1. Introduction

Hegel gives a comparatively succinct explanation of the racial diversity of humankind in § 393 of the Encyclopaedia Anthropology, and provides copious commentaries on this diversity in the oral Addition to this section.¹ This explanation follows upon his preceding account of the ‘soul or natural spirit’ (§ 387), according to which the latter is an original terrestrial phenomenon (it is symbiotic with ‘planetary life’: § 392) whose prodigious variability is primarily a function of the early geological transformations of the Earth. Thus in the course of natural history the soul has come to exist in form of a plurality of natural spirits (Naturegeist), that is, of plant and animal species and their varieties – including humankind and its races (Rassen), peoples (Völker) and native groups (Lokalgeister). Hegel’s treatment of this subject matter, especially in the extensive commentary of the oral Addition (a compilation of students’ transcriptions),² presupposes transformational theories of organic matter championed by Lamarck (1744–1829) and Treviranus (1776–1837).³ In the transcribed comments, Hegel seems to feel no need to provide methodological support for the materialistic, natural-historical outlook of these theories. He appears to embrace them as representing a scientific consensus fully compatible with his own account of the beginnings and modes of existence of natural spirit. He is reported to have launched instead into a radical rebuttal of ideological manipulations of this ‘science of man’—in particular, its explanation of human racial differences—for geopolitical and economic ends. Yet again we find in the same oral Addition, among

¹ In the following, quotes from Hegel’s Anthropology and Philosophy of Nature are from the 1830 edition of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences. Exceptions to this rule are noted, such as quotes from the Griesheim/Kehler manuscripts (cited after the edition Petry, 1978) and from the lectures edited by Hespe & Tuschling, 1994. All citations to numbered paragraphs, Remarks (R), and Additions (A) are from the Encyclopaedia. Citations from the Lectures on the Philosophy of History and the 1821 Philosophy of Right are from Moldenhauer & Michel, 1970, vols 12 and 7 respectively (PhGesch. TW 12 followed by page number, and RPh TW 7 followed by section number). The translations are mine, but I have consulted throughout Petry’s, Knox’s and Nisbet’s English translations. All phrases in square brackets are my addenda.
² A history of the transcriptions and editions of the Philosophy of Spirit can be found in the editorial remark in Moldenhauer & Michel, 1970, TW 10, pp. 423–31. For a thorough, critical commentary on this history see the Introduction in Hespe & Tuschling, 1994.
³ Lamarck, 1809; Treviranus, 1802. See also the extensive notes in Petry, 1978, pp. 447 ff.
some brilliant insights, astonishingly simplistic (Marx would have called them vulgar-materialistic) claims of a direct correlation between physical surroundings and human spiritual characteristics. We find the claim, for example, that the Ethiopian (African) race, though capable of receiving Bildung, shows ‘no internal drive’ towards it, does not rise ‘to the feeling of the personality of the human being’, and possesses a ‘wholly slumbering spirit’ incapable of self-development – all of which is explained by the fact that this spirit ‘corresponds [entspricht] to the compact, undifferentiated mass of the African land’ (§ 393 A).

As noteworthy as the recorded commentaries of the ‘absolute professor’ are, they are sometimes at loggerheads with the main argument laid out in Hegel’s hand – the main text of the Encyclopaedia’s numbered sections. Taken together, main text and recorded testimony constitute one remarkable example of the double tongue of which modern philosophy is capable. For example, while the Encyclopaedia’s main text insists that natural history is irrelevant to practical philosophy’s concerns, or that natural disposition is irrelevant to personhood, the oral Additions and the recordings of a now infamous passage on Africa from the Lectures on the Philosophy of History (1822–1831)⁴ use ancient political categories like the Aristotelian ‘inferior’ and ‘superior’ to characterize the ‘merely natural’ diversity among the races of mankind, not to mention uncharacteristically blunt statements like ‘The Negro represents [...] natural man in his whole savageness and irrepressibility [...] there is nothing assonant with humanity [and das Menschliche Anklingende] in this character’ (PhGesch. TW 12:122).

Most of Hegel’s argument in the bona fide text of the Anthropology (§§ 388–412) is in keeping with the outlook of his philosophy of world history, namely, that human history is a progressive abandonment of our natural subjection, as well as universal ‘progress in the consciousness of freedom – a progress that we have to recognize in its necessity’ (PhGesch. TW 12:32). Yet the Addition to § 393, and more so the recorded lectures on the races of mankind, not only suggest but state explicitly that some parts of mankind hardly display any natural disposition to attaining the universal, non-natural end of freedom. Thus while all parts of humankind are equal historical candidates for right and freedom, some might have to be dragged recalcitrantly along in the maelstrom of history. Rousseau’s emphatic statement on membership in the social compact comes to mind: ‘que quiconque refusera d’obéir à la volonté générale y sera contraint par tout le corps: ce qui ne signifie autre chose, sinon qu’on le forcera d’être libre.’⁵ Ac-

4 The detailed reconstruction of the editorial and publication history of the Lectures on the Philosophy of History can be found in the editorial remark in Moldenhauer & Michel, 1970, TW 12, pp. 561 ff.
5 Rousseau, 1762, Book I Ch. 7.
cording to Hegel’s Africa lectures, this external compulsion may even take the form of historically necessary, albeit provisional, enslavement— a widely shared sentiment among sections of the educated public in his time:

Negroes are led into slavery by the Europeans and sold in America. Their fate is nevertheless almost worse in their own country, where absolute slavery is equally present [...] Indeed it is key for the [African] kings to sell their enemy prisoners or even their own subjects, and [European-American] slavery has therefore awaken more humanity [mehr Menschliches] among the Negroes’ (PhGesch. TW 12:128–9).

Since he appears to consider the social formations prevailing in Africa as embodiments of a largely untainted state of nature, thus of ‘absolute and thorough wrong [Unrecht]’ (ib.,129), any stage in the Hobbesian process of exeundum e statu naturae is for Hegel only a relative wrong in humanity’s inexorable march to freedom (‘which is why we find slavery even in the Greek and Roman state’, ib.). Perversely, slavery in a modern state such as the American nation is for the slave, in a way that enslavement in the state of nature is not, a ‘progressing from a merely singular, sensual existence, a moment of education, a manner of participation in a higher ethical life and in the cultivation [Bildung] that is connected with it’ (ib.). Just like the education of children – the generational recurrence of exeundum – so the elevation of races and peoples still dwelling in the state of nature cannot and should not happen at once: ‘Slavery is in and for itself wrong because the essence of the human being is freedom, yet the human being must first mature towards freedom’ (ib.). Characteristically for his own ‘mature’ state of thinking, Hegel draws here the conclusion that ‘the gradual eradication of slavery is something more adequate and right [etwas Angemesseneres und Richtigeres] than its sudden abolition’ (ib.).

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In current Anglo-American debates on ‘race’ and ‘racism’ in philosophic thought and in Hegel in particular,6 advocates of the centrality of the idea of race and of the ideology of racism in the history of Western philosophy tend to conflate Hegel’s own arguments and transcribed commentaries with one another as well as with what are taken to be the philosopher’s personal views. This is understandable, particularly when the main text’s claim that racial variability is a function of geographical variation seems to issue seamlessly in ideas like that of the

greater internal differentiation, and thus creativity, of the Caucasian race as a whole vis-à-vis the lack of internal differentiation, and thus obtuseness, of the African race as a whole. The well-known fact that neither the oral Additions nor the extant texts of the Lectures can be directly attributed to Hegel does not imply, of course, that the commentaries they contain, and the judgments that embellish or mar them, are the mere product of students’ and editors’ imagination. These judgments, or a subset of them, may well mirror Hegel’s opinions. Yet scholarly criteria would seem to require caution, first, in attributing the merely recorded views to the philosopher himself; second, and more importantly, in presenting them as the underlying ‘authentic’ import of Hegel’s philosophy of spirit – especially when they appear to be incompatible with the arguments in Hegel’s published texts and in his manuscripts. It seems to me that some contemporary scholars have abandoned every caution when interpreting the most extravagant claims and crude perspectives from the oral Additions and Lectures as the underlying glue of Hegel’s philosophical anthropology, of his philosophy of history and, by extension, his philosophy of right. As a prominent representative of this tendency puts it: ‘Hegel’s Eurocentrism’ is structured by Hegel’s understanding of race⁷ and ‘[Hegel’s] appeal to race [...] functions in his hands as a caste system, thereby rendering his philosophy of history arbitrary and so devoid of reason in spite of the fact that that was precisely what he did not want it to be.’⁹ In the contemporary literature that aims to demonstrate the ‘racial’ foundations of Hegel’s conceptions of history and right, passages are sometimes quoted in mutilated ways resulting in severe distortions of their meaning – as when, for example, one of Hegel’s remarks regarding peoples’ consciousness of freedom is limited to the sentence: ‘Whole continents, Africa and the Orient, have never had this idea [of freedom], and are without it still’¹⁰ (§ 482 R). Yet Hegel is not singling out only two continents (let alone two ‘races’) as lacking familiarity with the idea of freedom. His point is historical and not merely geographical, as the completion of that sentence demonstrates:

the Greeks and the Romans, Plato and Aristotle, even the Stoics have not had it; they knew by contrast only that the human being is actually free through birth (as Athenian, Spartan

