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Hegel, Colonialism and Postcolonial Hegelianism

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Abstract

This article aims to shed light on Hegel's conception of colonialism and its implications for the postcolonial reception of Hegel. Drawing on the abundant literature on the topic, it begins by engaging with Hegel's understanding of colonialism through a close reading of relevant passages of his works, in particular the Heidelberg *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft* (1817–18), the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1821), the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts* (1819/20, 1821/22, 1822/23, 1824/25) and the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (1822/23, 1830). Having mapped and reconstructed Hegel's conception of colonialism through his writings and lectures, the article argues that his account of Europe's modern colonial expansion is based primarily on economic considerations, rather than on civilizational assumptions proclaiming the spiritual superiority of European peoples—to which Hegel nevertheless subscribes. The conclusion explores distinct and divergent postcolonial perspectives for engaging with the contemporary legacy of Hegelianism. It addresses, on the one hand, Tibebu's critical reading of Hegel's philosophical enterprise as 'the coldest rationalisation of genocidal murder and carnage' based on 'paradigmatic apartheid' and, on the other, Brennan's redemptive reading of Hegel, which values his theoretical contribution to the shaping of 20th century anticolonial thought. After contrasting these two interpretations, the article argues in favour of postcolonial strategies for critical reappropriation and sabotage of the legacy of Hegel's philosophy.

The *vexata quaestio* of Hegel and colonialism is part of a broader constellation of widely debated issues—such as 'Hegel and slavery', 'Hegel and race', 'Hegel and Eurocentrism'—which revolve around the controversial relationship between Hegel's philosophy and the non-Western world. It is precisely across this array of critical issues that the so-called 'Hegel wars' have been raging in the field of postcolonial studies (Brennan 2013: 143), fiercely opposing Hegel's partisans (Brennan

2014; Buck-Morss 2009; Habib 2017) and detractors (Bhabha 1986; Tibebu 2011; Young 2004).

This article aims to shed light on Hegel's conception of colonialism and its implications for the postcolonial reception of Hegel. Drawing on the abundant literature on the topic (Copilas 2018; Paquette 2003, 2012; Pradella 2014; Serequeberhan 1989; Stone 2020), it will begin by engaging with Hegel's understanding of colonialism through a close reading of relevant passages of his works, in particular the Heidelberg *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft* (1817–18), the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1821), the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts* (1819/20, 1821/22, 1822/23, 1824/25) and the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (1822/23, 1830). Having mapped and reconstructed Hegel's conception of colonialism through his writings and lectures, the paper will argue that his account of Europe's modern colonial expansion is based primarily on economic considerations, rather than on civilizational assumptions proclaiming the spiritual superiority of European peoples—to which Hegel Text nevertheless subscribes (Stone 2020). The conclusion will explore distinct and divergent postcolonial perspectives for engaging with the contemporary legacy of Hegelianism. It will address, on the one hand, Teshale Tibebu's critical reading of Hegel's philosophical enterprise as 'the coldest rationalisation of genocidal murder and carnage' based on 'paradigmatic apartheid' (Tibebu 2011: 325) and, on the other, Timothy Brennan's redemptive reading of Hegel, which values his theoretical contribution to the shaping of 20th-century anticolonial thought (Brennan 2014). After contrasting these two interpretations, the article will argue in favour of postcolonial strategies for critical reappropriation and *sabotage* of the legacy of Hegel's philosophy (Dhawan 2014; Mascat 2014).

I. Colonization *sive* colonialism?

What did Hegel write about colonialism? To answer this question, it is first necessary to identify the most significant passages in Hegel's mature works where colonialism is explicitly mentioned, and then to scrutinise the definition he provides of it within his conceptions of modern *Sittlichkeit* and World History. But first, a disclaimer is in order concerning the very term at stake: while contemporary Hegel scholars speak of *colonialism* (Copilas 2018; Paquette 2003; Serequeberhan 1989; Stone 2020), Hegel himself only wrote about *Kolonisation/colonisation*. The word *Kolonialismus* is therefore not to be found in Hegel's writings, as it only sporadically appeared in the German language at the end of the 19th century (and became more widespread during the 20th century), unlike the word *Kolonisation* that can be traced back to the early 19th century.

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Colonialism as such refers to the modern European enterprise of conquering and ruling over territories and people overseas. Instead, *Kolonisation* designates the process of acquiring colonies and taking over the land, without any specific historical connotation. Hegel thus speaks of *colonization*—which he distinguishes from *emigration* (*Auswanderung*)[1] to define a wide range of historical phenomena that spans the Greek settlements known as *Magna Graecia*; the 'Dutch and French [who] have also established settlements on the coast of Senegambia' (*LPWH*: 217); the Phoenicians, who 'went to all areas of the Mediterranean, everywhere founding colonies such as Rhodes, Cyprus, Thasos and others' (*LPWH 22–23*: 330); Cyrus the Great, who 'subjugated the coast of Asia Minor […] and conquered the multitude of Greek colonial city-states' for the Persian empire (325); the English who *colonized* North America; and the Spanish who *conquered* South America (*LPWH*: 167).[2]

Although Hegel connects ancient and modern colonization and ascribes both phenomena to the inevitable expansion of ancient and modern societies, he also takes care to point out the specific colonial *styles* of each age, contrasting ancient Greek and Roman colonies with modern European ones. Whereas the former territories were granted the same rights and freedoms as the homelands, the latter were generally dependent and subordinate to the mother countries (*VPR II*: §§248–49, 995–96).[3] Therefore, Hegel remarks, modern colonies are more likely than ancient ones to revolt to reclaim their independence (*PR*: §248A, 269; *VPR III*: §248, 1395).[4] In his view, modern colonial strategies also differ greatly: 'sporadic' colonization—as in the case of German citizens who emigrate to Russia or America, losing all connections with their country of origin (*VPR III*: §248, 1394)[5]—has little to do with the 'systematic' colonization which is planned by the State, as practised by France, Spain or England (*PR*: §248, 269). Furthermore, Hegel remarks that the Spanish autocratic rule in Central and South America is very different from the 'somewhat more liberal' British rule in North America, which allowed greater freedom to the new territories (*VPR III*: §248, 1395).[6]

Despite Hegel only utilizes the concept of 'colonization', his efforts to identify and describe distinct colonial patterns also delineate an insightful portrait of the dynamics of *modern colonialism* as both a response to and a consequence of the needs and cyclical crises of civil society. Therefore, although his examination of the subject only amounts to a few paragraphs scattered throughout the various versions of his *Philosophy of Right* and occasionally emerges in his *Philosophy of History*, these scattered comments show a certain coherence and lay the foundation for what I maintain as a Hegelian theory of modern colonialism. I suggest that Hegel's theory of modern colonialism should be considered a crucial component of the framework of his political economy, in which he establishes a strong causal correlation between the expansion and growth of European industrial capitalism

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and the scramble for the world. In the pages that follow, I will synthetically reconstruct Hegel's conception of colonization/colonialism. After elucidating Hegel's discourse on the origins and causes of colonization, I will analyse the overall assessment he makes of it in terms of the advantages and/or side-effects colonies bring to the mother countries, a topic that constituted a bone of contention among European political economists in his day. Next, I will explore Hegel's *geopolitics of the sea* to highlight its relevance to his understanding and praise of the colonial endeavour as a world-historical phenomenon. Finally, I will consider whether Hegel's theory of modern colonialism contains normative grounds to justify or condemn the colonial enterprise.

