

Hegel's Philosophy of History and the Postcolonial Realization of Concrete *Bildung*

Christian Hofmann

Abstract

Hegel's Philosophy of History can be characterized as Eurocentric and one finds in it many problematic passages, and even racist statements, as well as a legitimization of colonialism which is presented as a means of education (*Bildung*). Nevertheless, this article argues that it is possible to reject such judgements and at the same time hold on to the basic intention of Hegel's theories of freedom and *Bildung*. While the concept of freedom as self-determination is certainly applied in a Eurocentric manner by Hegel in his Philosophy of History, this concept is not Eurocentric at its core. To understand this 'core', one has to go back to Hegel's logic of the concept, which finally leads me to a concept of 'concrete *Bildung*'. The struggles for self-determination of the colonized peoples must be understood in terms of a further development of the realization of the concept of freedom. If one wants to think Hegel's Philosophy of History meaningfully beyond Hegel's own time, one is inevitably led to the necessity of a liberation of the colonized, for there is a need for a further extension of the consciousness of freedom that actually is inclusive. This demand is contained in Hegel's thought itself, but it still remains abstract with him and must therefore be developed beyond him.

I. Introduction

Hegel's Philosophy of History can be characterized as 'Eurocentric' (cf. Stone 2017; 2020), and one can find many problematic passages, prejudices and racist or cultural chauvinist statements about the peoples of Asia, Africa or America in it (cf. James and Knappik 2023). All of them are rightly criticized as such and judged as 'embarrassing' or 'scandalous' (cf. Kimmerle 1993: 307; 2005: 9). In the transcripts to Hegel's lectures on the Philosophy of History, for instance, he speaks of the 'weakness' of the Native Americans: the 'American race' shows itself to be a 'weak-minded people' (*GW* 27.3: 822), its 'both physical and moral weakness' has 'caused [...] that the Americans have perished' (*GW* 27.3: 823 fn.).¹

There is also talk of the 'savagery' and 'crudeness' of 'African man', who still lives in a direct unity with nature (cf. *GW* 27.3: 836). 'As long as we know him, no

change occurred' (*GW* 27.3: 836). Also, among Africans, 'the idea that man is free in and for himself [...] does not exist' (*GW* 27.3: 841). Slavery was also 'generally prevalent' among them, and they had 'no feeling' for 'the injustice of it' (*GW* 27.3: 841). The transcript by Hegel's son Karl (from 1830–31) is even more explicit here:

As far as the character of the negro is concerned, it must be said that it represents the natural man in all his savagery [...]; one must abstract from all reverence, morality, in short from everything human, from everything that is called feeling, if one wants to understand him correctly; if one looks at the condition of the negro peoples, there is nothing in it that echoes anything human. (*GW* 27.4: 1223)

Instead, Africans display a 'complete disregard for everything human' (*GW* 27.4: 1225), for example, in the practice of cannibalism. Hegel sees an 'approximation' of *Bildung* at best via Islam or 'Mohametanism' (*GW* 27.4: 1223). The path from such representations and judgements of an otherwise still uneducated 'savagery' to the relativization or even (in connection with a mission of *Bildung*) justification of the slavery practised by Europeans in the course of colonial rule is not far.²

In cases like these, Hegel, like other modern philosophers such as Kant or Marx, seems to reproduce stereotypes and adhere to the prejudices and ignorance of his own time. But the reference to other contemporaries and the 'spirit of the times' in a Europe that considered itself enlightened and superior cannot serve as an excuse—especially not if one measures Hegel by his concept of freedom and if one wants to read him as a thinker who also has something to contribute to a diagnosis of the present.

It is true that, for Hegel, philosophy can only ever comprehend 'its own time [...] in thoughts' (*PR*: 21/14). However, this cannot amount to a mere repetition of what is empirically given in each case, just as 'actuality', for Hegel, is not merely what is empirically given in its mere appearance (cf. *GW* 20: §6). Philosophy is much more about grasping the thought, the concept, the rational in the given—and distinguishing it from that which does not agree with reason. But this is precisely what makes the critique of the given possible!

Hegel's portrayal of Africa becomes even more problematic when—as Robert Bernasconi points out—Hegel may have deliberately reproduced sources in a one-sided, distorted or falsified manner in order to emphasize the impression of 'savagery' or 'sensuality' in a particularly blatant way concerning Africans.³ This is all the more true when one considers that such assessments could, in turn, serve the Europeans as a basis for legitimizing colonialism and slavery (cf. Bernasconi 1998: 62; Stone 2020). Susan Buck-Morss remarks on this:

The more frequent the incidences of slave-initiated revolts in the colonies that proved their desire for freedom, the more receptive Europeans were to theories of Negroes as naturally destined to slavery. [...] Europeans built conceptual barriers of difference [...] in order to segregate free Europe from colonial practices. (Buck-Morss 2009: 89f.)

Alison Stone rightly points out that Hegel legitimizes colonialism in this sense and that this assessment is based on Hegel's theory of the self-determination of spirit. In the context of a *Bildung* towards freedom and self-determination, colonization is then justified as a means, as Stone points out:

Colonialism is justified, on this view, because it spreads freedom to peoples who otherwise both lack it and have no native means of acquiring it. Moreover, the colonisers are justified in extirpating the indigenous cultures of native peoples [...] since those indigenous cultures embody unfreedom. [...] Hegel's overall line of thought is that colonialism is not only justified but also necessary, as part of Europe's centuries-long process of realising freedom. A logical step in this process is to extend freedom to non-European peoples: after all, the European principle is that all are free. (Stone 2020: 255f.)⁴

Hegel's racist statements and his justification of colonialism require critical consideration. This is especially true if one wants to hold on to the basic intention of Hegel's concept of freedom.⁵ Before asking how Hegel's philosophy can nevertheless be taken up today in a postcolonial perspective (IV), I take a closer look at Hegel's Philosophy of History and its Eurocentrism (II.i), and his view on colonialism (II.ii).

In order to classify Hegel's justification of colonialism as a means of *Bildung*, it is essential to address his theories of *Bildung* and freedom. I will first discuss the connection between *Bildung* and alienation (III.i) and then Hegel's concept of freedom, according to which self-consciousness for itself has yet to become free (III.ii). Finally, in part III.iii, I address the fact that Hegel's theories of freedom and *Bildung* are to be understood against the background of his logic of the concept. In this respect, the concepts of freedom and *Bildung* are to be understood independently of Hegel's Philosophy of History and his view of colonialism, and can be turned against colonialism by their own logic. In this sense, the logic of the concept contains potential for thinking Hegel's philosophy of freedom beyond Hegel himself and making it fruitful for a postcolonial and non-Eurocentric perspective on the present. I discuss this against the background of the concept of a 'concrete *Bildung*'.

Stone holds that ‘rescuing Hegel from himself’ is ‘complicated because Hegel’s conception of freedom as self-determination has significant connections with his Eurocentrism and the pro-colonialism that follows from it’ (2020: 248). But while this theory of freedom as self-determination is certainly applied in a Eurocentric manner by Hegel in his *Philosophy of History*, I argue that this theory of freedom is not Eurocentric at its core. To understand this ‘core’, one has to go back to Hegel’s logic. Against this background, I think an argument can be made that ‘Hegel’s basic account of freedom can be separated from his actual pro-colonialism’ (Stone 2020: 261).⁶

While other ‘actualizations’ of Hegel’s philosophy often centre on the concept of recognition (cf., for example, Honneth 2011; Buck-Morss 2009) I would like to include especially his logic as a background. It seems to me that especially the recourse to the logic of the concept is helpful, which, in my opinion, has not been done to a sufficient degree in the current discussion.

II. Hegel’s view of history and colonialism

II.i. Hegel’s Philosophy of History and its Eurocentrism

Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* is often accused of Eurocentrism (cf. Kimmerle 2005: 14; Stone 2017 and 2020; Bernasconi 1998; Pinkard 2017: 52). And a *Philosophy of History* which ends in modern Europe and which sees the ‘Orient’ only as a preliminary stage of the actual development that unfolds on the soil of Europe, in Greece, Rome and the ‘Germanic’ world, surely is Eurocentric. This Eurocentrism implies (and this is the case with Hegel) that ‘Europe has a special, privileged, central place in world history’ (Stone 2017: 86) and ‘that modern Europe is the world’s most advanced civilization which is obliged to educate, develop and civilize the others, using violence where this mission requires it’ (Stone 2020: 248).⁷ My aim is to show that Hegel’s own philosophy has potential to leave this Eurocentrism behind. First, however, in section II, I will briefly present his *Philosophy of History* and his view of colonialism.