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7 In the contemporary literature, ‘Eurocentrism’ is often used as equivalent to ‘white racism’, rather than as a particular case of ethnocentrism. On the necessity to distinguish (not uncouple) ethnocentrism from racism, see the helpful discussion in Bonetto, 2006, pp. 35–64, referencing D’Souza, 1995, p. 27: ‘Racism, unlike ethnocentrism, is not a universal phenomenon. Only a few human groups have deemed themselves superior because of the content of their gonads.’

8 Bernasconi, 2000, p. 171.

9 Ib. p. 191.

10 Quoted ib., p. 179.
citizen, and so on) or through strength of character, education, through philosophy (the sage is free even as slave and in chains) (§ 482 R).

Unfortunately, other modern writers on the human races (principal among them, J. F. Blumenbach), despite being far less ambivalent than Hegel in their universalistic assessment of the natural and spiritual capacities of humankind, continue to suffer a fate worse than Hegel’s at the hands of contemporary commentators.

In what follows, I argue for the need to revise these contemporary accounts on the basis of a closer study of the textual material of Hegel’s Anthropology (including Remarks and oral Additions), of his main sources, and of the contrast these offer with race theories flourishing in America and Europe less than a century later. Accounts of a linear development from early modern and modern anthropologies of race to British-American anti-abolitionism or to twentieth-century European genocidal racism simply do not withstand the test of scholarship. As Bonetto puts it in a detailed analysis of Hegel’s understanding of race:

> Simply having a concept of race does not a racist make, nor does the attempt to account for racial differences. Neither does the rejection of the concept of race necessarily imply anti-racism [...]. Moreover, negative value judgments concerning various cultures or cultural practices, however ill-informed and arrogant we might find them today, do not automatically amount to racism (Bonetto, 2006)

The following discussion of text and context of Hegel’s writings on race is intended as a contribution to revising what I take to be oversimplified and conceptually nebulous reconstructions of this particular segment of the ‘philosophy of the real’. I begin in Section I with the immediate systematic context in which Hegel’s concept of the races is embedded: the philosophy of the natural soul. After summarizing, in Section II, Hegel’s racial classifications in the Addition to § 393, in Section III I give an outline of the wider scientific and political context in which and against which Hegel develops his arguments about the human race (Gattung) and the human races (Rassen). I highlight the contrast between modern theories that were committed to anthropological universalism – including, with hesitations, Hegel’s – and the anti-universalist ideas that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century and came to dreadful fruition, in theory and practice, in the next.
2. The double makeup of the soul

[...] Spirit that has become [Der gewordene Geist] means [...] that nature self-sublates vis-à-vis itself [an ihr selbst] as the untrue, and thus that spirit presupposes itself no longer as this self-external universality in singular bodies, but rather as universality that is simple in its concreteness and totality, a universality in which spirit is soul, not yet spirit proper (§ 388).¹¹

The ontological status of spirit just emerging from mechanical, physical and organic nature is twofold. Spirit can be said to participate in self-external nature (for example, as planetary system), but only insofar as it results from nature’s sublation of this self-externality (for example, as a totality of organic systems in which peripheral organs relate themselves to central ones; or as the inwardization of bodies in perception). In this ambivalent status as soul, spirit is what the ancients called psyche – though Hegel also equates Seele, in a way unusual for an Aristotle scholar, with nous pathetikos: ‘But in this still abstract determination the soul is only the sleep of spirit; – the passive nous of Aristotle, which potentially is everything’ (§ 389).¹² The soul in general is further defined as ‘universal immateriality of nature, its simple ideal life’ (ib.); and the sentient soul is characterized as ‘ideal moment’ of being because what is being sensed is both being negated and yet also ‘preserved virtualiter, although it does not exist [in the soul that senses it]’ (§ 403 R). In the same vein, in the Philosophy of Nature the analysis of individual organisms’ relations to their environment yielded the definition of animal appetite (Begierde) as ‘the idealism of objectivity [Gegenständlichkeit], so that this objectivity is nothing alien [to the animal]’ (§ 359 A).

The Philosophy of Subjective Spirit studies this inwardization or ‘idealization’ of and by (self-external) nature – the becoming of spirit – in three broad phases. In the first phase, self-external nature’s immediacy preponderates. Spirit is here dunamei in nature but has no place of its own in which to emerge in non-self-external forms, that is, as spirit proper. This stage must be studied in a philosophy of the soul: the Anthropology. The second phase is that of the seeming – and ultimately illusory – disappearance of nature into spirit. This process is best studied in a philosophy of consciousness: the Phenomenology. In the third phase, spirit proper is studied as a ‘return to itself’, a process in which it con-

¹¹ I thank Michael Wolff for help in interpreting this difficult passage, especially as regards the nearly untranslatable ‘dass die Natur an ihr selbst […] sich aufhebt’.

¹² For a criticism of Hegel’s appropriation of Aristotle’s ‘soul’ in the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit, and in particular, of Hegel’s analogy between the De Anima’s psyche and nous pathetikos, see Ferrarin, 2001, Ch. 8, A. and B.
quers its own twofold one-sidedness: that of being a merely natural or ‘immediate’ existent (a soul), and that of being a merely spiritual existent lacking all externality (a ‘mere’ consciousness). This third shape of spirit is the subject-matter of the philosophy of mind: the Psychology.

The task of the Anthropology, then, is to describe being-soul as a comparatively simple case of material nature’s beginning to turn inward or self-relate. In the wider context of spirit’s development, the soul is an abstract moment, the ‘merely immediate’ being of spirit. This is why the key-notions at work in the Anthropology are comparatively generic and abstract. The text is dominated by geographical and temporal categories like ‘species,’ ‘race’ or ‘life-stage’, as well as by physiological and psychological concepts like ‘irritability’, ‘sex’ or ‘temperament’. What is being analyzed is the primal (both primitive and first) foundation of conscious mind (subject of the Phenomenology), of theoretical and practical intelligence (Psychology), of ethical life (Spirit Objective), and ultimately of art, religion and philosophy (Absolute Spirit). If much in the analysis of the ‘universal soul [...] as world-soul’ (§ 391) sounds paradoxical, this is due to the internal opposition present in the object of investigation. While nature is the extrinsic realm par excellence, the natural soul marks the birth of nature’s inwardness. Our subject-matter finds itself ‘in the middle between nature lying behind it [...] and the world of ethical freedom that is working itself out of natural spirit’ (§ 391 A). In other words, what we are asked to conceptualize are the external manifestations of that whose principal activity is inwardization. Keeping this paradox in mind goes a long way towards understanding the story that unfolds.

To begin with, the soul is a terrestrial phenomenon. It has spatial and temporal dimensions. It is made possible, as the Philosophy of Nature has shown, by the ‘physical relationship of the heavenly bodies, together with their mechanical relationship [...] This cosmic relation is the foundation, the wholly universal life in which the entire living nature participates’ (§ 279 A).