II. In the beginning was the rabble: causes, origins and advantages of modern colonialism

One of Hegel's earliest extensive descriptions of colonization/colonialism can be found in his 1817–18 Heidelberg *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*. Here, *the colonial venture* is exposed in the third section of the *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* devoted to 'The Police or Public Authority', inaugurating the textual locus Hegel will assign this matter to even in subsequent versions of his *Rechtsphilosophie*.[7] In the penultimate paragraph of the section, §120, Hegel writes:

> If the population increases too much, the result is *colonisation*. […] where farm property can be divided up and there is freedom, there is a marked increase in population, and land becomes insufficient. People must then earn a necessitous living at factory work without free independence [*Selbständigkeit*]; or else the state must see to it that they are given some uncultivated land or land not fully used by its occupants on which to realise the demands they make on the state to earn their living, and where they can live in the same way as in the home country—and this is how colonies come into being (*VPR I*: §120, 144).

In the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1821), colonization is portrayed again as a much-needed measure to limit the negative effects of the industrial system, and in particular to prevent or respond to the 'creation of a *rabble*' (*PR*: §244, 266). Having praised the virtues of the sea as 'the natural element for industry' and as 'the supreme medium of communication' that establishes 'trading links between distant countries' (§247, 268), Hegel introduces colonization 'whether sporadic or systematic—to which the fully developed civil society is driven, and by which it provides part of its population with a return to the family principle in a new country, and itself with a new market and sphere

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of industrial activity' (§248, 269). In the *Grundlinien*, colonization is envisioned as an immediate response to the needs of civil society: first, the need to restore the ethical status and self-sufficiency of its members through the redistribution of land and labour; secondly, industry's general need to acquire new markets. But why is civil society 'driven to establish colonies' (§248A, 269)? Hegel lists two main causes: 'the increase of population' and 'the emergence of a mass of people who cannot gain satisfaction for their needs by their work when production exceeds the needs of consumers' (*ibidem*). Therefore, overpopulation (resulting in land shortage and unemployment), on the one hand, and overproduction (resulting in the stagnation of industry), on the other hand, constitute the unavoidable consequences of the expansive dialectic of civil society. Despite an excess of wealth, Hegel remarks, civil society *is not wealthy enough* to avoid the formation of the rabble (§245, 267). Contrary to his hypothesis, however, it could be argued that, paradoxically, civil society's inability to prevent the formation of the rabble is not *in spite of its wealth*, but precisely *because of its excess of wealth*, i.e. because it produces too much and thus engenders underconsumption and poverty. In Hegel's view, even if the poor could be supported by public institutions to meet normal standards of living, this would not be a viable solution because it would not involve the 'mediation of work' (*ibidem*). At the same time, full employment would not provide a suitable solution either because it would 'increase the volume of production' and, according to Hegel, 'it is in overproduction and the lack of a proportionate number of consumers who are themselves productive that the *evil* [*Übel*] consists [*besteht*]' (*ibidem*).[8]

If colonialism seems to be at first sight the only possible response to these crises and contradictions, Hegel assumes that it is a necessary but insufficient response to the economic and political drama of civil society, as in the long run colonial expansion will end up reproducing in the colonies a similar situation to that of the mother countries.[9] Along the same lines, in the 1821–22 *Vorlesungen über die Rechtsphilosophie* (§248), Hegel recalls the *necessity* of colonization in antiquity and in modern times, linking it in the latter case to the needs of both industry and farming in a reference to the shortage of rural land in Prussia, which he does not mention in the *Grundlinien* (*VPR II*: §248, 756).[10] The *Vorlesungen über die Rechtsphilosophie* of the following years (1822–23 and 1824–25) reiterate the same *Leitmotiv* that colonization arises as an intrinsic consequence of the very expansion of civil society: 'when the inner activity has reached a high degree, and a people has more individuals than it can feed, colonization occurs' (*VPR II*: §§248–49, 995).

Interestingly, Hegel seems to equate the *causes* of modern colonialism and ancient colonization, while comparing and contrasting their *outcomes*—and in this respect, according to his view, the Greeks managed their colonies better

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than his contemporaries (*PR*: §248, 269).[11] His partial conflation of the two distinct phenomena, however, does not undermine the thesis proposed here, i.e. that Hegel's diagnosis captures the logic of modern colonialism as a result of the very (dis)functioning of civil society and, by extension, of the very engine of capitalist economy. In fact, Hegel's analysis of ancient and modern colonization consistently highlights a difference in scale between the two: lands and people, he reckons, have been colonized since ancient times, and today, like in the past, the colonies' *raison d'être* lies in the advantages they bring to the mother country and its population. Yet, in the modern era the emergence of industry and trade complicates the picture, giving birth to the sphere of civil society, a permanently polarized social fabric that undergoes permanent crises. Therefore, capitalist modernity set up an unsolvable socio-economic conundrum; and modern colonialism appears to Hegel as insufficient and inadequate to properly fix the problems raised by the inner dialectic of civil society whose consequences can only be displaced and postponed by means of colonies.[12]

Without invoking colonization as a miraculous solution, Hegel maintains that colonies are necessary and may be advantageous to the colonizing powers, depending, to a large extent, on the nature of the colonies themselves. Colonists may 'bring much benefit' to their motherlands if, as is the case in France and England, they remain citizens of their own countries. German migrants, on the other hand, 'go out as individuals, and instead of being of use to the home country as colonists, they become assimilated to other peoples since their own country does not care for them' (*LNR*: §120, 217).[13] Elsewhere, Hegel remarks that 'for England, the enormous increase in the population of America has opened up a large market', but he also notices that 'Spain will not fare so well' (*VPR III*: §248, 1395). For colonization to be beneficial to European countries, the state needs to regulate the process by supporting the colonists in their enterprise and granting them the freedom to prosper, while at the same time maintaining a strong connection between the colonial powers and the colonies, primarily through trade, so as to ensure that the wealth produced in the overseas territories can still contribute to the wealth of the homelands. With regard to colonization, Hegel is thus in favour of state regulation and assigns this task to the *police* [*Polizei*], 'the instrument for the intervention of politics in the economy in general' (Pradella 2014: 437).[14] He maintains that 'welfare is the supreme law for a state in its relations with others' and, since the welfare of the state depends on its capacity to satisfy the needs of civil society, colonization must therefore concern the state's business (*PR*: §336, 369). 'Colonization can be accidental; it is said that Germans can be found all over the world', Hegel writes. Yet, in his view, 'this does not benefit the mother country as much as if the government organises it' (*VPR II*: §248, 756–57). According to Hegel, colonization may follow two main strategies. The first is to ensure 'that the colonists [in the colonies] enjoy the same

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civil rights they enjoyed in the State from which they come; this was the case with the ancients'; the second aims 'to keep the colony in such dependence that it is governed by the mother country, and also only allowed to trade with the mother country' (757). It is the latter strategy, in Hegel's opinion, that is the most implemented in recent times, as well as the least profitable. Instead, he remarks, 'In time the colonies become independent, as we have seen in America', where they declared their independence as soon as the English Parliament tried to impose its rule, and this does not damage the former motherland. On the contrary, 'the industry of England finds now there a big market' and therefore, Hegel concludes, 'the future has much to experience from the development in America' (*ibidem*).