To give a rational reconstruction of what Hegel is doing in his *Philosophy of History*, one might say that he basically asks how the modern consciousness of freedom, which manifested itself in the French Revolution and modern European philosophy, became possible (cf. Riedel 1982: 212, 221f.; Stekeler-Weithofer 2001: 153; Pinkard 2017: 47). Hegel looks at history retrospectively towards the goal of the modern revolution. It is thus a backward projection from the developed concept of freedom of modernity to the stages necessary for its development, i.e., a ‘*retrospective teleology*’ (cf. Bielefeldt 2007: 179).⁸ Hegel’s teleology of history is thus necessarily thought from the end, from the unfolded

and realized concept, and it always considers the preceding moments in terms of the presupposed goal.

Hegel explicitly distinguishes this philosophical-speculative contemplation of history as a '*thinking* contemplation' (*GW* 18: 138) from the 'original' contemplation of history by the contemporary witness and the 'reflective' one by the historian who gathers facts (*GW* 18: 121–37). The philosophical view of history is not concerned with empirical completeness but only selects the moments that are necessary or relevant for the speculative development of concepts. However, such a philosophical-speculative view of history must not contradict empirical evidence (cf. *GW* 18: 142). If this were to happen, we would have to object to the latter—as, for example, Bernasconi justifiably does concerning Hegel's depiction of Africa.

The philosophical view of history is content with a 'sketch of ideal-typed epochs', as Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer writes (2001: 164). The 'exclusion'⁹ of certain cultures and entire continents from the consideration of 'world history'—Africa, America, Australia and large parts of Asia are especially to be mentioned here—is to be understood against this background. The Slavic peoples, for example, are also excluded from the philosophical consideration of history because they have not intervened 'in the gradual process of the further development of spirit' (*GW* 27.4: 1460).

For sure, one can argue (but I will not do so here) about the extent to which Hegel's judgements about which contributions certain cultures have made to the modern concept of freedom and which have not are correct. Likewise, one might object to the 'world' concept claimed by Hegel's theory of '*world* history' that it is ultimately provincial in its Eurocentric orientation. Hegel's claim can probably be explained by the fact that he was trying to comprehend his time, colonialist modernity and the global 'world system' that emerged from it. At the same time, however, this allows us to anticipate this principle's possible negation, which I will discuss at the end. For '[t]he capture of a time already points beyond it' (Brauer 1982: 188).

In any case, it is clearly problematic when, against the background of the historical-philosophical framework, pejorative and sometimes even racist judgements are made about people from certain cultures—as in the statements about Africans quoted at the beginning of this essay. Pejorative statements can be found also about European peoples, for example.¹⁰ But the case of Africa is special: According to Bernasconi, the fact that Hegel caricatured Africans one-sidedly as cruel and sensual certainly fulfilled a particular function: 'Hegel's account of Africa served as a null-point or base-point to anchor what followed' (Bernasconi 1998: 51). The account of Africa in Hegel's Philosophy of History does therefore seem to fulfil a rather 'rhetorical' function.¹¹ The 'null point' is marked by Hegel's assertion that in Africans, 'the natural will [...] is not yet

negated'. By contrast, 'in Asia' or in the ancient Asian advanced civilizations, there is already 'not only linkage of people according to their natural nationality, but a living together according to a general principle' (*GW* 27.3: 846). This abstract distinction is problematic in itself, but I will not go into it further here.

What now follows is the presentation of the four world-historical epochs, beginning with the 'oriental world'. For Hegel, the criterion, as it were, for entry from 'prehistory' into history is the formation of states in connection with objective laws and, at the same time, a handed-down subjective historical narrative, since only this testifies to a corresponding consciousness (cf. *GW* 18: 191–96). The 'Orient' is important in Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, because the first state structures are developed here, as well as the first evidence of advanced civilizations (at least the first that was handed down to modern Europeans). In addition, it provides the background and the contrasting foil against which, according to Hegel, the 'beautiful freedom' of the Greeks (cf. *GW* 27.2: 675) unfolds. In this context, some 'orientalist' stereotypes can undoubtedly be found, such as that of 'oriental despotism' (*GW* 18: 152).

One can probably say that in Hegel's *Philosophy of History* the Orient is characterized as the 'substantial' and 'static', while the actual historical dynamics and the actual consciousness of freedom only begin with the Greeks. However, Hegel does not simply assume an abstract opposition between a 'historical' and 'free' Occident on the one hand and an 'ahistorical' and 'unfree' Orient on the other.¹² Instead, he also sees continuities and gradual developments here. This becomes clear, for example, in Hegel's classification of the Persians. He calls them 'historical' and explicitly speaks of 'freedom'. Thus, in the lecture notes on Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, it is said that we already enter world history with the Persian Empire (cf. *GW* 27.1: 205). We enter here 'into the connection of history with the more distant formations of spirit, with ourselves. [...] As a substantial principle, we see the sublime depth in which the particular is free in it' (*GW* 27.2: 596).¹³

With the Greeks, on the other hand, Hegel repeatedly emphasizes that they were very closely related to the 'Orient' in their development. Thus, the Greeks had received their *Bildung* at the beginning from oriental influences and immigrants, 'from foreigners, to whom the formation of fixed centres is due. Immigrants from educated, especially Asian nations' (*GW* 27.2: 647). Thus Hegel locates the origin of some Greek tribes in Lydia, Phoenicia, Egypt. 'The connection between Athens and the Orient, Egypt is an undoubted fact' (*GW* 27.2: 648). However, the Greeks had appropriated the oriental influences and created something new against this background: they 'have by no means become Egyptians or Phoenicians, [...] but the Greeks have transformed and developed these foreign echoes into independence through their own peculiar spirit' (*GW* 27.2: 648).

In Greek *Bildung*, the connection with the oriental element is thus definitely preserved. However, it is in a sublated form. Here, the 'Orient' is the 'other', for example, when 'beautiful individuality' and the idea of a democratic polis constitution are set against Oriental 'despotism' (cf. *GW* 27.2: 675). But the Oriental world is not *only* this other for Greece. It is also the substantial basis of its own development. The relationship between 'Orient' and 'Occident' is thus not to be understood simply as an abstract opposition between an unfree Orient and a free Occident, but as dialectical.

Of course, the basic tendency remains that the *telos* of development lies in European modernity, that the development of European history since antiquity takes up the most space, while the 'Orient' remains only the substantial basis of these developments, the 'infancy' of world history (cf. *GW* 27.3: 846; *GW* 27.4: 1232). This includes the fact that, for Hegel, the concept of the 'Oriental world' basically always remains related to antiquity, while more recent developments in Asia are ignored or mentioned only in passing.

This leads Hegel, for example, to treat the Islamic world or 'Mohammedanism' in the section on the 'Germanic Empire'—this, too, is a sign of continuity and connection. However, the Islamic world is also actually only considered here in its function of being the 'other' or the negation of the only gradual development in medieval Christian Europe. This corresponds to the fact that Islam as a religion does not really find a place of its own in Hegel's system either, since it is regarded by Hegel primarily as a continuation of the Jewish principle of the 'religion of sublimity'.¹⁴

As this brief overview should show, Hegel's Philosophy of History remains Eurocentric—and this is also true for his view on colonialism.

II.ii. On the classification of colonialism as a 'means'

In his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explains colonialism in terms of the dynamics (in connection with industrialization, division of labour, population growth) and social inequality within civil society (cf. *PR*: §§243–46). As Hegel puts it: 'This inner dialectic of society drives it [...] to go beyond its own confines and look for consumers [...] in other nations' (*PR*: §246). This does not yet legitimize colonialism. Moreover, there are other statements by Hegel that clearly suggest such legitimization (cf. Stone 2020), for example when he speaks about 'the necessary fate of the Asian empires to be subject to the Europeans' (*GW* 27.4: 1265). And Kimmerle is right that Hegel (quite Eurocentrically) views the colonies primarily as an 'extension of civil society'. In contrast, he does not discuss 'the fate of the population already resident there or their right to the land' at all (Kimmerle 1993: 310).