The soul is geographically distributed, influenced by climate, participant in the physical happenings on Earth. It does not have Geschichte, but it is a natural Geschehen. And just as the Science of Logic has shown that abstract universal ‘being’ must pass over into ‘determinate being,’ so being-soul becomes by necessity ever more determinate through its own movements, for example, pulsations, rhythms, sexual differentiation, birth, decay. Eventually, the soul ‘returns to unity with itself by denying its other [...] the character of a fixed state of affairs and by dissolving it into its own [the soul’s] ideality. In this way, the soul has

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13 For a thorough analysis of the logical and ontological status of the natural soul in Hegel see Wolff, 1992.
proceeded from merely universal singularity that is only in-itself to actual singularity for-itself, and thus to sentience’ (§ 390 A). In this characterization, ‘soul’ denotes the sentience (Empfindung) of organisms that reach out and assimilate the self-external reality that surrounds them. The sensations of these organisms are called the soul’s feeling (Gefühl). Viewed in this way, ‘world-soul’ refers to the whole of living bodies that are affected, inwardly as much as outwardly, by other bodies. But among these ‘others’ there is always also the sensing body itself. (In virtue of being the inwardization of self-external nature, a soul or living body is the performative proof, as it were, of the concept of being-other-than-oneself.) Thus sentience and feeling cannot but lead to the emergence of self-feeling (Selbstgefühl). The self-feeling soul is the animal that seeks or recoils from other living bodies – the natural prelude to the ‘actual soul’ (die wirkliche Seele) that, through habituation, forms and takes possession of the body and makes it into a human body: ‘the artwork of the soul’ (§ 411).

To speak of the soul, Hegel stresses in § 391, is not to refer to a singular subject, but to the ‘natural substance’ caught in the process of becoming subjective. Substance, we recall, is not a thing but a web of relations. As all other natural phenomena, the soul offers to the philosophical observation a wealth of qualities (treated in α: §§ 392–395) and a series of transformations (β: §§ 396–398). Like no other natural phenomenon, however, the soul becomes also a point in nature in which those qualities and transformations begin to be reflected ‘virtualliter’ (§ 403 R). This natural inwardizing of the soul is what Hegel also calls ‘sensible nature’ or ‘spirit as sensibility’ (γ: §§ 399–402).

The presentation of the soul’s becoming subjective is organized along a logical (not chronological) trajectory of successive self-differentiations. (Here as elsewhere in Hegel’s philosophy, the notion of a-temporal sequences and derivations is not a coquetterie. Their paradigm, perhaps their archetype, is the inference from premises to conclusion in any valid syllogism, in which the conclusion does not follow upon but from the premises.)

The account of the self-differentiations of the world-soul begins by focusing on the eco-system’s physical diversifications (§ 392), then narrows its focus on the human species and follows the trajectory (§§ 393–394) of its breakup into varieties or races as they become determined by geological, geographic and climatic circumstances. In the early history of the human species these material conditions gave rise to regional, customary ways of life and dispositions of human groups. Further self-differentiations of our natural soul finally issue into a vast variety of temperaments, propensities and idiosyncrasies that distinguish human ethnicities, families and even individuals (§ 395).

Hegel’s account of human qualities begins therefore from the ‘abstractly’ universal concept of an amorphous soul that occupies a ‘middle reality’ between
self-external nature and its laborious process of inwardization. It is only on a much later stage that we reach the familiar territory of the ‘concrete’ dispositions, temperaments and characters of collective and individual types. Only then can we think of the human soul as more than an organic phenomenon (more than a natural substance), that is, as human subjectivity: ‘The universal soul must not, as world-soul, at once be fixed as a subject, because it is only universal substance, which has its actual truth only as singularity, subjectivity’ (§ 391).

The natural soul of humankind displays species-specific, racial, national, familial, sexual features about which, Hegel tells us, anthropology, psychology and physiology have much to contribute – some of it drawn from observation, much of it from fantasy and prejudice. Whatever empirical science’s often changing and self-serving insights may be (and the oral Additions prove that Hegel is ready to embrace a number of them), we are reminded that to speak of the naturalness of the soul is to do so from the perspective of its successors, namely consciousness, intelligence and will. For example, we encounter in the Addition to § 391 the Anthropology’s first instance of the notion of ‘the unconscious’ in the guise of an adjective: bewusstlos. Like other notions in the system, being-unconscious has meaning only from a subsequent perspective, that of consciousness. By distancing itself from its objects, consciousness comes to understand the soul as a form of its own primal being – its simple being-there (Daseyn). It is not from the soul’s perspective but from that of consciousness that cosmic and telluric influences, geological and climatic happenings, racial and cultural dynamics, familial propensities or sexual determination – the contents of this first chapter of the Anthropology – accompany and qualify the soul: ‘These natural determinations [...] are natural objects for consciousness, but the soul as such does not relate to them as if they were external’ (§ 391). Thus immersed in nature, the soul does not distinguish itself from it – indeed the soul has no self from which to distinguish what it is not. At the same time, Hegel cautions us that this nearly incoherent perspective implies that the soul and its successor forms are relatively indifferent to one another. For the phenomenologist of consciousness, and more so for the philosopher of mind, the natural soul is an object of paradoxical descriptions that one indulges in for the sake of the larger project of accounting for spirit that is free.

The soul’s description begins then with this concept of spirit as natural substance. Darkly, the soul is determined by climate, season, even the time of day. At this level of ‘sympathy’(§ 392 R) with the world, it does not yet feel, desire, recoil from, nor seek what surrounds it. It coincides with it. The so-called surroundings are really modes of its being: the ‘murky moods’ of the soul (§ 392). However impalpable, cosmic influence on the ways of plants and animals is undeniable: liv-
ing beings’ very existence and survival depend on sympathy with the universe. Already in the Philosophy of Nature (under the general heading ‘Physics of Individuality’) Hegel has explained that, in the case of humankind, the ‘general symbiosis [Mitleben]’ of individual and planetary life explains ‘that we sleep and wake, that we are in different moods at daybreak and in the evening’ but also, conversely, that ‘the stronger [individuality] becomes, the weaker becomes the power of the sidereal forces’ (§ 279 A). The same original symbiosis explains that some patterns of illnesses may coincide with lunar phases, that weather may impact the sensitivity of scars, or that the moon may influence the lunatics among us (§ 392 A). Yet, Hegel continues, the importance of the ‘cosmic relation’ has been vastly inflated ‘in recent times’ (§ 392 R) by those who, believing the world to be ‘a mirror of the spirit’, attempt to ‘explain the spirit out of the world’ (§ 392 A). Welcome as it may be that good vintages follow the sighting of comets (ib.), a possible connection between the two events would have to be corroborated by atmospheric and geological sciences. As for human beings, the more they form themselves (through Bildung), the less they are and consider themselves to be affected by cosmic, sidereal and telluric powers (ib.). Of course, long after we have taken leave from our natural state, physical influences remain with us. Yet they carry little meaning: ‘World history does not depend upon the revolutions in the solar system, and neither do the destinies of individuals depend upon the positions of planets’ (ib.), because ‘terrestrial states of affairs [...]’, though not without influence on man, are meaningless for spirit as such’ (ib.).

One must therefore acknowledge, without making too much of it, that the weather and the seasons and the daily rotation of the Earth continue to affect us, at the collective and individual level, in all phases of civilization. (For Hegel, these influences are mostly limited to illnesses and regressions like the general ‘depression of self-conscious life’ [ib.] that he claims accompanies the first attainment of selfhood – the first of the mental illnesses classified in a successive chapter of the Anthropology).

Collectively, these cosmic effects are manifested in the wondrous capacities of human groups – and that includes peoples and races long isolated from material and spiritual commerce – who are more attuned to nature and less advanced in freedom than those whose wonder they excite: visionary predictions, magic knowledge, action at a distance. Magic is of course, according to the Africa lecture, one of the attributes of African cultures: ‘Already Herodotus [...] has called Negroes magicians’ (PhGesch. TW 12:122). Yet this lecture stresses rather different aspects of natural ‘attunement’: the feeling that the human being (der Mensch), rather than God, is the highest natural power against all other powers of nature; the absence of a ‘representation of one God’ and of a ‘realm
of right’; and the external positing of human power in the form of the fetish, ‘a word [...] that stems from the Portuguese feitiço, magic’ (ib.). In the Anthropology’s § 392 A, however, Hegel reminds his audience that there is that of the savage in each of us: even modern individuals are able to feel in their body imminent weather changes ‘of which the barometer still shows nothing’. Still, strong beliefs in the symbiosis of human and cosmic history are symptomatic of a spirit that is not yet sure of itself. In what may be the only existing literary instance in which Greek and Roman civilizations are taken to illustrate collectively ‘weak spirit’, Hegel exemplifies credence in this symbiotic relation as follows: ‘That which determines the organism in these ways is of significance as well for weak spirits and is sensed by them as an influence. Even entire peoples, the Greeks and the Romans, let their decisions depend upon natural phenomena they believed connected to meteorological variations’ (ib.). In battle, Greek generals consulted oracles and Roman augurs interpreted birds’ flight in order to decide whether to attack or retreat. They inspected the entrails of slaughtered beasts to discern their soldiers’ courage – that individual ‘feeling of physical strength’ required by ancient warfare. From the visible disposition of animals’ viscera, warlords derived the invisible disposition of their men (their ‘having guts’). Yet, Hegel adds, not only ancient peoples but also modern scholars who strive to turn cosmology and astrology into sciences are hopelessly caught in a dead end:

To want to turn this symbiosis of the soul with the whole universe into a supreme object of the science of spirit is however an utter mistake. Indeed the essential activity of spirit consists precisely in rising above its captivity in mere natural life [...] Thus in spirit the universal life of nature is only a wholly subordinate moment; cosmic and telluric powers are being dominated by it and can only cause in it [...] a mood of no consequence (§ 392 A).