By raising such claims, Hegel provides his own contribution to the ongoing debate among political economists about the pros and cons of colonialism for European countries. In Hegel's time, colonization was not unanimously supported, either because it was considered unfair—French economist Jean-Charles-Léonard de Sismondi famously denounced the greed and cruelty of the British as unprecedented in history—or because it was not perceived as advantageous—Adam Smith saw the colonies as a burden, and Jean-Baptiste Say defended free trade against colonial monopoly for similar reasons (Paquette 2003). Within this context, Hegel's views on modern colonialism are exceptionally optimistic and somewhat eccentric: on the one hand, he praises colonies as a useful means to balance and counter the excesses of civil society—colonization is considered an exit strategy (*Ausweg*) in relation to endemic economic crises (*VRP*: §§248–49, 705); on the other, he also stresses the limits and side effects of the enterprise. Moreover, he emphasizes the need for state supervision in colonial interventions while at the same time celebrating the importance of the colonies' emancipation to the benefit of the mother countries.[15] In this respect, Hegel holds a peculiar position that cannot be completely assimilated to any of the views expressed by other influential political economists such as Adam Smith, James Steuart or Adam Ferguson (Paquette 2003). His outlook on modern colonialism derives from his attempts to account for several distinct phenomena—industrial overproduction and agricultural crisis, unemployment and land shortage, the expansion of civil society and the weakening of its membership—across various national settings in Europe that were differently invested in the colonial mission. In this eclectic composition, Hegel's discourse identifies three major grounds for colonization or, in other words, three kinds of *interests* driving the process. The first of these are the immediate interests of the poor and of those whose subsistence cannot be guaranteed by civil society as it is. For them, colonization is a viable way to regain wealth and dignity and its import is therefore both economic and ethical. Secondly, Hegel argues that society as a whole and the state itself economically benefit from the colonies, especially when the latter establish a privileged commercial connection with the mother country. Finally, Hegel mentions a third element of interest that he ascribes to

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the world as whole: the *Weltinteresse*. The notion of *world interest*, as introduced by Hegel in the 1819–20 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Right*, points to the economic sphere. As he remarks, 'Needs and commerce give rise to a world interest' and global trade allows for the entire world to be put 'into universal relation' (*VPR I*: 504).[16] The notion of *world interest*—that obviously concerns only a limited part of the world—testifies precisely to Hegel's economico-political conception of modern colonialism. However, the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* show a slightly different approach to the matter that also incorporates civilizational arguments in Hegel's reasoning.

III. The world and the sea: a capitalist adventure

Hegel's treatment of colonization/colonialism includes significant insights on the role of the sea in the development of world commerce and international relations which provide an outline of his *geopolitics of the sea*. Hegel's understanding of modern and ancient colonial enterprises has a deep maritime component, since trade is fundamentally dependent on the sea—and so is modern civil society. Moreover, in his view, *world history* itself has flourished thanks to the establishment of a universal connection among the peoples that was made possible by the sea (*VPR I*: 504). Hence, the sea is not to be understood as a purely physical or geographical space, but as an economic medium that facilitates and enhances the ethical advancement of peoples it connects through economic links.

In §247 of the *Grundlinien,* Hegel highlights that the sea is 'the natural element for industry' by which industry proves its courage exposing its gain to great risks of loss and damage (*PR*: §247, 268). As an *element of fluidity, danger and destruction*, the sea imposes itself over 'the ties of the soil and the limited circles of civil life with its pleasures and desires' (*ibidem*). Hegel remarks that 'through this supreme medium of communication, it [industry] also creates trading links between distant countries, a legal [*rechtlichen*] relationship which gives rise to contracts' (*ibidem*). In conclusion, he states, 'such trade [*Verkehr*] is the greatest educational asset [*Bildungsmittel*] and the source from which commerce derives *its world-historical significance* [*welthistorische Bedeutung*]' (*ibidem,* emphasis added). Overseas trade thus acquires a very special ethical (*sittliches*) status in the development of Hegel's world history. While elaborating on the causal relation between the sea and the progress of civilizations, Hegel emphasizes that

> in order to appreciate what an educational asset is present in the link with the sea, one should compare the relationship to the sea of those nations in which creativity has flourished with those which have shunned navigation and which, like the Egyptians and Indians, have stagnated internally and sunk into the most

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> appalling and miserable superstition; *one should likewise note how all great and enterprising nations push their way to the sea* (*PR*: §247R, 268–69).

Similarly, in the 1821–22 *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts* (§247), Hegel establishes an immediate connection between the sea and the flourishing of industry and civil society:

> Bourgeois society must look elsewhere. *The main way to do this is the sea. As regards industry, the element that in fact drives it outward is the sea. This is the main element* [Hauptelement] *of industry, which must look outward for its markets.* This appears to be contrary to industry [as] industry is selfish, but it must entrust itself to the sea, this enemy, this opponent of pleasure. *The sea goes against this moment of selfishness. The means to help industry is the path of greater danger. This search for lands is bravery, the poetry of industry. Nations drive themselves directly to the sea* [*when*] *they want to go out into the world; the narrowness in which they find themselves drives them straight out* (*VPR II*: §247, 756, emphasis added).

In the same passage, Hegel reaffirms the superiority of peoples that have evolved by the sea and laments the 'moral lowliness' of those which remain isolated. He notes: 'Nations that have kept away from the sea while their industry is developing are sinking into dullness, such as the Egyptians. This was also the case of the ancient Babylonians, who had the Tigris and the Euphrates, but did not sail the sea itself' (*ibidem*). Indeed, for Hegel 'the very sea is a tremendous educational asset [*ungeheure Bildungsmittel*]' as much as 'seafaring has become a tremendous element in the progress of European education' (*ibidem*). In this context, England, in Hegel's view, deserves to be particularly praised for having undertaken a civilizing mission of global dimensions through its worldwide commerce and colonial enterprise: 'It is the great destiny of the English nation, the more civil life blossoms among the peoples, the more they gain, their advantage is linked to the civilization of the world. They seek to civilise the peoples, and in this they have their advantage' (*ibidem*). In sum, the sea appears in Hegel's narrative as a channel of communication, a source for economic and ethical development, a driver for disclosure and bravery, a magnetic force to connect the entire world, and finally, a means of education which, from his perspective, allows for distinctions and ranking among peoples within the *Weltgeschichte*. This is the reason why the sea fundamentally contributes to the *Weltinteresse* (*VPR I*: 504) and also possesses a crucial *weltliche Bedeutung* (*PR*: §247, 268). In Hegel's discourse the notions of *Weltinteresse* and *weltliche Bedeutung* have a partial and distorted signification, insofar as they designate respectively the economic prosperity of commerce and wealth for