One must observe that Hegel does not view colonialism from the perspective of 'Abstract Right' or 'Morality'. Instead, he views it from the standpoint of 'Ethical

Life’, to which, systematically speaking, the lectures on the Philosophy of History also belong (cf. *PR*: §§341–60). ‘Ethical Life’, however, is for Hegel ‘the *Idea of freedom* as the living good [...]—*the concept of freedom which has become the existing [...] world and the nature of self-consciousness*’ (*PR*: §142). While, according to Hegel, ‘Morality’ is characterized precisely by a difference between ‘being’ and ‘ought’, this difference is dropped at the level of ‘Ethical Life’. Freedom is here already conceived as actual in the world. Thus, in Hegel’s Philosophy of History, one will find neither a moral nor a cosmopolitan critique of colonialism, as in Kant’s ‘Perpetual Peace’, for example. There, ‘the inhospitable behaviour of the civilised, primarily trading states of our part of the world’ towards the peoples of America, Africa or India is judged to be an ‘injustice’ that goes ‘as far as to frighten’ (Kant 1912: 358). On the other hand, Hegel does not want to argue merely from an ‘ought’. Instead, he considers the actual conditions, which are then to be assessed at the same time against the standard of reason.

One could then object to Hegel that, at this point, one could have expected, if not a moral (or cosmopolitan), then at least an *immanently ‘ethical’ critique* of colonialism, since colonization is opposed to the freedom and right of the colonized peoples. However, such a critique is not found in Hegel either. The absence of such a critique is due to two factors: On the one hand, Hegel ultimately leaves questions of international law to the ‘world’s court of judgement’ of history (cf. *PR*: §340), since there is, in any case, no superior and impartial ‘praetor’ who can decide on them (cf. *PR*: §333R); on the other, he also thoroughly justifies colonialism in terms of the development of the concept of freedom (cf. Stone 2020).

Hegel can certainly also be criticized for not regulating international law—say, with Kant or already de Vitoria. Hegel argues here, however, that the ‘treaties’ of international law only designate a ‘law that “*should be observed*”, which, as merely intended, remains dependent on the arbitrariness of the particular states’ (cf. *PR*: §333).

However, what is decisive is that, in ‘world history’ in Hegel’s sense, it is not sheer power that ultimately decides, but *reason* and thus *freedom*. For it is not merely particular ‘spirits’ (the various ‘*Volksgeister*’ with their respective interests) that realize themselves in it, but ultimately the ‘*universal spirit*’ (or ‘world spirit’) through them:

[I]t is not just the *power* of spirit which passes judgement in world history—i.e. it is not the abstract and irrational necessity of a blind fate. On the contrary, since spirit in and for itself is *reason*, and since the being-for-itself of reason in spirit is knowledge, world history is the necessary development, from the *concept* of the freedom of spirit alone, of the *moments* of reason and hence of spirit’s self-consciousness and freedom. It is the exposition and the *actualization of the universal spirit*. (*PR*: §342)

Hegel's speculative Philosophy of History is thus based on the claim 'that *reason governs the world*, and thus has also governed and governs world history' (*GW* 18: 162). For Hegel, however, reason is inseparably connected with the principle of freedom and, in this respect, world history is 'progress in the consciousness of freedom' (*GW* 18: 153). But if reason or freedom is the guiding principle of world history, colonialism, which involves oppression and exploitation, must also ultimately be abolished because it contradicts freedom. With Terry Pinkard, one can say that in this case the idea of freedom is 'at odds with itself', which also means a 'disagreement of reason with itself' (2017: 41f.). This contradiction has to be resolved. And Hegel initially resolves the contradiction in principle by describing colonialism as a provisional 'means' of *Bildung* precisely on the way to the development of freedom (cf. Stone 2020). But this answer remains problematic.

The assessment of a 'mission of *Bildung*' incumbent on Europeans *viz-à-viz* colonized peoples is to be judged as highly ambivalent: on the one hand, one can say that talk of such a mission of *Bildung* is entirely ideological, since it apparently merely attempts to disguise the factual exploitation and at the same time legitimize it as an 'export of civilisation'—Rudyard Kipling, for example, spoke of a '*White Man's Burden*' in a famous poem in 1899 in precisely this sense.

On the other hand, it cannot be wholly dismissed that apart from all exploitation, one can also speak of a process of 'Bildung' in a certain (albeit problematic) way: For colonialism also brought modernity and its achievements (or at least some elements of it) to the colonies, for example in the form of modern technology, infrastructure (e.g., railways), modern institutions and also through modern schools, universities, etc. (cf. Ritter 2003). In principle, these achievements and products of modern thinking can also be appropriated by the colonized in the sense of their independent development and self-determination to use them for the struggle for independence.

Thus, concerning the history of decolonization in the twentieth century, it is also true that the education of the pioneers of liberation was initially mostly European or 'Western'. This is also evidenced by the biographies of many non-Western intellectuals and freedom fighters who initially oriented themselves towards European education and educational institutions. They include (to name just a few examples) Mohandas K. Gandhi, Ho Chi Minh, Frantz Fanon and Ali Shariati. Some of them studied at European or American universities and dealt with Western educational content, theories and ideologies.

The '*Bildung*' that emerged or is emerging from this is, of course, one that is also to be evaluated ambivalently, since it initially remains contaminated by the situation of oppression and exploitation, by the imposed system that, at the same time, is supposed to bring 'freedom', as Hegel put it. But how can colonial coercion in its heteronomy actually bring about 'freedom' if the latter, according to Hegel, is

essentially determined by the *telos* of being able to be at home with oneself in the other (cf. Hofmann 2019)?

To examine this problem, now I take a closer look at the connection between *Bildung* and freedom. Here I include the background of the logic of the concept, from which an alternative view of post-Hegelian and postcolonial history also emerges. In section III, the following three points will be discussed:

- (1) For Hegel, '*Bildung*' always contains the moment of negation and alienation as a mediating element.
- (2) According to Hegel, all people are free in themselves, but they must also become free for themselves.
- (3) We must understand Hegel's concept of *Bildung* against the background of his logic of the concept.

III. Freedom and *Bildung*

III.i. *Bildung and alienation*

For Hegel, *Bildung* always contains the moment of negation and alienation as a mediating element (cf. Sandkaulen 2014; Stojanov 2018: 29ff., 54). Hegel already emphasizes this claim in his Jena period, for example, in the 'Differenzschrift' of 1801 and especially in Chapter VI of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the introductory manuscript to the Philosophy of History lecture of 1830–31, Hegel distinguishes the process of development or formation of spirit from that of 'natural things': In the latter development takes place 'in an immediate, unopposed, unhindered way' (*GW* 18: 183), for example as the development of a germ into a fully grown plant. In spirit, by contrast, the development is 'mediated by consciousness and will', whereby spirit here comes into opposition to itself: 'Development in this way is not the harmless mere coming forth without struggle, as in that of organic life, but the hard unwilling work against itself' (*GW* 18: 184).