Scientists, magicians, rational philosophers and palm readers alike all agree with the Aristotelian-Leibnizian principle that natura non facit saltus. Holding onto this abstract principle alone, astrology and cosmology will continue to offer their poor but widely popular explanations of human history and individual fate without accepting the burden of proof. The onus of proving them wrong falls then squarely to the science of spirit: ‘The content of astrology must be rejected as superstition; yet it is the task of science to provide the determinate ground of this rejection’ (ib.).
3. Environs, races and dispositions

The main text of § 393 describes the ‘breakdown [Zerfall]’ of the soul into a plurality of ‘natural spirits’ that are reflections of the early geographical separations of the continents and constitute ‘the diversity of the races’.

America, Africa, Asia and Europe appear to be the greatest landmasses resulting from Earth’s early cataclysms. Accordingly, Americans, Negroes or Ethiops, Mongols and Caucasians are the most general races of mankind. These in turn break up naturally into sub-groups due to the natural history – the catastrophes, climatic changes and subsequent migrations – to which the species is subject. Yet even the basic attributes of the general races, those that reflect the most stubborn features of their environment, are subject to countless variations.

Native Americans inhabit what appears to be the most recent result of tectonic movements. This, and not their recent European discovery, is the reason for calling the Americas ‘the new world.’ Moreover, by migrating to the Americas ‘the old world’ has a chance ‘to shape itself anew.’ Reason (displaying here more cynicism than list) allows this process to unfold in such a way that ‘the native peoples [...] succumb.’ Truth be told, ‘a fair degree of organization was to be found in several parts of America at the time of its discovery. It was not however to be compared with European culture and it has disappeared together with the original inhabitants’ (§ 393 A). As for the incomparable culture that, rather than interacting with alien polities and ways of life, altogether wipes off their members, the instruments of its success are rather simple: ‘The Caribs of earlier times are almost entirely extinct. These savages die out when brought into contact with brandy and guns’ (ib.). Such is in this text the rude world-historical basis of spirit’s universal actualization of itself - an illustration of precisely that ‘abstract and irrational necessity of blind fate’ that the Philosophy of Right opposes to ‘the necessary development of the moments of reason’.14 Whether conquered by Spain and Portugal, subjected to Jesuitic paternalism, or destroyed by the French and the English, ‘[i]t is clear [...] that the Americans are unable to hold their own against the Europeans, who will initiate a new American culture in the land they have conquered from the natives’ (ib.).

The most general physical appearance of Africa is that of a ‘solid mass’ (ib.) of uplands closing its inhabitants off from the sea and, with that, from physical

14 ‘World history is [...] not the mere tribunal of [spirit’s] power, that is, the abstract and irrational necessity of blind fate but, because [spirit] is in and for itself reason [...], [world history] is [...] the necessary development of the moments of reason [...] – the exposition and actualization of universal spirit’ (RPh TW 7 § 342).
and cultural commerce. With a remarkable lack of mediation and a heavy dose of Montesquieu, the master of modern dialectics identifies this ‘solid mass’ as the physical counterpart of cultural and psychological un-differentiation. Africa's native ethnicities are ‘unaffectable,’ ‘uninterested,’ ‘naïve [...] nations of children’ who still believe that the sign is the thing, that the fetish is God itself. Like children, they hardly question social hierarchies and customary bondage: ‘They are being bought and let themselves be bought without any reflection on whether this be right or not’ and their societies are governed ‘by the most dreadful despotism’ (ib.). Despite its comparatively undifferentiated nature, we are further informed, the natural soul of the Negro is subject to swings between extremes: mostly good-natured, it acts at times with appalling cruelty. Yet even this slumbering soul is capable of raising itself to spiritual freedom. Being human soul, it is capable of embodying reason. This is due not only to the logical necessity of the Idea; it is also a historically proven truth of the kind necessary for philosophy to be true Realphilosophie:

> Even a sensible observation of the world distinguishes what is [...] only appearance [...] from what truly [...] deserves the name of actuality. Since philosophy differs only in form from other processes by which this same content becomes conscious, its accord with actuality and experience is necessary. As a matter of fact, this accord can be considered at the very least an external touchstone of the truth of a philosophy’ (§ 6).

After all, it was Negroes and not Europeans who ‘formed in Haiti a state in accordance with Christian principles’ (§ 393 A). And in Brazil, as Hegel has learned from an Englishman (though he could have referred to more extensive case-studies by Blumenbach, of whom more below), ‘there are quite a number of Negro physicians, artists, clergymen and craftsmen’ proving that ‘Negroes show themselves to be capable of acquiring European skills’ (Griesheim/Kehler ms., Petry 1978, pp. 63–4).

Asia's physical and spiritual features make it into a paradigm of ‘unmediated opposition’ – witness its territory’s sharp divisions into high lands and deep valleys and its inhabitants’ historical oscillations between a drive to invade and ransack ‘like colossal locust swarms,’¹⁵ and a tendency to dull quietude and indifference, to which apparently belongs a Mongol disposition to ‘petty pedantry’

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¹⁵ The analogy between Mongol and locust invasions (still in propagandistic use mutatis mutandis in 20th century Germany and elsewhere) is at least as old as the 13th century Chronicle of Novgorod: ‘That same year [1238 A.D.] foreigners called Tartars came in countless numbers, like locusts, into the land of Ryazan.’ (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/novgorod1.asp).
– perhaps Hegel’s attempt at an explanation for the legendary intricacies of Asian bureaucracies.¹⁶

Given these general ‘facts’, then, we are not surprised to learn that the physical geography of the Mediterranean basin inclined its inhabitants from the earliest times to most constructive attitudes and ways of life. The Caucasian race unites the African soul’s attunement with nature and the Asian soul’s antagonism to it. This race, one may say, is the dialectical identity of African identity and Asian difference. Thus it embodies the natural spirit most apt to determine and transform itself. Unsurprisingly, then, it eventually ‘brings forth world history’ (§ 393 A). The first internal differentiation of the Caucasian soul yields two preponderant elements: the Western Asiatic and the European. Through developments pertaining to religious history that this text leaves unspecified, these moments of the Caucasian – that is, Eurasian – soul have come to correspond with the Islamic and Christian culture, respectively.

At this point in the oral Addition, the naturalistic bent of the commentary and its pretense to explain culture and collective psychology through large-scale geography is abandoned wholesale. A healthy dose of history is injected into the narrative. Geography recedes in the pre-historical past, and culture (primarily religious culture in the broad sense) is invoked to explain collective characters, temperaments, and traditional political structures. We read among other things that

In Mohammedanism, the narrow-minded principle of the Jews [i.e., that what is divine is God of Israel alone] is overcome […]. And neither is God represented, like in East Asia, as existing in an immediately sensuous way [e.g., as the Dalai Lama or the Brahmins], but is rather understood as one infinite power rising above all the multiplicity of the world’ (§ 393 A).