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the benefit of European nations and the ethical progress generated by the very export of European civilization across the whole world. Certainly, and unsurprisingly, Hegel's concept of *Weltinteresse* does not include the standpoint of those who suffer the consequences of the colonial enterprise—the colonized, who are almost never part of the picture– nor does it translate into an authentic cosmopolitan concern that would have forced him to consider the fate of non-European peoples. Through the notion of *Weltinteresse,* Hegel designates the economic kernel of Western modernity resulting from the world-scale expansion of industry and trade and epitomizes global capitalism's drive for unlimited growth in markets and resources. As he makes manifestly clear, only Europeans are assigned the role of contributing to the promotion of world interest across the globe. Yet, despite the manifestly Eurocentric premises on which it relies, the notion of *Weltinteresse* must be regarded as the instantiation of a primarily economic interest that corresponds to the ever-expanding economic dynamics of modern European capitalism, rather than as the expression of Hegel's civilizing teleology.

IV. Hegel's advocacy for colonization: necessity, contingency and normativity

On numerous occasions, Hegel insists on colonization being economically necessary to preserve and protect people's welfare from the irreparable and recurrent crises affecting civil society as a result of the inner dialectic of the *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (Paquette 2003: 415).[17] He recalls that even if 'the movement of bourgeois society appears to be random, arbitrary; it seems to be nothing but individual events, at the same time *a general course of necessity can be recognised in it*' which warrants investigation (*VPR II*: §248, 757, emphasis added). Hegel assigns this task to political economy, a science that, like philosophy, 'does credit to thought because it finds the laws underlying a mass of contingent occurrences' and whose goal is 'to discover the necessity at work' in the realm of *Sittlichkeit* (*PR*: §189A, 228). Hegel's Philosophy of Right thus reveals this *'allgemeiner Gang einer Notwendigkeit'* and makes a compelling case for the economic and political necessity of colonization from the standpoint of European civil societies (*VPR II*: §248, 757). Predictably, it does so without ever considering the price to be paid by the peoples at the receiving end of the colonial mission whose lives and lands, qua *terrae nullius*, are at the disposal of the colonizers.[18] Yet, if colonization is, in Hegel's view, first and foremost a viable economic and political solution—albeit a temporary one —to the intrinsic problems of civil society, how do civilizational arguments fit into the overall framework of his argument? Do they include normative grounds for supporting colonization/colonialism? Or, is there a *right to colonize* in Hegel's work? As we have just remarked, while praising the greatness of the sea and

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celebrating the flourishing of global scale commerce, in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right,* Hegel also emphasizes the educational surplus value implicit in the development of world trade and colonization (*PR*: §247, 268). In §246 of the *Grundlinien,* he writes that 'this inner dialectic of society drives it […] to go beyond its own confines and look for consumers, and hence the means it requires for subsistence [*Subsistenz*], in other nations [*Völkern*] which lack those means of which it has a surplus or which generally lag behind it in creativity, etc.' (§246, 267). The colonized *Völker*, in Hegel's view, lack the means and goods which are therefore exported by the colonizers, but also 'lag behind in creativity' in comparison to them, so that the alleged economic underdevelopment of the colonized mirrors their spiritual poverty.[19] The philosophy of history is perhaps the locus par excellence where Hegel unabashedly allocates different degrees of freedom to people and civilizations based on their 'world-historical significance' within the universal parade of the *Geist*. Interestingly, in his 1822–23 Berlin *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History,* Hegel does not extensively elaborate on modern colonialism, mainly focusing on ancient colonization, with few references to North and South America or to the English colonies in Asia (*LPWH* 22–23: 191–204). Indeed, nowhere in the *Vorlesungen* can a proper normative ground for colonization/colonialism be identified: there is no such a thing as a *right to colonize* in Hegel's discourse. This is not to downplay the fact that, in the *Grundlinien,* Hegel outlines a majestic imperial destiny for the nation that becomes the 'bearer of the present stage of world spirit's development' and possesses an '*absolute right over the others*' (*PR*: §347, 374, emphasis added).[20] In his own words, 'this nation is the dominant one in world history for this epoch, *and only once in history can it have this epoch-making role*', while 'the spirits of other nations are without rights, and they, like those whose epoch has passed, no longer count in world history' (*ibidem*). Further in the *Philosophy of Right* (§351), Hegel thus remarks that

> the same determination *entitles* civilized nations [*Nationen*] to regard and treat as barbarians other nations which are less advanced than they are in the substantial moments of the state (as with pastoralists in relation to hunters, and agriculturalists in relation to both of these), in the consciousness that the rights of these other nations are not equal to theirs and that their independence is merely formal (§351, 376, emphasis added).

Despite similar statements, it is not possible to pinpoint an explicit *right to colonize* in Hegel's writings where colonization seems rather to be framed as a *need* than as a *right*—an economic need of some to be satisfied at the expenses of others.[21] At the same time no *right against colonization* can be found either in his work, as sovereignty, freedom and property are strictly related to the notion of *Sittlichkeit*, which not all the

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peoples in the world are entitled to.[22] As Hegel remarks, 'In the case of a nomadic people, for example, or any people at a low level of culture, the question even arises of how far this people can be regarded as a state' (*PR*: §331R, 367). Moreover, peoples that do not have a state and are not governed by a set of laws remain, according to him, *unethical*.

From Hegel's perspective, state sovereignty is not recognized by default, but only to those peoples who reached a certain level of ethical advancement. Additionally, he maintains that 'full personal freedom, full free property, can emerge only *in states with a specific principle*' (*LPWH 22–23*: 190). In contrast, the colonized live in a peculiar *initial stage* 'in which a nation [*Volk*] is not a state' (*PR*: §349, 375). As he explains, 'if the nation, as ethical substance […] does not have this form, it lacks the objectivity of possessing a universal and universally valid existence [*Dasein*] for itself and others in [the shape of] laws as determinations of thought, and is therefore *not recognized*; since its independence *has no objective legality or firmly established rationality for itself, it is merely formal and does not amount to sovereignty*' (*ibidem*, emphasis added). With regard to formally existing states, Hegel also adds (§331) that 'the state has a primary and absolute entitlement to be a sovereign and independent power in the eyes of others, i.e. to be recognized by them. *At the same time, however, this entitlement is purely formal, and the requirement that the state should be recognized simply because it is a state is abstract. Whether the state does in fact have being in and for itself depends on its content*—on its constitution and [present] condition' (§331, 367; emphasis added).[23] Such assumptions, which exclude a huge portion of the world population from the *Sittlichkeit,* also result in the implicit impossibility for the colonized to reclaim on normative grounds their freedom and independence against colonial domination, since the colonized have no right either to property or to sovereignty. Hegel's remarks, however, do not only target here extra-European peoples, rather question more generally the legitimacy of allegedly insufficient forms of statehood and advocate for their caducity—let's recall that in his early writing *Über die Reichsverfassung* Hegel laments that even Germany '*ist kein Staat mehr*'. Undoubtedly, civilizational arguments are fundamental to Hegel's conception of World History but, with respect to colonialism, their role seems to be tangential rather than essential. This is not to deny that Hegel's philosophy is ridden with such arguments; on the contrary, they play a major role, for instance, in his conceptualization and endorsement of slavery which he deems 'necessary at those stages where the state has not yet arrived at rationality' and 'an element in the transition to a higher stage' (*LPWH 22–23*: 197).[24] Yet, it must be noted that, in relation to colonialism, civilizational arguments are less compelling than the economic arguments. In conclusion, Hegel's pro-colonial views are chiefly based on contingent economic premises and sustained by his general vision that the global expansion of industry and trade via colonization is something which drives *world interest* forward. Located at the core of his *Philosophy of Right* and at the heart of civil society, Hegel's conception of colonization is indeed a fundamental component of his political