This 'hard unwilling work against itself', this negation constitutive of spirit, can take place in very different ways: In his Nuremberg Grammar School Speeches, Hegel emphasizes the importance of the teaching of ancient languages for the experience of alienation evoked in the pupils, which he judges to be a necessary element of *Bildung*:

The progression of *Bildung* is not to be regarded as the quiet continuation of a chain [...]. Rather, *Bildung* must have an earlier material and object on which it works, which it changes and reshapes. [...] But in order to become the basis, the substance of nature and of spirit must have confronted us, it must have taken on the form of something alien.—Unhappy is he to whom his

immediate world of feelings is alienated;—for this means nothing else than that the individual bonds which bind the mind and thought sacredly to life, faith, love and trust, are torn asunder!—For alienation, which is the condition of theoretical *Bildung*, this does not require this ethical pain, not the suffering of the heart, but the slight pain and effort of the imagination to occupy itself with something non-immediate, something alien, with something belonging to memory and thought. (*GW* 10.1: 461)

By studying ancient languages, the student opens up a new world that was previously foreign to him and broadens his horizons. This alienation does only include a 'slight pain', and is therefore 'weak' (cf. Stojanov 2018: 36f.). A quite different example of the connection between *Bildung* and alienation is the 'ethical' diremption brought about by Civil Society, in which individuals are regarded independently of their family and cultural origins, such that their recognition becomes dependent on labour and market relations (*PR*: §§184–87):

Spirit attains its actuality only through internal division, by imposing this limitation and finitude upon itself in [the shape of] natural needs and the continuum [...] of this external necessity, and, *in the very process of adapting itself to these* limitations, by overcoming them and gaining its *objective* existence [...] within them [...]. Only in this way is the spirit *at home* and *with itself* in this *externality* as such. (*PR*: §187R)

Bildung is understood here as 'hard work' and the alienation of self-consciousness, which in this process transcends its previous ethical embeddedness and its previous cognitive horizon. *Bildung* is therefore presented in this paragraph also as 'liberation' which 'serves as a gate' to a more developed ('minded') 'form of ethical life' and self-consciousness (cf. Stojanov 2018: 48f.). The individual gets alienated from an immediate and unreflective form and moves to a form which is mediated by the 'universality of thought' (cf. *PR*: §20). Krassimir Stojanov (2018: 49f.) regards this 'self-elevation' of the individual to 'conceptual universality' as 'a twofold process consisting, first, in the individual entering the institutionalized life of the society, and second, in the individual *conceptualizing* her incentives as well as the norms of the social environment'.

The process of alienation from a previous form of particular ethical consciousness is also understood as *Bildung* in the lectures on the Philosophy of History. For instance, in the transcripts, it is also said of the Germanic peoples that they were only formed by the medieval church and monastic orders, through 'tremendous violence, which breaks the rigid self-will of the barbarian' (*GW* 27.1: 419).

But it is problematic to think of this violent process as ‘*Bildung*’. And it is similar in the case of colonialism. Here, of course, the experience of alienation will also not, as a rule, take on the harmless form of merely theoretical *Bildung*, of which Hegel speaks in his Grammar School Speeches, or the ethical ‘liberation’ that he finds in civil society. Still, the experience of colonialism will involve an ‘ethical pain’ and a ‘suffering of the heart’ (*GW* 10.1: 461) with the colonized, for it bears a dichotomy here that contradicts the ethical need for being able to be with oneself. This is not the ‘weak’ alienation, as in school education (cf. Stojanov 2018: 36), but, as one might say, a ‘strong’ or ‘hard’ alienation.

This experience of a split in ethical consciousness resulting from colonialist or imperialist influences can perhaps be described as a *general* phenomenon in the non-Western world of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All non-Western peoples or states were confronted with the challenge of colonialism’s or Western modernity’s influence in general, even if they could retain their independence, such as Japan or Turkey (cf. Ritter 2003). Using Turkey as an example, Joachim Ritter drew on Hegel to describe this phenomenon in the 1950s in his essay ‘Europeanisation as a European Problem’ as such a ‘diremption’ of consciousness.¹⁵ He diagnosed this in Turkey as the result of the Kemalist policy of modernization, which pushed traditional Ottoman-Islamic culture into the private sphere (for example, by introducing the Latin script or the temporary bans on the call to prayer). Although this was not the result of colonial intervention, it can be understood indirectly as a reaction to Western domination. In this respect, it is ‘Westernization’—Jalal Al-e Ahmad even speaks of *westoxication*¹⁶—through which one, as Ritter writes, ‘is trapped externally and internally between two orders that are unrelated and even more: in sharp contradiction to each other’ (Ritter 2003: 333). The Iranian philosopher Daryush Shayegan (1997) speaks of a ‘cultural schizophrenia’ that pervades individual consciousness.

However, this inner division inscribed in individual consciousness is certainly even stronger when it arises from direct colonial relations of exploitation and racist violence. Frantz Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks*: ‘The colonised is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle’ (Fanon 2008: 9). Alienation here thus takes the form of self-denial, in so far as the colonized identify entirely with the colonialists’ dominant culture and have learned to suppress their particularity themselves. To put this in a context with ‘*Bildung*’ is cynical. The path marked out by the colonialists would thus seem to be one of assimilation to the culture of the ‘mother country’ and the path of development marked out by it. However, such assimilation would ultimately contradict the Hegelian concept of freedom, the conceptual-logical foundations of which I will discuss in a moment. *Bildung* does not mean mere subordination to the given, but rather ‘working through’ it, appropriation, mediation with one’s own.

It should not remain with alienation; spirit simultaneously urges a negation of the negation. The new consciousness must be reunited with itself. In the following, I would like to call this ‘*concrete Bildung*’, which should be distinguished from an ‘*abstract Bildung*’ which does not overcome alienation.

How can this concrete *Bildung* be achieved? And why should it be desirable to acquire the *Bildung* of Western modernity? Recall that it is about the acquisition of *modern knowledge in general*—it is about the modern understanding of science and technology, for example, but also the modern concepts of freedom, law or subjectivity. In the colonized world, this modern knowledge is inseparably linked to its mediation through colonialism. One can, therefore, characterize the *Bildung* associated with it and the legacy of the European Enlightenment as a ‘child of rape’, as Nikita Dhawan (2014: 70) points out with a metaphor by Gayatri C. Spivak:

The relation of postcoloniality to the Enlightenment and its legacies of modernity, secularism, democracy, human rights, science [...] is diagnosed as a ‘double-bind’, whereby Spivak advises that one should neither accuse European philosophers, nor excuse them; rather, one ought to enter the protocols of the canonical texts of the Enlightenment to see how it can be used if turned around on its own terms towards a more just and democratic postcoloniality. (Dhawan 2014: 69f.)

The following remarks will also be about this ‘more just and democratic postcoloniality’, which, in my opinion, can be justified also with an actualized Hegelian concept of freedom. For what should emerge from the process of *Bildung*? According to Hegel, the goal of *Bildung* can ultimately only be freedom, the self-knowledge of spirit. This self-knowledge is the “‘absolute’ commandment’ under which spirit stands from the beginning, as Hegel emphasizes in the first paragraph of his encyclopaedic ‘Philosophy of Spirit’ (cf. *PSS*: §377). This goal of self-knowledge is, of course, mediated through many stages that are to be understood as moments of development. The task of spirit is, in this sense, to make

itself into that which *it is implicitly* [...]. In the philosophic treatment of spirit as such, spirit is considered as instructing and educating itself within its Notion, and its expressions as the moments of its bringing itself forth to itself, of the self-coincidence whereby it initiates its actuality. (*PSS*: §387)

III.ii. *Potential and actualized freedom*

According to Hegel, *Bildung* and freedom are inherently related, and *Bildung* means a ‘development to freedom’ (Stojanov 2018: 23, 51). All people are free in

themselves, but they must also become free *for themselves*. In applying this figure of thought, Hegel admittedly makes some problematic judgements about the state of development of certain peoples concerning their actualization of freedom, which he links to the legitimization of colonialism and even slavery (cf. *PR*: §57; Stone 2020). These judgements are passed from the Berlin cathedra, so to speak, about the degree of freedom of other people who live thousands of miles away. Even if such classifications and judgements must be rejected, it is still, in principle, possible to hold on to the idea of freedom that is potentially always already present but at the same time still has to be actualized.

In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel relates this figure of thought to free will: The will that is only free ‘in itself’ is only ‘the will in *its concept*. Only when the will has itself as its object [...] is it *for itself* what it is *in itself*’ (*PR*: §10). It is, therefore, not enough to stop at the abstract concept of free will; the will must relate to itself and become free for itself. Only in this way is the concept actualized, such that it becomes an idea (cf. *PR*: §10). In the spirit of Aristotle, Hegel also refers to this ‘being-in-itself’ as ‘*faculty*’ or ‘*potentiality*’ (*PR*: §10R), i.e., as *dynamis*, in contrast to ‘actuality’ (*energeia*): ‘The will which has being is in and for itself [...] is not just a possibility, predisposition, or *capacity* (*potentia*), but the *infinite in actuality* (in finitum actu)’ (*PR*: §22). ‘Actually-infinite’ or ‘truly-infinite’ (cf. *PR*: §22) is this concrete free will, since in the course of its realization it has become free for itself and recognizes that in all relations it always also refers to itself: ‘Only in this freedom is the will completely *with itself* [...], because it has reference to nothing but itself, also that every relationship of *dependence* on something *other* than itself is thereby eliminated’ (*PR*: §23).