It is now clearly the cultural environment that allows for the particular collective character of a people to flourish or be quashed. Among Eurasians the ‘Arab character’, being most attuned to radical and ‘in the proper sense sublime’ monotheism, is capable of complete indifference towards everything finite, even its own finite suffering. It is a character ‘as generous with its own life as with its material goods; to this day Arab bravery and beneficience deserve our recognition’ (ib.). As a participant in the religion of the sublime, the individual in Islam is free

¹⁶ The mind-bending attention to detail displayed in Mongol and ancient Chinese administration and jurisprudence already struck Italian, Arab and Persian historians in the thirteenth century as extraordinarily pedantic: see Lane, 2006. On the Mongols’ meticulous planning of sieges and fastidious cataloguing of loot during the 13th century, see Weatherford, 2004, Chs 4, 7 and 8.
from the caste hierarchies that dominate the political life of the Orient. Here as elsewhere, the political life reflects religious consciousness. As Muslims’ religious self-understanding, so their political life. Since Islam recognizes only the divinity as supreme, it acknowledges no universal despot on Earth. The Muslim respects and serves a plurality of chieftains, warlords, princes, caliphs and their councils. None of these is the Emperor-God. On the other hand, the divinity of Islam is only an abstract universal. It is an internally undifferentiated, non-organic unity. It is simply the One. Accordingly, the caliphate is a federalism of states that, despite being non-despotic, are also ‘not differentiated into particular powers’. The Muslim peoples hold fast to an abstraction. While Hegel cannot help but admire ‘their magnificent aloofness with regards to subjective, finite ends’, the abstract quality of their motivating belief is for him cause for alarm:

on the other hand they also lounge forward in the pursuit of just these ends with unbridled impetus, ends that lack all universality because here the universal has not yet achieved immanent differentiation. In this way there arise amongst them, together with the most noble dispositions, supreme revengefulness and duplicity (§ 393 A).

By contrast, the God of the Christianized Eurasians (i.e., the Europeans) is an internally differentiated, concrete universal. The Christian God is trinitarian; it holds ‘difference within itself,’ having revealed itself as Father, Son and Holy Ghost at once. Fittingly, the European state is internally articulated in three distinct powers. The particular interests of individuals are ‘determined by thought [i.e., by universal principles] just as, conversely, the universal develops itself into particularization’ (ib.). The latter, of course, is also Hegel’s definition of actualized reason. The principle of the European spirit is therefore self-conscious reason, confident that nothing can be an insuperable obstacle against itself, thus ready to impact everything in order to recognize itself in the world:

The European spirit posits the world over against itself, emancipates itself from it, and then sublates this opposition [...]. Hence an infinite urge for knowledge predominates here that is foreign to the other races. The European is interested in the world; [...] he wants to cognize it, [...] to behold in its particularities the genus [die Gattung], the law, the universal, thought, the inward rationality [...] In the practical sphere] he subjects the external world to his ends with an energy that has assured him the mastery of the world [...] and the state in Europe more or less represents through rational institutions the unfolding and actualization of freedom it has wrestled from a despot’s arbitrary will [Willkür] (§ 393 A).

Reason is thus best able to unfold historically – ‘more or less’ if truth be told – in the fertile ground of the soul-type prevalent among Western Eurasians, a subsection of a race apparently capable of transforming the capricious freedom of despotism into the rational freedom of the modern state.
4. On the political consequences of choosing one Adam or many

As mentioned in this Introduction, some of Hegel’s pronouncements, in the Addition to § 393 and in the lecture on Africa, pertaining to the relation between physical surroundings and soul-characteristics in human groups are uncharacteristically rudimentary. On the one hand, Hegel dismisses African ‘indolence,’ Asian ‘restlessness’ or European ‘energy’ (‘which has secured them the rule of the world’) as psychological givens prompted only by the geographical luck of the draw – chance conditions that ought to be irrelevant to the human soul’s intrinsic drive toward right and freedom. On the other hand, the oral Addition also brims over with ideological explanations and post factum justifications of global power relations that become connected with natural history in ways more reminiscent of early French Enlightenment than of German speculation. Even more surprisingly, we find in the very same text a trenchant criticism of colonial and imperial attempts at just those ideological justifications.

Irrespective of the authenticity problems raised by the transcription of Hegel’s comments, some light may be shed by relating this text to its context in a major quarrel in the history of anthropology. This is the long-standing debate between monogenists – advocates of a single-couple descent of mankind – and polygenists – promoters of multiple-couples descent theories. Immediately before launching in the extended ruminations (summarized above) regarding a European ‘infinite urge for knowledge’ or an African lack of ‘inner drive to cultivation’ (ib.), Hegel notes that philosophically uninformed scientists hope to corroborate their claims of the spiritual or physical superiority of one race over another if they can trace them to different ancestors. Some even hope to ground the moral dimension of humans – i.e., their being persons according to right – on those empirical (and always conjectural, because pre-historical) differences in origins.¹⁷ These thinkers aim at a naturalistic justification of the treatment of some as beasts of burden at the hands of others: ‘Some have attributed importance to this question [of the monogenic or polygenic origins of humans] because [...] they hoped to prove that human beings are by nature so different in their spiritual capacities that it would be permissible to dominate some of them like animals’ (ib.). But the attempt to ground moral questions on real or hypothetical genealogies only reveals a fundamental ignorance of the nature of right or freedom:

¹⁷ I treat below only two prominent polygenist thinkers from the 17th and 18th century. For some other likely targets of Hegel’s criticism see Petry, 1978, pp. 449 ff.
From origins one can never derive any ground for humans’ right or lack of right to freedom and power. The human person [*der Mensch*] is rational in itself; therein lies the possibility of all humans’ equality in right, – and the nullity of rigid distinctions between kinds of humanity with and without right’ (§ 393 A).

(That the abolition of African slavery in the Americas ought to be gradual rather than sudden, as argued in the Africa lecture cited above, may well explain the qualifier ‘rigid’ in the last phrase). Since humanity is ‘rational in itself’, the only kind of necessity found in the racial characteristics of mankind is natural necessity – Earth’s geography. The necessity of freedom is unaffected. One will look in vain for the natural origins of right or for physiological dispositions to freedom, as right and freedom affirm themselves precisely when nature becomes silent.

Despite the ambiguities and inconsistencies contained in this oral Addition, Hegel does not confine himself to declaring the irrelevance of genealogical hypotheses to the moral history of the species. In one variation or the other, monogenism strikes him as incontrovertible while multiple-origins hypotheses appear to be lacking in logical clarity and consistency. Hegel’s rejection of polygenism is based not only on its alleged irrelevance for the question of human spirituality but on its incompatibility with the history of world spirit. Due to Hegel’s thorough familiarity with the scientific, religious and political debates raging on this topic on both sides of the Atlantic since early modernity, the force of his argument can be best assessed in the light of this context.

In the 1500s, the felt necessity to justify early practices of European expansionism into overseas domains alerts European scholars, faced with the increasing evidence of a remarkable variety of human types, to the possibility that scriptural monogenic explanations of human origins may be inadequate. Religious authorities react by pronouncing ethnic variety to be the result of geographic and historical differentiations within one and the same created species. In 1512, Pope Julius II issues a bull making polygenism a heretic doctrine (with all foreseeable consequences for those foolish enough to entertain it publicly). Thus the just-discovered aboriginal peoples of the Americas are made by papal verdict into descendants of Adam and Eve. The Biblical genealogies that separate Noah’s descendants from one another are decreed sufficient to explain the remarkable ethnic and racial variations reported by missionaries, explorers and sundry conquerors.

In the next two centuries some stubborn voices, emboldened by the swell of anti-papist Protestant and Enlightenment sentiment, persist in raising doubts. They point out, for example, that the time-length allowed by scriptural genealogies is insufficient to account for what are perceived to be conspicuous racial
differences. In the mid-seventeenth century, Isaac de la Peyrère advances sacrilegious speculations about separate pre-Adamite creations.¹⁸ His work Prae-Adamitae, appearing first in 1655, challenges Church dogma through cleverly literalist readings of Genesis (one of which is that if Cain could take a wife, she must have belonged to a tribe other than Adam’s). It cannot have helped la Peyrère’s standing in the eyes of the Church that his scholarly endeavors entail the impertinent conclusion that only Jews can be descendants of Adam and Eve because Gentiles existed before Adam and the Law.

