolonisée* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2010).

[58] There is a vast literature; an up to date overview and useful guide is: Donatella di Cesare, *Heidegger and the Jews: The Black Notebooks* (London: Polity Press, 2018).

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