What is scandalous about Hegel’s consideration of slavery (*PR*: §57) is that the enslavement of those people who, in his view, do not raise themselves to freedom is not rejected outright. But what is crucial is that he holds that they are always already free in themselves and must now become so *for themselves*. This becoming-for-itself of freedom is decisive if freedom is not to be merely an abstract right or something morally intended (which is admittedly also important, as one could emphasize more strongly against Hegel), but must also be realized in individual and collective consciousness and social institutions. According to Hegel, every human being is free in himself, but—wherever the *Bildung* necessary for this comes from—she also faces the task of becoming free for herself.¹⁷

That man may become free, therefore, requires a free world. That there be no slavery is the moral demand. This demand is fulfilled only in such a way that what he is to be appears as an external world that he appropriates. In essence, he thereby makes himself his own. (*GW* 26.1: §29, 260)

In a transcript to Hegel's 1817 lecture on the philosophy of right, it says: 'Even though I was born as a slave and was fed and educated by the master, and even though my parents and forefathers were all slaves, I am free at the moment when I want to be, when I become aware of my freedom' (*GW* 26.1: §29, 29). And Homeyer's transcript of 1818–19 also says: 'The slave, as soon as he says he is free, is free from this moment on' (*GW* 26.1: §35, 264).

Of course, this inner freedom or the awareness of freedom alone is not enough as external freedom is not achieved alongside it. But we will now go into a little more detail about how Hegel understands this realization of freedom. The basic structure of this realization is not merely the Aristotelian relationship between *dynamis* and *energeia*, but above all, Hegel's logic of the 'concept'. The concrete free will is mediated in its self-determination by the moments of universality, particularity and singularity or individuality (cf. *PR*: §§5–7).

III.iii. *Bildung and the logic of the concept*

Hegel's logic can be understood as the 'rational core' of the Hegelian system. The encyclopaedic areas of nature and spirit with their various sub-areas, i.e., the areas of Hegel's 'Realphilosophie', are based on this logical 'core'. According to Christian Krijnen (2019: 109), Hegel's system as a whole 'is throughout a doctrine of the idea'.¹⁸ Thus, in the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel writes that his consideration here is based on the *Science of Logic* (cf. *GW* 14.1: 6). And the *Philosophy of History* follows its structure according to a model that Hegel presented at the end of his *Philosophy of Right* (cf. *GW* 18: 121; *GW* 14.1: §§341–60).¹⁹ The logical 'core', however, is founded as such independently of its concretion or application in the *Realphilosophie*.

I now go into the connection between *Bildung* and the logic of the concept. In the introduction to his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel determines 'the absolute value of education' or *Bildung* as the 'cultivation of the universality of thought' (*PR*: §20). This concept of *Bildung*, like that of concrete free will, is ultimately to be understood against the background of the logic of the concept. '*Bildung*' would then not merely be the abstract standpoint of understanding that demands an elevation to abstract universality. Instead, it would correspond to a concrete and speculative thinking that knows how to mediate this universality with the particular and the individual.²⁰

The concept is thereby conceived as the 'free' (cf. *SL*: 530/33). According to Hegel, it demands and brings about its concretion, its realization, it determines itself. In this sense, it is subjectivity and, with Aristotle, *energeia*. This actualizing concept does not merely aim at the abstract universal, which turns against particularity. Instead, it aims at the concrete individuality produced through the mediation of universality and particularity, through which it experiences its determinateness.

The concrete determination of the universal into a concrete universality and the mediation and ‘reflection in itself’ of the individual belong inseparably together here (cf. *SL*: 554/57).

The objection that particularity is thereby merely a moment unilaterally subordinated to universality understands their relationship merely as an intellectual subsumption. Hegel, on the other hand, distinguishes different forms of syllogism in which the relationship between the universal, the particular and the individual is determined differently in each case and which are to be viewed in their logical connection, so that the concrete whole is finally mediated by each moment (*GW* 20: §187R). The other conceptual determinations are not simply subordinate to the universal; it does indeed encroach upon its other, ‘but without *doing violence* to it’ (*SL*: 532/35): ‘Just as it has been called free power, it could also be called *free love* and *boundless blessedness*, for it relates to *that which is distinct from it as to itself*; in it, it has returned to itself’ (*SL*: 532/35). Therefore, the concept requires its concretion, for which particularity, just as universality and individuality, are necessary moments.

The individual human being, for example, is not merely an abstract individual. Instead, she is a living human being, determined as such by the universal concept of ‘human being’, and by the particular and diverse relationships to her fellow human beings, by a specific cultural environment, etc. Her knowledge is completed as a concrete self-consciousness that knows itself to be mediated in itself and thereby also experiences itself as a universal through which its particular determinations are mediated.

According to Hegel, the concept itself has the structure of a free subjectivity. It contains the structure of self-determination according to which human beings can think and unfold as free beings (cf. Pinkard 2017: 146–49). The process of such unfolding can be understood as *Bildung*. The subject cannot accomplish this unfolding in isolation, merely out of its own particularity, but only in engagement with other subjects. This process is mediated through thinking, and the subject must conceptually access the world shared with others. Therefore, education means, above all, ‘the cultivation of the universality of thought’ (*PR*: §20), which allows one to transform one’s particularity conceptually and thus to liberate oneself from it, for which a certain self-distancing and thus alienation from one’s previous particularity is required (cf. Stojanov 2018: 46–53). Stojanov (2018: 47) understands this ‘self-elevation to universality’ as a ‘conceptual articulation and transformation of one’s own opinions, values, courses of actions and needs’ which ‘takes place in judgements and arguments’ and which is also linked to the development of social institutions.²¹ In the process of *Bildung*, the individual now experiences alienation since she is confronted with a new universal that transcends her previous sphere of experience. At the same time, the individual is confronted with the task of uniting this new universal with her own particularity, as the

universality that is 'concrete within itself and consequently has being for itself' (PR: §24R). This process is what I would like to call '*concrete Bildung*'.

If humans as such have the task of realizing themselves as a concrete free will and free spirit, then they are destined, according to the logic of the concept, to unite universality, particularity and individuality in a concrete mediation. The universal must be appropriated, but also united with the particular, that which is one's respective own. This also corresponds to the specifically *modern* principle, as Hegel emphasizes, of the 'right of the subject's *particularity*', which demands its recognition (PR: §124R). *Bildung* does not demand subordination to the universal but a realization of concrete freedom.

If, however, the subject orients itself to a universal without mediating this with its own particular 'opinions, values, courses of actions and needs', the educational process remains abstract. This is the case, for example, when the subject merely subordinates itself to an externally given universal, e.g., certain school learning content, without critically reflecting on it (cf. Stojanov 2018: 107). Another, more extreme, example would be that of a universal mediated in the colonial situation through external coercion, which is accompanied by a suppression of particular identity.²² If this can be called '*Bildung*' at all, it is at most in an abstract sense. Concrete *Bildung*, on the other hand, requires a mediation, and specifically one that takes its starting point in the free activity of the subject. In this respect, the elevation to the universal is to be understood as '*self-elevation*' (cf. Stojanov 2018: 45–47) and *Bildung* is to be understood as a '*development to freedom*' (cf. Stojanov 2018: 50–59). The alienation and oppression that accompany colonial rule contradict this concept of *Bildung* and must therefore be overcome from the logic of this concept if there is to be a realization of the concept in the Hegelian sense on this level, as well.