One century later, Scotsman Henry Home, Lord Kames, an influential figure with a strong penchant for defying the common rules of logic, theorizes the creation of multiple pairs and outlines separate histories for their descendants.¹⁹ Multiple creations notwithstanding, Home also asserts that racial differentiation is God’s punishment (meted out, we must suppose, to members of one and the same species) for the impudence epitomized by the tower of Babel. Despite his own uncertainties, Home displays throughout an unflinching determination to prove wrong anyone who theorizes the existence of one common origin for humans. The first of his four-volume Sketches of the History of Man consists of a peculiar mixture of venomous resentment against French and German science, a strong attitude for non sequitur, and fearless appeals to common sense from a dog breeder’s point of view. He scoffs at Buffon’s ‘artificial rule’ according to which individuals belong to the same species if their offspring is fertile. Home counters that when dog breeds (which he takes here to be species) produce fertile mongrels they do so only ‘from want of choice, or from deprived appetite.’ He further implies that Buffon is a pilferer of the undeservedly ‘celebrated Linnaeus’ who in turn ‘has wandered wonderfully far from nature in classing animals.’ Unimpressed by conceptual distinctions among class, order, species, variety or race, Home derides Linnaeus’ common grouping of men and bats as mammals and concludes: ‘What will a plain man think of a method of classing that denies a whale to be a fish?’ Home is also entirely confident that the environment has no impact whatsoever on racial diversifications, except in two peculiar senses running exactly counter to scientific consensus: first, in the sense that multiple races were created to fit different environments; second, as a necessary consequence of this, in the sense that by moving to a new environment, a race can only be affected negatively. Thus we are informed that ‘Europeans who are born in Batavia soon degenerate’ and ‘Portuguese, who settled [...] the Congo, retain scarce the appearance of men.’ In a logical twist, Home proves however
the fixity of the Jewish ‘species’ precisely by its resilience in new environs: ‘In the suburbs of Cochin, a town in Malabar, there is a colony of industrious Jews of the same complexion they have in Europe.’ The belligerent ruminations contained in this first volume of Home’s *oeuvre* are intended as naturalistic support for the moral-political theory he develops in the remaining volumes – in his eyes perhaps a challenge to Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Both of Home’s views: that of the deteriorative effects of environmental adaptation, and that of a naturalistic-racial foundation of political economy, would play important roles in late-nineteenth century British anthropology (see below). Home’s brand of anthropological naturalism deserves one last quotation: ‘There is no propensity in human nature more general than aversion to strangers. And yet some nations must be excepted, not indeed many in number, who are remarkably kind to strangers; by which circumstance they appear to be of a peculiar race’ (*Sketches* vol. I, pp. 5–14).

Several eighteenth-century thinkers – some of whom offer better constructed arguments than Home – revel in their newfound emancipation from religious dogma, and polygenism becomes a scientific theory.

For philosophical, ultimately metaphysical reasons that cannot be treated here, egalitarian tendencies and political progressivism historically predominate in monogenist circles. Yet a *caveat* is appropriate. Against facile associations of monogenism with ‘egalitarianism’ and of polygenism with ‘racism’ one must highlight the historically tangled and crisscrossing allegiances of both. Polygenism is often rejected in the Middle Ages and modernity, not thanks to logical insight or scientific evidence, but because it contradicts the book of Genesis. In colonial and post-colonial North America, while polygenism enjoys wide support in anti-abolitionist and academic circles, many slaveholding states reject it as official doctrine. Some polygenists even disapprove expressly of slavery because this familial institution (as most famously proven in Jefferson’s household) encourages ‘miscegenation’: an ‘unnatural’ trespass uniting what nature or God intended forever separate. In its turn, monogenism is not the fount of all emancipatory thought. For one, it combines nicely with religious dogma. It also allows for ‘deterioration’ hypotheses of racial evolutions from a superior original stock. The resulting hierarchy of human types can well accommodate the exploitation and even enslavement of various kinds of savage races (noble or not), preferably calling for these arrangements on philanthropic and educational grounds. In some cases, as we have seen with Hegel’s Africa lecture, monogenism can be

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20 These reasons have mostly to do with the alternative ontologies underlying the political theories in question, namely monism or pluralism.
made to fit a principled rejection of slavery that nonetheless allows for its transient emancipatory function. According to one contemporary researcher,\textsuperscript{21} monogenism in the Southern states of the American nation ‘helped create a humanistic argument for secession’ beyond the economic ones. The argument was that abolition would represent ‘the destruction of a paternalist society, where the whites were no longer able to protect their “black families”’.

One major author for whom scientific monogenism and radical ethical universalism go hand in hand is Hegel contemporary and social egalitarian J. F. Blumenbach (1752–1840). Blumenbach offers the first modern racial classification from a monogenist perspective based at once on scientific and ethical arguments.\textsuperscript{22} Blumenbach’s anthropology is Rousseauian and occasionally naive, as when without comment he invokes the ‘natural domesticity’ of man. But his scientific grounding, vast scholarship and ethical commitment to Enlightenment universalism make him stand out among contemporaries. Races, he states, are varieties (Menschenvarietäten) of one and the same species (das Menschengeschlecht) (Beyträge pp. vi-vii), no matter the feelings this arouses in European circles:

There have been persons who have most earnestly protested against their noble selves being placed in the natural system in one common species [...] with Negroes and Hottentots. And again, there have been others who have had no compunction in declaring themselves and the orangutan to be creatures of one and the same species.\textsuperscript{23} Perhaps [...] it will contribute [...] to the tranquillization of many upon this familiar affair, if I name three philosophers of otherwise quite different opinions [...] namely Haller, Linnaeus, and Buffon. All three considered man different by a whole world from the orangutan, and [...] all true men, Europeans, Negroes, etc., as mere varieties [Spielarten] of one and the same original species [Stammgattung] (ib. p. 56–8).

Blumenbach’s general proof of monogenism – though not, alas, his pugnacious anti-racism – provides the ‘external touchstone’ for Hegel’s general philosophical stance on the human species. It is based on two scientific observations and

\textsuperscript{21} Willoughby, 2010, 153–160.
\textsuperscript{22} Blumenbach, 1775\textsuperscript{1} and 1795\textsuperscript{3} (in the following: De Generis); id., 1790\textsuperscript{1} and 1806\textsuperscript{2} (in the following: Beyträge). Both works, together with further materials, were translated and edited by Bendyshe, 1865\textsuperscript{1} and 1969\textsuperscript{2}. Bendyshe’s translation of the Beyträge is from the second edition. The following quotes are my own translations from the first editions of De Generis and Beyträge.
\textsuperscript{23} The reference is to James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, justice, author of metaphysical treatises, linguist ante litteram, deist, proto-evolutionist and nemesis of Henry Home. Blumenbach quotes Monboddo as follows: ‘The orang-utans are proved to be of our species by marks of humanity that I think are incontestable.’ Not surprisingly, Home and Monboddo are reported to have studiously avoided each other’s company when both living in Edinburgh.
one methodological principle. First, physical peculiarities of the human organism vis-à-vis all other animal organisms are found to be common to all the races. Second, differences among races are without exception gradual variations of common features. Methodologically, reliance on scholars’ writings and travelers’ reports must always be trumped by direct acquaintance with ‘the open book of nature’ (*Beyträge* p. 70) rather than on the shameful distortions by portraitists and other self-styled experts on exotic peoples: ‘there are not many authors of travels whose pictures, so far as regards the likenesses of nations, can be trusted’ (*De Generis* p. xxxvii-xxxviii). The following excerpt from Chapter XIII of the *Beyträge* perfectly encapsulates Blumenbach’s relentless denunciation of the ideo-

logues of his time:

> As to the physiognomy of the Negroes, the distance no doubt is striking if one contrasts an ugly Negro (of whom there are of course as many as ugly Europeans) with a Greek ideal. But this means going against one of the rules established above [i.e., gradual variation]. If instead one follows the transitional forms here as well, what is striking between the two contrasting extremes disappears altogether – and evidently there must exist extremes in this case as in all other creatures that branch out [ausarten] into several varieties’ (*Beyträge* p.88).

(On the English renditions of *Auszartung* into English, see below; suffices it to note here Bendyshe’s translation of the last phrase: ‘[…] there must be extremes here as well as in the case of other creatures which degenerate into all sorts of races and varieties’ [Bendyshe, 1865, p. 306]).

Beyond the criterion of acquaintance with the ‘open book of nature’, Blumenbach could have added as well another principle at work in his research: familiarity with the open book of society. He dedicates this Chapter XIII entirely to the accomplishments of famous African individuals in European and American society, as well as to behavior and character of personal acquaintances. The latter include a lady he met at Yverdun, ‘whose parents were both from the Congo’ and whose ‘most pleasing’ conformation and physiognomy made her, like other African ‘Negresses’, in no way different (‘if abstraction be made of the color’) from ‘our European ladies’ (*Beyträge* p. 89–90). (In the Bendyshe translation, ‘if abstraction be made of the color’ becomes ‘if one could […] set aside the disagreeable skin […]’. [Bendyshe, 1865, p. 307]).