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economy and one that testifies to his sharp awareness of the relentlessly expansive growth of the capitalist world market. In Hegel's political economy, therefore, colonization/colonialism reveals some crucial features of civil society (and of capitalism *tout court*): it shows, on the one hand, that civil society and capitalism have strong polarizing tendencies and, proves, on the other hand, that they are inexorably expansive, i.e. they cannot simply be, because in order to be they need to expand constantly and, paradoxically, their expansion will never be sufficient.[25]

V. Colonial, anticolonial or postcolonial Hegel?

So far, I have argued that Hegel's conception of colonialism emerges first and foremost as a specifically modern response to political and economic problems that necessarily derive from civil society and the emergence of industrial capitalism. It is thus an inevitable step given the nature of modern capitalist societies, albeit not a resolutive one. I have also stressed, *pace* Teshale Tibebu and Robert Bernasconi, that Hegel's case for colonialism is not primarily based on civilizational arguments, although some of Hegel's remarks strongly express the idea that colonialism finds its significance in world-historical terms as a *Bildungs- and Kommunikationsmittel*. Consequently, although the economic and the civilizational functions Hegel attributes to colonialism cannot be fully dissociated nor disentangled, I maintain that in his view colonialism is less 'the solution to the problem of how to include within the continuous history of the Caucasians, the races that were otherwise excluded' (Bernasconi 2000: 190), but rather 'the only viable solution to the fundamental contradictions that emerge from the dialectic internal to civil society and the state' (Serequeberhan 1989: 312), a necessary—albeit temporary and insufficient—solution.[26]

The question that now arises beyond Hegel's own specific treatment of the colonial question is what use can be made of his philosophical legacy for the purposes of our postcolonial posterity. In this regard, two opposing interpretations among others are offered by Teshale Tibebu and Timothy Brennan in their respective works, *Hegel and the Third World* (2011) and *Borrowing Lights. Vico, Hegel and the Colonies* (2014). Tibebu's book makes a strong and compelling case against Hegel's colonial philosophy, which he conceives as the cruellest synthesis of Western modern thinking. According to Tibebu, Hegel's philosophy is premised on a 'racist philosophical anthropology' that completely disqualifies non-European and non-Caucasian populations for the purpose of establishing White Western Europe on the peak of a spiritual/racial hierarchy. Provocatively and polemically, Tibebu shows how Hegel's outline of a universal history falls short of his own ambitions, unmasking the fallacy of his all too partial universalism, which appears to be grounded in the racial prejudice of sense-certainty rather than

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in the speculative dialectic of reason. Indeed, for Tibebu, Hegel's racism 'entails consciousness frozen at the level of sense-certainty' (2011: 344). His final verdict is thus merciless: 'Hegel invested a significant part of his formidable intellectual power to rationalising Europe's global domination of the Third World. His philosophy may articulate a sophisticated case for human freedom, yet the same philosophy comes up with the coldest rationalization of genocidal murder and carnage […] Hegel's philosophy of world history is based on a paradigmatic apartheid' (325). If that is the case, what lessons can be learnt from Hegel's system from a postcolonial perspective?

Tibebu has no doubt that 'Now that we have seen what is inside Hegel's bag, we need to close it and return it to Hegel' (350). For him, 'Hegel, the absolute monarch of the kingdom of Eurocentrism, needs to be dethroned' and the effort 'must be made globally, including by the Western world, whose absolute superiority over the rest the absolute philosopher asserted absolutely' (351). Convincingly, Tibebu claims and proves that 'Hegel's philosophy fails to be a philosophy of genuine humanism or concrete universalism' (331). Moreover, he affirms that Hegel's philosophy still exerts an infamous degree of power on Western thought, especially when it comes to the conceptualization of the non-European world. 'The subtext of the discourse on Africa, he argues, continues to remain essentially Hegelian because Africa is still perceived through the prism of essential otherness' (174). Hegel's philosophy thus appears, in Tibebu's view, to be of no use for anticolonial and de-colonial purposes, but rather as a voluminous intellectual edifice to be dismantled. While his own work brilliantly engages with the Hegelian corpus, Tibebu's performative appeal to dethrone Hegel seems to invoke a *damnatio memoriae* and is an instigation to overcome and dismiss his legacy. It is a call to depart from Hegel *à jamais*.

Poles apart from Tibebu's reading is Timothy Brennan's *Borrowed Light. Vico, Hegel and the Colonies,* which aims to revisit these two modern philosophers in terms of their relevance to the anticolonial theories and struggles of the 20th century. An entire chapter of the volume, entitled 'Hegel and the Critique of Colonialism', is devoted to explaining to what extent and in what way Hegel's contribution could be amenable to decolonization. Brennan argues that 'Hegel's importance to anticolonial thought is especially evident in those aspects of his philosophy that place him as an heir to Vico' and maintains that both Vico and Hegel can indeed be considered progenitors of anticolonial thought (Brennan 2014: 73). His reading celebrates the radical import of Hegel's philosophy for having first brought 'a geopolitical consciousness into the discourse of philosophical modernity' and for having 'weaved together in the Philosophy of Right […] the destinies of center and periphery' while aptly grasping 'an economic motive behind the rhetoric of European civilization' (81–84). These claims are convincing, but Brennan pushes his argument much further into an unabashedly apologetic interpretation

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that seeks to dissociate and rescue Hegelian philosophy from 'the tale of Hegel, Africa and slavery' (97). The *tale*, in Brennan's view, was built during the 1990s and the 2000s, mainly by postcolonial and de-colonial critics and critical race philosophers such as Robert J. Young, Tsenay Serequeberhan, Walter Mignolo and Robert Bernasconi 'declaring (among other things) that Hegel believed Africa had no history, that the binary logic of dialectics formalizes the racial divide of white and non-white, and that Hegel is the author of "Western European […] modernity in its double face: the economic and political configuration of the modern world as well as the theological and epistemological space"' (100). In the *tale*, Brennan continues, 'We are told that Hegel applauds the British as "the missionaries of civilization to the world" and that Hegel's thought is "implicated in the link between the structures of knowledge and the forms of oppression of the last two hundred years: a phenomenon that has become known as Eurocentrism"' (*ibidem*). According to Brennan, not only is the *tale* ungrounded, since it relies on dubious criticisms developed without solid textual support, but it is even more distorting because it does not acknowledge or value 'Hegel's cultural relativism (rather than racism)' and 'his emphasis on de-centering Europe' that is displayed in his Philosophy of History (103).[27] In the face of allegedly biased and partisan readings that do not do justice to the complexity and nuances of Hegel's philosophy, Brennan interestingly praises a return to Hegel that seems to be 'colored by specifically postcolonial imperatives, not only in Susan Buck-Morss's *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, or in Slavoj Z̆iz̆ek's neo-Hegelian writings on terrorist violence, the bombing of Serbia, and Islamophobia, but also in a whole array of scholarship from the last two decades that sets out to establish the relevance of critical theory —and, of course, Hegel's central place in it—to the study of empire' (81). In Brennan's view, such approaches reconnect with earlier 20th-century anticolonial scholarship in which the legacy of Hegel was particularly relevant, such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and C. L. R. James (Mascat 2014).