IV. The postcolonial realization of self-determination

The liberation of the colonies and colonized peoples was still largely in the future during Hegel's lifetime²³—even if there were exceptions, such as the Haitian Revolution, the significance of which for Hegel has been elaborated by Buck-Morss.²⁴ When Griesheim's transcript to Hegel's 1824–25 lecture on the philosophy of right praises the fact that 'the colonies have made themselves free' and that 'the greatest benefit has accrued' for the 'mother country' (GW 26.3: 1395), he only refers to the political independence of the colonizers of European origin (here are meant those in South America) from the 'mother country' and not the rights of the indigenous population (see Kimmerle 2005: 85; Stone 2020: 257). Consider, however, the teleology of a 'progress in the consciousness of freedom' and the concrete realization of the concept at the heart of Hegel's

Philosophy of History. If we want to think meaningfully about that philosophy beyond Hegel's own time, we are inevitably led to the necessity of a continued liberation of the colonized.

This necessity can be justified with the dialectic of master and servant (cf. Buck-Morss 2009). In the dialectical relationship between master and servant we find in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it is ultimately the servant who, through his work on the object, recognizes himself in this achievement and thus attains a new level of self-consciousness that is denied to the master (cf. *PS*: 115f./115f.). Fanon emphasizes, however, that this solution cannot be applied in the same way to the colonial relation of exploitation. The colonial masters are not at all concerned with recognition by the colonized, and the colonized cannot experience recognition in their work. It is also problematic if the colonized are only granted their freedom by the colonial masters. Instead, they should fight for their liberation and recognition themselves.²⁵

Fanon emphasizes the 'cleansing' effect of the violence used in the liberation struggle: 'It frees the native from his inferiority complex [...]; it [...] restores his self-respect' (Fanon 1963: 94). Gandhi, to give another example, in turn, has shown that such a struggle can also be waged non-violently. Only through the struggle for one's own freedom, at any rate, which in case of doubt also subordinates one's own life to freedom, is, according to Hegel, 'the truth of being recognized as a self-sufficient self-consciousness' achieved (*PS*: 111/111). By fighting for their freedom, the 'servants' or the colonized also try to become free for themselves externally. In the sense of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, as Buck-Morss points out, they 'demonstrate their humanity when they are willing to risk death rather than remain subjugated' (Buck-Morss 2009: 55).

In the context of liberation from slavery and serfdom, Hegel speaks in the *Philosophy of Right* of a 'return into myself'—and we can now relate this to liberation from colonial rule:

This return on my part into myself, whereby I make myself existent as Idea, as a person with rights and morality, supersedes the previous relationship and the wrong which I and the other party have done to my concept and reason [...] in treating the infinite existence [...] of the self-consciousness as something external, and in allowing it to be so treated. (*PR*: §66R)

This freedom and self-determination must also be legally and politically fought for and institutionalized, for which we see numerous examples in history. Thus, we can certainly interpret the worldwide struggles for independence and decolonization with Kojève and Fanon, for example, as recognition struggles.²⁶ In the decades after the Second World War, almost all colonies were liberated, right up to the end of the South African apartheid regime in 1994. The American civil rights

movement of the 1960s and the Black Lives Matter movement today can also be seen in the context of these struggles for recognition. These struggles for liberation, which also find their continuation in current demands for recognition of rights and identities, can be understood in terms of Hegel's Philosophy of History as a further development of the consciousness of freedom: it is about an expansion of this consciousness that actually includes 'everyone' and is thus *inclusive*. As long as this freedom does not apply to all people, its idea is 'at odds with itself' (cf. Pinkard 2017: 40, 162). This inclusive demand is contained in Hegel's philosophy itself, but it remains abstract with him and must therefore be developed beyond him.

Thus Hegel formulates a universalist concept of right, which he explicitly places in a context with the standpoint of *Bildung*:

It is part of education, of *thinking* as consciousness of the individual [*des Einzelnen*] in the form of universality, that I am apprehended as a *universal* person in which [respect] *all* are identical. *A human being counts as such because he is a human being*, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc. (PR: §209R)

Likewise, Hegel emphasizes in his introductory manuscript of 1830–31 to the lectures on the Philosophy of History that the human being is 'an end in itself' (cf. *GW* 18: 166f.) and that the 'Germanic' world, through the influence of Christianity, has come to the awareness that not only 'one' or 'some' but 'all' are *free*, 'that the human being as a human being is *free*' (*GW* 18: 153). At the same time, Hegel speaks of the '*application of the principle to reality, the penetration, the formation of the worldly state*' (*GW* 18: 153) only gradually emerging in the historical process. We can then regard the French Revolution of 1789 as an essential stage in this development process towards inclusive freedom. However, it should be noted that even at this stage, which the concept reached in Hegel's time, freedom remains abstract, in so far as it focuses on 'bourgeois, white men', as it were. By contrast, women and people from the non-European or non-Western world, in general, are not yet recognized in the same way. This applies to Hegel's time, but it also applies to Hegel himself, as can be seen, for example, in the racist statements quoted at the beginning.

Thus, it has required and still requires further development beyond Hegel until 'all' are actually recognized as free. However, this teleology is already contained in Hegel's concepts of freedom and history—one can speak here of a concretization of the concept, in the sense of a development 'with Hegel beyond Hegel'. This necessity of concretion and unfolding corresponds to the logical development of the concept. Hegel already anticipates this in his *Phenomenology* when he writes in the preface: '[J]ust as little of a building is finished when its foundation has been laid, so too reaching the concept of the whole is equally as little as

the whole itself' (*PS*: 9). We can likewise apply this idea to the concept of freedom. And in the introduction to the lectures on the Philosophy of History, there is talk of the universal and abstract 'Principle' still having to be realized through the will and the 'activity of men' (*GW* 18: 158). We can relate this to the 'activity' of those who fight for their liberation and recognition and whose actions thus actualize freedom!²⁷

V. Conclusion: Philosophy of History and the task of concrete *Bildung*

Hegel's basic idea of a development of spirit towards itself and freedom as self-determination can be adhered to, even if one rejects the pejorative and racist statements that go along with it in his Philosophy of History. While Hegel legitimizes colonialism as a means of *Bildung* in his Philosophy of History, his 'basic account of freedom can be separated from his actual pro-colonialism', since this 'basic account' is formulated independently from the Philosophy of History, especially in his logic (cf. Pinkard 2017: 146). Against this background, however, how can the continuation of *Bildung* within history towards self-determination be understood (with Hegel and beyond Hegel)? In such a way that one thinks towards the goal of a *more concrete Bildung* that can also recognize the particular on the part of formerly colonized people in their diversity. It would have to do more justice to the individual and social processes of mediation and appropriation by including the suffering and oppression and the repressed history of the colonized—and the 'blind spots' (Kimmerle 2005: 83) on the side of the history of the colonialists.²⁸

Universal history is confronted with a diversity of perspectives, and it is the task of all to find a mediation here. In this negotiation and mediation process,²⁹ the concept of identity often plays a crucial role in discourses in formerly colonized societies. In this context, Hegel's statements about Africa, America and Asia often prove counterproductive, of course, and criticism is needed here above all. Nevertheless, Hegel's basic intention of a universal history of freedom remains valid, whereby freedom needs to be further developed beyond Hegel.³⁰ Buck-Morss speaks in this regard of the 'task [...] to reconfigure the enlightenment project of universal history in the context of our too-soon and not-yet global public sphere' (2009: 77). Such a Philosophy of History would then have to 'think humanity in a truly inclusive way' (Buck-Morss 2009: 144; cf. also Buchwalter 2009: 88).

Thus, the philosophy of world history would have to be freed from its Eurocentric stricture and sublated into a new and more differentiated concept that at the same time does justice to the particular—namely, the many particular perspectives and histories of various, also non-European peoples and cultures. Starting from Hegel, this cannot be understood in the sense of cultural relativism

or an absolutization of particular identities, but only as a further development of the universal concept of freedom, which thereby experiences a continued differentiation and concretion.

Christian Hofmann

Katholische Universität Eichstatt-Ingolstadt, Germany

christian.hofmann@mail.de

Notes

¹ Abbreviations used:

- GW* = Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968ff).
(with
volume
number)
- PM* = Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind. Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971)/*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), *GW* 20, §§377–577 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1992).
- PR* = Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)/*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, *GW* 14 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2009–11).
- PS* = Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. T. Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)/*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1980).
- PSS* = *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, vol. I, trans. M. J. Petry (Dordrecht: Riedel, 1978)/*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), *GW* 20, §§377–387 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1992).
- SL* = Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)/*Wissenschaft der Logik*, *GW* 11–12 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1978–81).