Blumenbach waxes lyrical about reliable accounts of the few ‘credible and unprejudiced witnesses’ (*Beyträge* p. 84) traveling to Africa and the Middle East, all of whom testify to ‘the good spiritual dispositions and capacities of these our black brethren as well as their natural kindheartedness, qualities in which they are hardly inferior to any other variety of the human species’ (*ib.* p. 91). And this is to say nothing of their women, to whom the ‘scrupulous nat-
ural scientist Adanson attributes “beauté parfaite [...] , vivacity [...] and especially a [...] free and agreeable decorum [Anstand] ’ (ib. p. 90). Blumenbach holds forth on the natural moral qualities of the Negro race,

which has never been numbed or smothered on the transport ships and the West Indian sugar plantations by the bestial brutality [viehische Brutalität] of their white executioners. For these last must be as much without heads as without heart, if despite this treatment they still demand loyalty and love from these slaves (Beyträge p. 91).

Blumenbach’s fervor is not limited to sponsoring paternalistic, Romantic or Jesuitic views of the natural innocence of savages. He is particularly affronted by the attribution of ‘obtuse mental capacities’ (ib. p. 84) to Africans. One wishes that his displeasure would have tainted more of Hegel’s oral commentaries on the African soul. A zealous and admiring collector of the works of African artists, scientists and intellectuals, Blumenbach sings the praises of Abba Gregorius, Ethiopian scholar visiting Thuringia in 1652; of celebrated African contemporaries like ‘young Freidig, master musician in Vienna’; Angelo Soliman, erudite from northern Nigeria and royal tutor to the prince of Lichtenstein; Abram Petrovich Gannibal, mathematician, engineer and artillery colonel in the Russian army; Geoffroy Lislet, correspondent of the Paris Academy of the Sciences; the Maryland savant Thomas Fuller, legendary for his ‘stupendous capacity for calculations’; and black doctors, theologians and authors of English, Dutch and Latin poetry. Blumenbach cannot help but quote from slave trader Barbot’s work on African Guinea, who reports that illiterate Negroes ‘grasp easily and correctly’ and possess ‘an almost unfathomably strong memory’. To the detached businessman’s eye, these people demonstrate ‘as much acumen and craft as any European merchant’, the obvious result of their ‘having been so often deceived by the Europeans’ (ib. 93–4). With irony not lost on his European readers, Blumenbach reminds those who entertain low expectations from African individuals that ‘it would not be difficult to mention considerable provinces of Europe, from out of which one would hardly expect such good writers, poets, philosophers, and correspondents of the Paris Academy’ (ib. p. 118).

The chapter closes with an authoritative statement that, in its emphatic tone, betrays the full extent of Blumenbach’s exasperation with the persistently mendacious European and American talk about the nature of the ‘Ethiopian race’: ‘I don’t know [...] of any other so-called savage nation under the sun that has so much distinguished itself by such examples of perfectibility and even capacity for scientific culture [...] as the Negro’ (ib.). It is remarkable that this and other passages from Blumenbach’s original works never find their way into contempo-
rary commentaries bent on proving the inherent racism of his anthropological theory.

Blumenbach counters polygenic doctrines as much through the force of empirical evidence (not least his beloved scull collection) as through logical deduction: if polygenism was correct, differences among the races would not be a matter of fluid anatomical transitions. As any comparative anatomist can testify, races, just like individuals, differ only by degrees.

Blumenbach’s monogenism is developmental but lacks a Darwinian conception of evolution through mutation and selection. Therefore Blumenbach is a Lamarckian: traits acquired in new environs become inheritable in the course of a few generations. Hegel takes several pieces of wisdom directly from Blumenbach (and other Lamarckians like Peter Camper) when he states, among other things: ‘It is apparent that blackness is due to the climate. The descendants of the Portuguese [in Africa] are [...] black like the native Negroes.’ Yet Hegel, perhaps mindful of Kant’s rejection of the climatic hypothesis, is on record as boldly including a genetic explanation for Europeans’ darkening: in the 1825 lectures (Griesheim/Kehler manuscript) he adds that such darkening may well happen ‘also through mixing’.

Blumenbach’s developmental monogenism is based on a five-races typology derived from comparative craniology. The variations closest to the Caucasian are the Carib and the Malay; these in turn connect the Caucasian to the two types furthest from it, respectively the African and the Mongolian. Once more, one of Blumenbach’s passages, which regards the perception of aesthetic differences among the races, is often cited by contemporary proponents of his racist turn of mind in a highly misleading mutilated form: ‘Europeans [...] are [...] the most handsome of men.’ But the original passage differs starkly: ‘The Europeans and Western Asians [...] together with the North Africans [...] are according to European concepts of beauty the best formed human beings’ (Beyträge p.82; the last italicization is mine).

Like Linnaeus and Hegel, Blumenbach understands racial diversifications as neither created nor stable, but as fluid variations of one species that resulted

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24 For Camper’s Sämtliche Kleine Schriften (1781–90) see Petry, 1978, p. 450. Camper used craniometry before Blumenbach. He is mostly known today for having identified prognathism as an important racial feature. While his followers associated prognathism with primitivity, Camper did not. His main discovery actually pertained to the existence of a bone shared by all apes except humans – a fact that strengthened his monogenic convictions and perhaps even his political advocacy of racial equality.

25 Kant, 1785, p. 105ff.

from geographic separations, historic migrations, and ‘mixing’: ‘The natural scientist has still to be born who, on truthful grounds, would dare to establish a determinate boundary between [the varieties of mankind]’ (Beyträge p. 60). Despite the clarity and explicitness of this theory, however, Blumenbach’s typology would eventually become – especially in the second half of the following century – an opportunity for others to rank races according to evaluative criteria that go well beyond those of cranial aesthetics. More perplexing is the fact that contemporary writers persist in tendentious misrepresentations of Blumenbach’s work. As shown by historian of life sciences Thomas Juncker in 1998, for example, Stephen Jay Gould corroborates his own claim that Blumenbach’s scientific work ‘has promoted conventional racism ever since’ by rearranging Blumenbach’s horizontal presentation of crania into a vertical one.²³

A major tool in the arsenal of misrepresentations of Blumenbachian anthropology developing at the turn of the nineteenth century is the increasingly pejorative use (especially striking in English translation) of the Latin degeneratio, its German derivative Degeneration, and the Germanic terms Ausartung and Abartung. Well into Blumenbach’s, Kant’s and Hegel’s time, these Latin and Germanic terms appear in scientific contexts in the value-neutral senses of ‘branching out’, ‘self-differentiation’, ‘derivation’, ‘development’ and even ‘conversion’. In De Generis Blumenbach for example inquires about the causes and ways in which, as a whole, ‘animalium species degenerant’ and those in which, in particular, ‘humanum genus degeneravit’; he also asks ‘Quomodo species primitiva in varietates degenerat? (ib., sections II and III). In the Beyträge he sets out to study ‘Die Ausartung der organisirten Körper’ and, more vitally, the ‘Ausartung des vollkommensten aller Hausthiere – des Menschen’ (Beyträuge chs. VI and VIII) – an expression quite bewildering in its English translation if ‘degeneration’ is taken in its contemporary signification: ‘Degeneration of Man, the most perfect of all domestic Animals’.²⁸ We also read in Blumenbach’s Beyträge that the ‘Degeneration of animals and plants from their original stock [Stamm-race] belongs to the striking demonstrations of the variability of creation’ (Beyträge p. 33).

The use of Ausartung is attested for the first time in the middle of the seventeenth century, where it indicates differentiation including loss of features (in-born or acquired, useful or harmful), derivation from, conversion into, or altera-


²⁸ Bendyshe, 1865, p. 293.
tion towards different forms.²⁹ In a physical context, Kant writes in 1763 that ‘the attractive force [...] close to the bodies by and by ausartet into a repulsive one’.³⁰ In the 1764 essay on the sublime and the beautiful we read that all initial tender feelings in marriage eventually ‘ausarten in loving intimacy’.³¹ In 1775, Kant recommends terminological distinctions for use in biological contexts, according to which Ausartung should be used for infertile cases of Abartung (derivation or descent). This would establish indeed a biologically ‘negative’ connotation of Ausartung. Referring to the animal kingdom, Kant writes in his essay on the human races: ‘The hereditary features of descent [Abartung], when compatible with their origin, are called Nachartungen; but if the descendant is incapable of forming the original stock [ursprüngliche Stammbildung], then it would be called Ausartung’.³² Blumenbach and other like-minded authors clearly disregarded Kant’s recommendations in their own use of Ausartung with regards to human races, as fertility among these constituted one of the best known and most glaring facts in favor of monogenism. In political and social contexts, however, a pejorative use of Ausartung begins to take root during the same period: ‘The nobility,’ one political economist writes in 1760, is what keeps ‘the unchecked monarchy from Ausartung into despotism.’³³ And in 1781, a historian of Judaism explains that ‘the unnatural oppression under which Jews have lived for so many centuries has certainly contributed as much to their general ethical corruptness as to the Ausartung of their religious laws from their original goodness and usefulness.’³⁴

There is little doubt that the 1865 publication of Bendyshe’s translation of Ausartung, Degeneration and degeneratio with ‘degeneration’ rather than with ‘branching out’, ‘derivation’ or ‘development’, contributed and is still contributing much to misrepresentations of Blumenbach’s work. At the very least, it certainly makes Blumenbach’s simultaneous talk of the ‘degeneration’ of the African race and the moral and intellectual excellence of Negroes completely unintelligible.