While Brennan's attempt at justifying and defending Hegel from the accusation of developing and consolidating colonial views and racial thinking is not persuasive, his efforts to revive the radical reception of Hegel in contemporary anticolonial and postcolonial theories makes a strong case for valuing the intellectual and political legacy of Hegelianism today. It is thus crucial to pose once again the question of what can be fruitfully done with Hegel from a critical perspective based on anticolonial, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist stances. What is indeed the potential of Hegel's dialectics, of his conception of philosophy, of his philosophy of right and of his *Weltgeschichte*? These issues have been raised by scholars in the fields of critical theory, Marxist philosophy and postcolonial studies and have received distinct responses that variously suggest the need to value Hegel's idea of universality, to rework his conception of the *Weltgeschichte*, to retrieve his dialectics of recognition, to reinterpret his logic of essence as a theory and critique of power

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in capitalist society, or to salvage and relaunch his notion of totality (Abazari 2020; Buck-Morss 2009; Habib 2017; Jameson 2010; Žižek 2013). Without fully sharing the view that 'Hegel's dialectic equally embodies a critique of capitalism' (Habib 2017: 141) or the attempts to rescue and resurrect Hegel's Philosophy of History (Buck-Morss 2009), it can still be argued that, by conceptualizing and systematizing the achievements of the Western philosophical tradition—by being the *summa* of European modern thought—Hegel's philosophy represents an invaluable source for any critical understanding of modernity, not necessarily nor primarily for the normative tools it provides to reverse its pillars, but rather for the insights it offers to grasp the terms in which such pillars have been founded and articulated. Paraphrasing Orlando Patterson, the author of *Slavery and Social Death* (1982), who argues that the slave variant of the capitalist mode of production is 'merely capitalism with its clothes off' (Patterson 1979: 31), I suggest that the surplus value of Hegel's philosophy resides precisely in its ability to provide us with a portrait of modernity *with its clothes off*, i.e. a portrait of racial colonial capitalism. Looking back at Hegel thus remains a crucial task for contemporary philosophy while investigating the legacy of capitalist and colonial modernity that still inhabits and shapes our global society. As a sharp interpreter of his age, Hegel elaborated penetrating analyses of the acute contradictions governing the logic of Western modernity, notwithstanding his overall endorsement of the right of capitalist economy to expand and the right of European civilization to impose its alleged superiority on the non-Western world.

Furthermore, in addition to acknowledging the significance of Hegel's philosophy in crucial critical efforts aimed at deconstructing the hegemonic discourse of modernity, particularly its racial and colonial narratives, strategic endeavours to approach Hegel from a postcolonial perspective may fruitfully result in disruptive appropriations of his legacy that yield to *sabotage* the grounds of his philosophy from within (Dhawan 2014; Spivak 2012: 4). The Black reception of Hegel, for example—what I called elsewhere the reception of 'Hegel in the Black Atlantic' (Mascat 2014)—shows various ways in which Hegel's thoughts and concepts have been recovered and incorporated for anticolonial purposes. Anticolonial thinkers such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Edouard Glissant and many others, who have been fruitfully engaging with the Hegelian corpus, testify to the possibility and the potentiality of radical strategies of textual and conceptual reappropriation. Their attempts at *sabotaging* or *cannibalizing* Hegel (Mascat 2024) succeeded in performing new *ab-usive* uses of the legacy of modernity (Spivak 2007: 219).[28]

Embracing what Edward Said famously referred to as the 'partial tragedy of resistance', namely that resistance 'must to a certain degree work to recover forms already established or at least influenced or infiltrated by the culture of empire' (Said 1993: 110)—I suggest that contemporary postcolonial critique should not

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abandon nor rescue Hegel, rather cultivate a generative disenchantment with its philosophy and *tarry with it*.

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Notes

[1] In his *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science* (§120) delivered in Heidelberg, Hegel remarks that 'Migrants [*Auswandernden*] from Germany, however, go out as individuals [*wander … als einzelne aus*], and instead of being of use to the home country as colonists, they become assimilated to other peoples since their own country does not care for them' (*LNR*: §120, 217).

[2] Abbreviations used (in alphabetical order):

ERB	= Hegel, 'On the English Reform Bill (1831)', in *Political Writings*, ed. and trans. L. Dickey and H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)/*Schriften und Entwürfen II (1816–1831)*, ed. C. Jamme and F. Hogemann, in *Gesammelte Werke* 16 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2001).
LNR	= Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, ed. and trans. J. M. Stewart, P. C. Hodgson and O. Pöggeler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)/*Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, in *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* I, ed. H. C. Lucas, C. Becker, W. Bonsiepen, A. Gethmann-Siefert, K. R. Meist, H. J. Schneider and W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983).
LPWH	= Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975)/*Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. J. Hoffmeister, in *Sämtliche Werke* I (Hamburg: Meiner, 1955).
LPWH 22–23	= Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, vol. 1: *Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822–3*, ed. and trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson and W. G. Geuss (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011)/*Vorlesungsmanuskripten II (1816–1831)*, ed. W. Jaeschke, in *Gesammelte Werke* 18, (Hamburg: Meiner, 1995) and *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, Berlin 1822/23*, ed. K. H. Ilting, K. Brehmer and H. N. Seelmann, in *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* 12 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1996).
PR	= Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)/*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, in *Werke* 7, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970).

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VPR I = Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts I. Nachschriften zu den Kollegien der Jahre 1817/18, 1818–19 und 1819–20*, ed. D. Felgenhauer, in *Gesammelte Werke* 26,1 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2013).

VPR II = Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts II. Nachschriften zu den Kollegien der Jahre 1821/22 und 1822/23*, ed. K. Grotsch, in *Gesammelte Werke* 26,2 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2015).

VPR III = Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts III. Nachschriften zu den Kollegien der Jahre 1824/25 und 1831* (ed. K. Grotsch), in *Gesammelte Werke* 26,3 (Hamburg: Meiner, 2015).

VRP = Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie (1818–1831)*, in *Philosophie des Rechts nach der Vorlesungsnachschrift von H. G. Hotho* 1822/23, ed. K.-H. Ilting, Band 3 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974).

When there is no English translation available (*VPR I*, *II*, *III* and *VRP*), translations are mine.