A first version of this article, on which the present version is largely based, was translated from German into English by Daniel James, to whom I am very grateful. This also applies to the quotations of Hegel from lecture notes or other works for which I have not used the above translations, and to quotations from German texts from other authors. All quotations from Hegel for which ‘*GW*’ (with the respective volume number) is given as the source were translated by Daniel James.

I would also like to thank Franz Knappik, Martin Sticker, Tomas Stolen, two reviewers unknown to me and the participants of the workshop ‘Racism and Colonialism in Hegel’s Philosophy’ for their constructive and helpful feedback.

² In *GW* 27.4: 1229, for example, Ackersdijck’s variant states that the ‘slave trade’ with the Europeans was for the Africans ‘a means of *Bildung* [...] in that they were thereby instructed to conserve their enemies and not to eat them. They are completely uneducated, unruly people’.

³ Cf. Bernasconi (1998: 43ff.). For example: ‘Hegel took from Hutchison the detail that the king of the Ashanti washed the bones of his dead mother. But whereas Hegel said that the bones were washed in human blood, Hutchison specified rum and water’ (1998: 45). Cf. *GW* 27.3: 843; *GW* 27.4: 1228.

⁴ Such a legitimization can also be found in Marx (1984: 172), who, like Hegel, uses the cliché of a ‘static’ Orient when he writes that only the British brought about a ‘social revolution’ in ‘Hindostan’ (‘the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia’): ‘The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution’ (1984: 173). In this respect, Marx seems to be echoing Hegel’s thesis of colonialism as a means of *Bildung* for freedom.

⁵ It is, therefore, vital to confront the ‘undead’ in Hegel’s philosophy instead of suppressing it. James and Knappik (2021), following Benedetto Croce’s distinction between the ‘living’ and the ‘dead’ in Hegel’s philosophy, ask about the ‘undead’ of Hegel’s racism and defence of colonialism. The latter are ‘undead’, in so far as they are usually concealed in contemporary contributions that affirmatively follow Hegel, but are possibly subliminally ‘closely related’ to ‘living’ elements such as Hegel’s theory of education and freedom (cf. 2021: 4f.). These connections are ‘still little explored’ (2021: 5).

⁶ The question is if, ‘when so separated, this account implies anti-colonialism and has an inherently anti-colonial direction’ (Stone 2020: 261). Against this ‘stronger’ claim, however, Stone prefers the ‘weaker’ claim that ‘Hegel’s basic account of freedom can be separated from his actual pro-colonialism, and so does not necessarily imply pro-colonialism, but contains anti-colonial possibilities as well as the pro-colonial possibilities that Hegel developed from it’ (Stone 2020: 261). Is the weaker or the stronger claim correct? The history of discussions of Hegel’s philosophy shows that there were always very different possible interpretations—think, for example, of the early distinction between Left and Right Hegelians in the 1830s. This seems to argue for the weaker claim which admits for Hegel not only anti-colonial, but also ‘pro-colonial possibilities’ as a *means*. The *end*, however, must necessarily be understood with Hegel as anti-colonial. From this end, then, in turn, a critique of pro-colonialism also becomes necessary.

⁷ Further, Stone (2020: 249) understands Eurocentrism with Shohat and Stam ‘as the position that (i) history follows a linear path from Greece through Rome to medieval then modern Europe, all change powered internally to this line; (ii) “modern Europe” includes European-derived cultures in the US, Australia and broadly “the West”; (iii) inherent progress unfolds along this intra-European line towards freedom, equality and other liberal values; (iv) where unfreedom has existed or still exists in Europe’s past or present, this is only because

Europe has not yet fully worked through and applied its own governing principles of freedom and equality; (v) no equivalent progression to freedom and equality has occurred outside the West'.

⁸ Here Bielefeldt refers not explicitly to Hegel, but to the history of ideas of human rights.

⁹ Cf. for example *GW* 27.3: 821. On the accusation related to this, cf. Kimmerle (2005: 80).

¹⁰ For instance the claim that Byzantine history offers 'the most disgusting picture of weakness' (*GW* 27.3: 1089).

¹¹ By this I mean that Hegel caricatures the Africans as 'undeveloped' in order to use this contrast to emphasize the achievements of the 'developed' peoples (especially in Europe) even more strongly. In this respect, one can probably say that Hegel instrumentalizes the Africans for this purpose.

¹² This, however, is the account for Stone (2020: 253), who speaks of Hegel's 'sharp divide between European freedom and non-European unfreedom, which generates a case for colonialism'. Cf. also Stone (2020: 251, 259). Although this distinction tends to be correct, Stone accentuates it too one-sidedly, in my eyes.

¹³ Here, the individual has 'a value for itself' (*GW* 27.2: 597), '[t]he Persian' stands 'upright before the One', namely the religious principle of light (*GW* 27.2: 600). King Cyrus granted the subjugated peoples 'free independence' in his great empire and virtually led his empire like a 'free association of peoples' (*GW* 27.2: 606).

¹⁴ Here, too, it is interesting to take an additional look at Persia. For in some places in the lecture notes on the philosophy of religion and art, medieval Persian poetry with its closeness to mysticism, is mentioned, in part with much praise (cf. also *PM*: §573R). This may already reveal a possibility of overcoming the Eurocentric perspective, in so far as Hegel emphasizes the importance of Persian poetry for the poetry of his own present: it was precisely in the works of his contemporaries Goethe and Rückert, inspired by Hafis and Rumi, that Hegel evidently saw a 'high point of contemporary poetry' (Bonsiepen 1981: 199).

¹⁵ Ritter was a visiting professor at the University of Istanbul in 1953–55; the essay in question was first published in 1956.

¹⁶ Al-e Ahmad's book *Gharbzadegi (Westoxication or Weststruckness)* first appeared in 1962 and was of extraordinary influence on the intellectual debates in the run-up to the Iranian Revolution of 1978/79 (cf. Al-e Ahmad 1997; Hofmann 2014: 516ff.).

¹⁷ Cf. Stone (2020: 257): 'These claims do not mean that Negroes and indigenous Americans cannot be educated; they can. But given their native ignorance of freedom, they cannot educate themselves but must be educated by Europeans, which requires that they first be subjected to European control'.

We certainly find passages in the lecture transcripts which suggest that 'they cannot educate themselves', but I think that one can also interpret Hegel as saying that 'they *can*, but that they have *not yet* done so' in his time. The latter statement is also problematic, of course, but it is clearly different from the former.

¹⁸ Cf. Arndt (2020: 216) on the relationship between logic and *Realphilosophie*.

¹⁹ In this respect, the statements on race and colonialism contained in the philosophy of spirit are ultimately ‘logically’ justified by Hegel (cf. James and Knappik 2023). However, this ‘application’ of the logical categories contains also ‘empirical elements’, which do not follow with necessity from the categories themselves. Cf. James and Knappik (2023: 19): ‘However, it is also important to realize that Hegel’s hierarchical theory of race, while being an *instance* of a higher-order essentialist explanation, does not logically *follow* from Hegel’s general metaphysical views’. I cannot go further into this discussion here. My only point is that it is possible to reject Hegel’s hierarchical theory of race and at the same time concretize his logic in a different way. This is to be done above for the concept of *Bildung*.

²⁰ For the following three paragraphs see also Hofmann (2020: 167–70) in more detail.

²¹ Since the education of individuals takes place in social institutions mediated by intersubjective relations of recognition, ‘social freedom’ must be understood ‘as a task of *Bildung*’ (Stojanov 2018: 56).

²² The educational systems and practices which were established in the colonies were very different, of course. While in what is now Namibia the German colonialists around 1900 provided almost no educational opportunities for the indigenous population at all (beside an ‘education’ through labour), since their only concern was to exploit the people as cheap labour on farms (cf. Matasci 2020: 133–38), in other colonies, however, there were higher schools for the colonized and the possibility of university studies.

²³ A large part of the colonies, however, came under colonial rule only after Hegel’s death (1831). The great wave of decolonization then began especially after the Second World War and the independence of India (1947).