[3] 'In recent times, the colonies have become more subject to the mother country; they are only allowed to trade with the mother country, and their articles of consumption are only allowed to be imported from the mother country. In the same way, the mother country often imposes restrictions, although the English allow for greater freedom in this respect. In Antiquity, the colony was free in all this, could tax as it wished, trade wherever and wherever it wished. In more recent times, people have returned to this system. North America, for example, has become freer and it has been shown that this has been the greatest advantage for England, since North America has formed as a state, [and] still has many needs in that it is still more of an arable state, which cannot satisfy itself' (*VPR II*: §§248–49, 995–96).

[4] *See* also the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts* of 1824–25 (§ 248): 'The North American citizens wanted to be represented in Parliament and they broke away, prompted by a tax imposed on them by the Parliament, while claiming the right to tax themselves, like the English' (*VPR III*: §248, 1395).

The North American citizens wanted to be represented in Parliament and they broke away, prompted by a tax imposed on them by the Parliament, while claiming the right to tax themselves, like the English.

[5] See the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts* 1824–25 (§248): 'The colonists move to America, Russia, etc., remain without connection to their fatherland [*Vaterlande*] and thus confer no benefit on it; they let themselves earn their living by chance, are lost to their fatherland, and pursue only their own benefit' (*VPR III*: §248, 1395). This is reiterated in the *Grundlinien* (1821): 'The colonists move to America or Russia and retain no links with their home country, to which they are consequently of no service' (*PR*: § 248A, 269).

[6] See the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts* of 1824–25 (§248): 'The English are somewhat more liberal in this regard, but even they did not consider the citizens of the colonies to be as entitled as the English citizens' (*VPR III*: §248, 1395). In *the Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (1830), Hegel expands on the distinction between the English and the Spanish colonial settings as follows: 'A further incongruity is that South America was *conquered*, while North America was *colonised*. The Spanish took possession of South America in order to dominate it

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and to enrich themselves both through political office and by exacting tributes from the natives. Living far away from the mother country on which they depended, they had more scope to indulge their arbitrary inclinations; and by force, adroitness, and self-confidence they gained a great preponderance over the Indians. The noble and magnanimous aspects of the Spanish character did not accompany them to America. [….] The North American states, however, were entirely colonised by the Europeans. Since Puritans, Episcopalians, and Catholics were constantly at loggerheads in England, with each party gaining the upper hand in turn, many of them emigrated to another continent in search of religious freedom. These were industrious Europeans who applied themselves to agriculture, tobacco and cotton planting, etc. Soon, their whole concern was with their work; and the substance which held the whole together lay in the needs of the populace, the desire for peace, the establishment of civil justice, security, and freedom, and a commonwealth framed in the interests of the individuals as discrete entities, so that the state was merely an external device for the protection of property. The mutual confidence of individuals and their trust in the goodwill of their fellows had their source in the Protestant religion; for in the eyes of the Protestant Church, religious works constitute the whole of life and human activity. […] Thus, the population which has settled in North America is of a completely different order from that of South America. They had no united church to bind the states together and impose restrictions upon them. The industrial principle was imported from England, and industry itself contains the principle of individuality: for in industry, the individual understanding is developed and becomes the dominant power' (*LPWH*: 167, emphasis added).

[7] In the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, colonization is treated in the third section of Civil Society entitled 'C. The Police and the Corporation, a. The Police', §§246–48 (*PR*: 267–69).

[8] Hegel's argument presupposes that, despite the growth of European populations, European societies face constraints that make such demographic expansion unsustainable. These limitations, encompassing space, employment opportunities and resources, propel the imperative to colonize and conquer new territories. Additionally, Hegel posits a connection between overpopulation and overproduction. According to his rationale, capitalist economies generate an excess of goods beyond what can be absorbed in relation to the consumption capacity of its population. Overpopulation, characterized by demographic expansion without commensurate means of subsistence, leads to the impoverishment of significant segment of the population resulting in underconsumption. In essence, underconsumption, driven by widespread poverty, is merely the flip side of overproduction and both are inherent to the trajectory of capitalist development.

[9] See Hegel's text *On the English Reform Bill* (*ERB*: 248). See also Ruda 2011. Ruda argues that Hegel sketches seven distinct solutions, including colonization, to solve the problem of poverty in civil society. All the envisioned remedies, however, turn out to be 'for different internal logical reasons', insufficient (15). Colonization, in Ruda's view, only provides a 'retardation' of the problem and 'not a fundamental solution' (30), so that, in the last instance, Hegel's proposal 'leads into a logic of bad infinity' that ends up generating 'an eternal return of the same problem' (20).

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[10] See the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts* of 1821–22 (§248): 'Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft in's Weite getrieben wird angetrieben zur Colonisation. Es wird Ackerbau angefangen und es findet in the Colonien die bürgerliche Gesellschaft ein neues Feld für ihern Arbeitsfliess' (*VPR II*: §248, 756). See also the 1817–18 Heidelberg lectures (*LNR*: §120, 217).

[11] In relation to systematic colonization, Hegel writes: 'The second variety of colonisation, quite different from the first, is systematic. It is initiated by the state, which is aware of the proper way of carrying it out and regulates it accordingly. This mode of colonisation was frequently employed by the ancients, especially the Greeks. Hard work was not the concern [*Sache*] of the Greek citizen, whose activity was directed rather towards public affairs [*öffentliche Dingen*]. Accordingly, whenever the population grew to a point at which it could become difficult to provide for it, the young people were sent off to a new region, which was either specifically chosen or left to be discovered by chance' (*PR*: §248A, 269).

[12] In the 1822–1823 *Vorlesungen,* Hegel admits that colonization has not eliminated the extreme misery of the masses in England (§§241–44): 'As far as poverty is concerned, it will always be in society, and the greater the wealth, the more it will increase. Riches come about chiefly through trade, through work for need. The more abstract the work becomes, the easier it can be done; and by extending the acquisition to many, much is gained. On the other hand, however, the limited labour increases the dependence of the labouring class, and thus the poverty. The plebeianism also includes the fact that the honour of earning one's livelihood through work is lacking, so that the lawless attitude considers it a right to exist without honour and work and activity' (*VPR II*: §§248–49, 995).

[13] A similar remark can be found in the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts* of 1821–22 (§ 248): 'Colonization can now be accidental, it is said that Germans can be found all over the world. This does not benefit the mother country, as when the government organises it' (*VPR II*: §248, 756–57).

[14] See the *Vorlesungen uber die Philosophie des Rechts* of 1824–25: 'The regulation of the external conditions, the oversight of the course of necessity, the knowledge of this course and the governing of what can be brought in as far as possible, these are the points of view of the police' (*VPR III*: §248, 1395). See also the *Grundlinien* (§ 248): 'The second variety of colonization, quite different from the first, is systematic. It is initiated by the state, which is aware of the proper way of carrying it out and regulates it accordingly' (*PR*: § 248A, 269).

[15] See Paquette 2003 and Waszek 1988 on Hegel's engagement with the works and legacy of Scottish political economists, among whom Adam Ferguson and James Steuart represent two key sources for Hegel's mature theory of civil society.