²⁴ Cf. Buck-Morss (2009). In the end, however, Hegel can see in the ‘conspiracies’ of the ‘Negroes’ in the ‘West Indies’ only the ‘proof of mere partial sentiment’, as he asserts in a note on §57 of the *Philosophy of Right* (cf. *GW* 14.2: 435).

²⁵ Cf. Fanon (2008: 168–73 and 172, fn. 8). On this also see Mascot (2014: 103).

²⁶ On the importance of Alexandre Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel in this context, see Mascot (2014: 93ff.). According to Mascot, Paris in the 1930s, where Kojève also gave his Hegel lectures, was ‘the cultural center of the Black diaspora’ (2014: 95); Césaire and Glissant were there, while Fanon studied in Lyon. Through Kojève, ‘Marxist and existentialist versions of Hegelianism’ exerted great influence on the thinking of a ‘generation of young overseas intellectuals’ (2014: 96).

²⁷ This demand for self-determination also corresponds to the Hegelian definition of the rational state. According to Charlotte Baumann’s reading, this state follows the ‘absolute form’ of the Idea which, at the same time, ‘involves the re-appropriation of social structures by individuals and, therefore, their power to actively and collectively shape their own world’ (Baumann 2021: 145).

²⁸ Cf. Bhambra (2021) and her appeal to ‘epistemological justice’. She argues that critical theory is based on the Enlightenment’s concept of freedom and a ‘conceptual framing of modernity’ (2021: 77, 80) which widely ignored the connection between modernity and colonialism. Against this, it is necessary to consider the ‘recognition of the knowledge claims of others’

(2021: 77), namely that of the formerly colonized peoples: 'All that is required is to take the other into account' (2021: 82).

²⁹ Bhambra (2021: 84) speaks of a 'dialogue' and of a 'learning in terms of [...] creating new understandings that reconstruct categories in the process'.

³⁰ Thus, I disagree with Allen's thesis that the idea of progress as such is necessarily an 'imperialist metanarrative' (2016: 4). It is not a matter of an alternative 'progress or decolonization' but of 'progress *as* decolonization' (and 'decolonization *as* progress'). Of course, the term 'progress' should not be understood naively or abstractly, but dialectically. 'Progress' is a normative concept in which the danger of a dialectic of enlightenment must also be considered.

Bibliography

- Al-e Ahmad, J. (1997), *Gharbzadegi (Weststruckness)*, trans. J. Green and A. Alizadeh. Costa Mesa: Mazda.
- Allen, A. (2016), *The End of Progress. Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Arndt, A. (2020), 'Begreifen als Kritik: Anmerkungen zu Hegel und Marx', *Hegel-Studien* 53/54: 209–24.
- Baumann, C. (2021), 'Was Hegel an Authoritarian Thinker? Reading Hegel's *Philosophy of History* on the Basis of his Metaphysics', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 103:1: 120–47.
- Bernasconi, R. (1998), 'Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti', in S. Barnett (ed.), *Hegel After Derrida*. London: Routledge.
- Bhambra, G. K. (2021), 'Decolonizing Critical Theory? Epistemological Justice, Progress, Reparations', *Critical Times* 4:1: 73–89.
- Bielefeldt, H. (2007), 'Ideengeschichte(n) der Menschenrechte', in N. Janz and T. Risse (eds.), *Menschenrechte – Globale Dimension eines universellen Anspruchs*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Bonsiepen, W. (1981), 'Altpersische Lichtreligion und neupersische Poesie', in O. Pöggeler, W. Bonsiepen, et al. (eds.), *Hegel in Berlin. Preußische Kulturpolitik und idealistische Ästhetik. Zum 150. Todestag des Philosophen*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Brauer, O. D. (1982), *Dialektik der Zeit. Untersuchungen zu Hegels Metaphysik der Weltgeschichte*. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog.
- Buchwalter, A. (2009), 'Is Hegel's Philosophy of History Eurocentric?', in W. Dudley (ed.), *Hegel and History*. Albany NY: SUNY.
- Buck-Morss, S. (2009), *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Dhawan, N. (2014), 'Affirmative Sabotage of the Master's Tools: The Paradox of Postcolonial Enlightenment', in N. Dhawan (ed.), *Decolonizing Enlightenment*.

Transnational Justice, Human Rights and Democracy in a Postcolonial World. Opladen: Budrich.

Fanon, F. (1963), *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. C. Farrington. New York: Grove.

Fanon, F. (2008), *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. C. L. Markmann. London: Pluto.

Hofmann, C. (2014), *Dialektik der Moderne. Globalisierung und Kultur aus Sicht der Philosophie Hegels und das Beispiel der Islamischen Revolution im Iran*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Hofmann, C. (2019), 'Being at Home with Oneself in the Whole – Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom as Actuality', in C. Krijnen (ed.), *Concepts of Normativity. Kant or Hegel?* Leiden: Brill.

Hofmann, C. (2020), 'Konkrete Individualität und Integration des Besonderen. Freiheit und Partizipation in Hegel's Staat der Bildung', *Hegel-Studien* 53/54: 165–90.

Honneth, A. (2011), *Das Recht der Freiheit. Grundriß einer demokratischen Sittlichkeit*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

James, D. and Knappik, F. (2021), 'Das Untote in Hegel: Warum wir über seinen Rassismus reden müssen', in *praefaktisch*, 27.05.2021. Available at: <https://www.praefaktisch.de/hegel/das-untote-in-hegel-warum-wir-ueber-seinen-rassismus-reden-muessen/?fbclid=IwAR15MKvOU3hp-4hlQWwPFxwuNcdFxmDCIR7OYDMaDARxdN4lgHA8yn4dVZk> (last accessed: 14.01.2024).

James, D. and Knappik, F. (2023), 'Exploring the Metaphysics of Hegel's Racism: The Teleology of the "Concept" and the Taxonomy of Races', *Hegel Bulletin* 44:1: 99–126.

Kant, I. (1912), 'Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf', in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. VIII. Berlin: Reimer.

Kimmerle, H. (1993), 'Hegel und Afrika: das Glas zerspringt', *Hegel-Studien* 28: 303–25.

Kimmerle, H. (2005), *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel interkulturell gelesen*. Nordhausen: Bautz.

Krijnen, C. (2019), 'How is Practical Philosophy Speculatively possible?', in C. Krijnen (ed.), *Concepts of Normativity. Kant or Hegel?* Leiden: Brill.

Marx, K. (1984), 'The British Rule in India', in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Gesamtausgabe* [MEGA], ed. Institutes for Marxism-Leninism in Berlin and Moscow, I/12. Berlin: Dietz.

Mascot, J. M. H. (2014), 'Hegel and the Black Atlantic: Universalism, Humanism and Relation', in N. Dhawan (ed.), *Decolonizing Enlightenment. Transnational Justice, Human Rights and Democracy in a Postcolonial World*. Opladen: Budrich.

Matasci, D., et al. (eds.) (2020), *Education and Development in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa. Policies, Paradigms, and Entanglements, 1890s–1980s*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Pinkard, T. (2017), *Does History Make Sense? Hegel on the Historical Shapes of Justice*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Riedel, M. (1982), 'Fortschritt und Dialektik in Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie', in M. Riedel, *Zwischen Tradition und Revolution. Studien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Ritter, J. (2003), 'Europäisierung als europäisches Problem', in J. Ritter, *Metaphysik und Politik. Studien zu Aristoteles und Hegel*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Sandkaulen, B. (2014), 'Hegels Konzep(e) der Bildung', in T. S. Hoffmann (ed.), *Grundbegriffe des Praktischen*. Freiburg: Alber.
- Shayegan, D. (1997), *Cultural Schizophrenia. Islamic Societies Confronting the West*, trans. J. Howe. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Stekeler-Weithofer, P. (2001), 'Vorsehung und Entwicklung in Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie', in R. Bubner and W. Mesch (eds.), *Die Weltgeschichte – das Weltgericht?* Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Stojanov, K. (2018), *Education, Self-consciousness and Social Action. Bildung as a Neo-Hegelian Concept*. London: Routledge.
- Stone, A. (2017): 'Europe and Eurocentrism', *Aristotelian Society Supplementary* 91:1: 83–104.
- Stone, A. (2020), 'Hegel and Colonialism', *Hegel Bulletin* 41:2: 247–70.