[16] 'Needs and commerce give rise to a *world interest*. World history shows the sides of the ethical totality, world trade shows the sides of the relation as such' (*VPR I*: 504).

[17] Hegel displays a different opinion about the utility of the colonies in his essay *On the English Reform Bill*. He writes: 'Those who already own nothing are deprived of their birthplace and their hereditary means of livelihood in the name of justice. And this too is justice, that the landowners have the huts burnt so as to make sure of getting the peasants off the ground and cut off their chance of delaying their departure or creeping in under shelter again. These cankers in Ireland are

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laid before Parliament year in year out. How many speeches are made on them! How many committees have sat! How many witnesses have been examined! How many sound reports have been drawn up! How many remedies have been proposed which appear either unsatisfactory or impracticable! *The proposed withdrawal of the surplus poor by colonisation would have had to take away at least a million inhabitants if it was to be likely to have any effect*. How could this be achieved? For another thing, the empty space thus produced would very quickly be filled in the same way as before if laws and circumstances remained otherwise the same' (*ERB*: 308).

[18] In the 1822–23 *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, Hegel writes: 'Some of the tribes of North America have disappeared and some have retreated and generally declined, so that we see that the latter lack the strength to join the North Americans in the Free States *[die Freistaaten)*. The same is more or less the case with Mexico and South America' (*LPWH 22–23*: 193).

[19] Elsewhere, in the 1819–20 *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts*, Hegel remarks: 'In the past the Europeans (the Spanish and the Portuguese and the Dutch as well) went to foreign peoples with the narrow-minded vision [*Borniertheit*] that those peoples were inferior. Only with the English, who started out from the human being as thought, the entire world was put into universal relation [*allgemeine Beziehung*]. The landlocked countries, which have no relation with any sea, remain stagnant and closed up in themselves' (*VPR I*: 504).

[20] Some regions of the world are characterized by Hegel as doomed to be collateral: for example, he writes, 'this northern region is the non-independent portion of Africa, for it has always been subject to foreign influences; it is not itself a theatre of world-historical events, and has always been dependent on revolutions of a wider scope. It was originally colonised by the Phoenicians, who established themselves as an independent power in Carthage, then by the Romans, the Vandals, the Romans of the Byzantine Empire, the Arabs, and finally by the Turks, under whom it dissolved into various piratical states. It is a country which merely shares the fortunes of great events enacted elsewhere, but which has no determinate character of its own. This portion of Africa, like the Near East, is orientated towards Europe; it should and must be brought into the European sphere of influence, as the French have successfully attempted in recent times (*LPWH*: 174).

[21] See *VPR I*: 501. 'In all peoples [….] the need for colonization takes place'. In the same passage colonization appears as a *necessity* [*Notwendigkeit*].

[22] See Peperzak 2001: 656.

[23] The passage continues as follows: 'and recognition, which implies that the two [i.e. form and content] are identical, also depends on the perception and will of the other state .[….] in the case of a nomadic people, for example, or any people at a low level of culture, the question even arises of how far this people can be regarded as a state' (*PR*: §331R, 366–67).

[24] See also the 1830–31 *Lectures*: 'Since human beings are valued so cheaply, it is easily explained why *slavery* is the basic legal relationship in Africa. The only significant relationship between the negroes and the Europeans has been—and still is—that of slavery. The negroes see nothing improper about it, and the English, although they have done most to abolish slavery and the slave trade, are treated as enemies by the negroes themselves' (*LPWH*: 183). Hegel's stance on slavery is further articulated in various occurrences across his texts. For example, in the

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same *Lectures* (84), we read that 'Slavery is unjust in and for itself, for the essence of man is freedom; but he must first become mature before he can be free. Thus, it is more fitting and correct that slavery should be eliminated gradually than that it should be done away with all at once. Slavery ought not to exist, as it is by definition unjust in and for itself. This "ought" expresses a subjective attitude, and as such, it has no historical justification. For it is not yet backed up by the substantial ethical life of a rational state. In rational states, slavery no longer exists; but before such states have come into being, the authentic Idea is present in some areas of life only as an unfulfilled obligation, in which case slavery is still necessary: for it is a moment in the transition towards a higher stage of development.' Elsewhere, in the Addition to the §66 of the *Philosophy of Right* (*Abstract right*), Hegel argues that 'It is in the nature of the case [*Sache*] that the slave has an absolute right to free himself' (*PR*: §66, 97), or, most importantly, in §57 he remarks that: 'The alleged justification of slavery (with all its more specific explanations in terms of physical force, capture in time of war, the saving and preservation of life, sustenance, education [*Erziehung*], acts of benevolence, the slave's own acquiescence, etc.), as well as the justification of the *master's status* as simple lordship in general, and all *historical* views on the right of slavery and lordship, depend on regarding the human being simply as a *natural being* [*Naturwesen*] whose existence [*Existenz*] (of which the arbitrary will is also a part) is not in conformity with this concept. Conversely, the claim that slavery is absolutely contrary to right is firmly tied to the *concept* of the human being as spirit as something free *in itself* and is one-sided inasmuch as it regards the human being as *by nature* free, or (and this amounts to the same thing) takes the concept as such in its immediacy, not the Idea, as the truth'. And the addition continues as follows: If we hold firmly to the view that the human being in and for himself is free, we thereby condemn slavery. But if someone is a slave, his own will is responsible, just as the responsibility lies with the will of a people if that people is subjugated. Thus the wrong of slavery is the fault not only of those who enslave or subjugate people, but of the slaves and the subjugated themselves. Slavery occurs in the transitional phase between natural human existence and the truly ethical condition; it occurs in a world where a wrong is still right. Here the wrong is valid, so the position it occupies is a necessary one (§57, 87–88).

[25] See also Neuhouser (2000: 173–74), for whom colonialism constitutes a serious 'blow' to Hegel's conception of civil society; and Habib, who reads Hegel as 'the archetypal philosopher of capitalism' whose dialectic 'expresses the nature of capitalism on many levels', including its expansive/imperialist character (Habib 2017: 2).

[26] Bernasconi actually distinguishes between the role colonization plays in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* ('a solution to the problems of civil society, specifically the destabilizing effects of excessive poverty and the creation of a rabble in countries that had expanded their population and their industry') from its role in the *Philosophy of History* where 'colonization is the solution to the problem of how to include within the continuous history of the Caucasians the races that were otherwise excluded, but the terms on which colonization was undertaken meant that the Africans, the Mongols, and the Americans were not included as themselves, but only as objects, so that the purpose of their existence remained problematic' (Bernasconi 2000: 190).

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[27] Brennan only recognizes that Hegel's critique of colonialism was certainly limited, of course. He never publicly agitated against colonialism, nor did he attempt to work out its specific and expanding theoretical logic in the course of his system. He is capable, also, of talking about the 'stagnation' of peoples who had been cut off from its dynamic contacts, and considered global trade itself an 'educational asset'.

[28] Spivak (2007) proposes the *ab-use* of Enlightenment as a third strategy to overcome the unproductive options of *accusing* or *excusing*.

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