The extension of the pejorative employment of Degeneration and Ausartung from socio-political to naturalistic subject matter would eventually, in the twen-

²⁹ I owe this and the following philological clarifications to Elke Gehweiler of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, who provided relevant texts (entries Ausarten and Ausartung) and commentary from the newest revision of the Deutsches Wörterbuch by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm.
³⁰ Kant, 1763, p. 169.
³¹ Kant, 1764, p. 242.
³² Kant, 1775, p. 430.
³⁴ von Dohm, 1781, p. 143 (http://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/diglib/dohm/ueber).
tieth century, reduce their meaning to that of ‘producing weaker, degenerate, perverted results.’ But projecting these new significations indiscriminately back onto earlier uses means ignoring philological and historical fact as well as theoretical meaning – unless one may want to construe also Darwin’s ‘descent’ to indicate a downward movement from higher and more complex life-forms to lower and poorer ones.

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After Blumenbach, the last major scientist to think of human variation in the categories of an uncompromising universalism is Jean-Baptist Lamarck. The French scientist centers his *Philosophie biologique* (1809) on a general theory of natural change. ‘La marche de la nature,’ as he calls his version of ‘universal development,’ can be described as a continuous branching out of limbs from the sturdy trunk of the phylogenetic tree. Nature’s transformationism is a function of the inheritability of acquired properties. Lamarck is an anti-catastrophist; he represents the modern scientific counterpart, as it were, of the metaphysics of *natura non facit saltus* (a principle also invoked by Linnaeus in the 1751 *Philosophia Botanica*). Neither races nor varieties are fixed. Rather, the whole of organic nature, including differentiations within the human species, is characterized by the fluidity of its transitions.

Lamarck’s younger contemporary George Cuvier is instead a champion of catastrophism. The Biblical flood inspires his discovery of past mass extinctions. Natural types acquire with Cuvier a new fixity. Despite his rejection of polygenist explanations of the human races, he still finds the European type to represent excellence. He explains measurable cranial and immeasurable mental differences among types by hypothesizing the mutual separation of human groups in primordial – thus scientifically inaccessible – times.

With the onset of counter-Enlightenment sentiment, the European and American ‘science of man’ shift increasingly towards ‘racial thinking.’ This is the generic view that physical, mental, behavioral and even social differences among groups are primarily determined by biological race – thus making the differences, if not essential, *quasi*-immutable. The ensuing history of anthropology as academic specialization includes vastly different theoretical frameworks for the interpretation of human and racial characteristics and behavior – from the monogenism of Lewis Henry Morgan (‘The history of the human race is one in source, one in experience, one in progress’),³⁵ whose work forms the anthropo-

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³⁵ Morgan, 1877, Preface.
logical foundation of Friedrich Engels’ study of the development of civilization,\textsuperscript{36} to the polygenism of Samuel G. Morton, who explains intelligence, or preferably lack thereof, by the inner volume of (empty) skulls.\textsuperscript{37} The arc of Morton’s career is eerily emblematic of the radical reversal from eighteenth century scientific universalism to nineteenth century particularism. Morton began his own skull collection in preparation for an 1830 lecture dedicated to Blumenbach’s five-races theory. After his death (1851) in antebellum South Carolina, he was eulogized in the \textit{Charleston Medical Journal} with an epitaph that would have made Blumenbach turn in his grave: ‘We can only say that we of the South should consider him as our benefactor, for aiding most materially in giving the negro his true position as an inferior race’.

The views of the remaining antagonists of racist thought in the second half of the century are best summarized in Karl Marx’s ironic riposte to political economists’ treatment of the so-called ‘Negro slave problem’: ‘What is a negro slave? A man of the black race […] A Negro is a Negro. Only under certain conditions does he become a slave. A cotton-spinning machine is a machine for spinning cotton. Only under certain conditions does it become capital.’\textsuperscript{38}

As mentioned above, not all polygenists shared the view that human differences in spiritual capacities are necessarily traceable along racial lines. Some polygenists had anticipated, though with a decidedly paternalistic bent, Hegel’s stance that ‘[f]rom origins one can never derive any ground for humans’ right or lack of right to freedom and power.’ Despite being a convinced polygenist, Charles White for example opposed slavery on account of the fact that ‘[l]aws ought not to allow greater freedom to a Shakespeare or Milton, a Locke or a Newton, than to men of inferior capacities’, among which he counted ‘thousands of Europeans’ as well as an unspecified number of ‘negroes’.\textsuperscript{39} By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, such evenhanded paternalism was largely overcome. The early history of the Anthropological Society of London (which commissioned the translation of Blumenbach’s works) is most instructive in this regard. It was founded in 1863 by polygenists in open rebellion against the Ethnological Society of London, whose scientific consent had been monogen-

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[36] Engels, 1884.
\item[37] Morton’s \textit{Crania Americana} helped make polygenism mainstream in American anthropology. Among his contemporary polygenist colleagues were former Swiss monogenist and later Harvard racist theoretician Louis Agassiz, as well as Josiah Nott, who, being a staunch defender of the fixity and separation of the races, became the English translator of Gobineau’s most famous work.
\item[38] Marx, 1849, Ch. 5.
\item[39] White, 1799.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
ist and Darwinian. The leader of the newly minted Anthropological Society, James Hunt, reads like a somewhat polished version of Henry Home. Among Hunt’s central claims: Negroes are a separate species from Europeans; Darwinism is unscientific because it presupposes the unity of mankind; adaptation is a myth, while ‘exhaustion and degeneracy’ are the logical consequence of resettlement; anthropology needs no theory but only facts and ‘the logical inferences from such data’; and – perhaps most importantly – anthropology must form the basis for the science of political economy. In Hunt’s own words:

The science of political economy must be based simply and solely on the facts discovered by the anthropologist [...] We are the students and interpreters of nature’s laws, and it is our duty [...] not [...] to raise up in the name of “social science” a code of morals based upon an assumption of human equality and consequently equal human rights, because we know that human equality is a mere dream and all systems based on it are mere chimeras.

Not surprisingly, Hunt thinks highly of transatlantic social arrangements then at risk of extinction (the American Civil War having ended two years before his Anniversary Address). So highly, in fact, that he is willing to indulge adaptationist beliefs, as long as they corroborate other ‘facts’ accounted for by polygenic views: ‘Scientific men [...] dare not close their eyes to the clear facts, as to the improvement in mind and body, as well as the general happiness, which is seen in those parts of the world, in which the Negro is working in his natural subordination to the European’. Nor does Hunt lack a distinctive taste for cynical humor: ‘In some respects [...] the Negro is far superior to the European [...] to wit:] Occupations and diseases which are fatal to the Europeans, are quite harmless to the Negro. By their juxtaposition in this part of the world, they confer a material benefit on each other.’ Few descriptions of the ‘peculiar institution’ deserve so fully, mutatis mutandis, the parody of the ‘free labor market’ that Marx would write just four years later:

This sphere is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham [...] Thus] do they all, in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an all-shrewd providence, work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal and in the interest of all.

42 Hunt, 1867, pp. lxi-lxii.
43 Hunt, 1863b, pp. 55–6.
44 Marx, 1867, Ch. 6.
As seen in the divide between Spencerism and Marxism in political philosophy, similarly in anthropology Darwinian models of competition and survival of the fittest seem at first to lend themselves to reactionary Weltanschauungen more readily than Lamarckian models of gradual adaptation to the environment. Yet there are too many exceptions for this to be a rule. Ernst Haeckel⁴⁵ perhaps best illustrates the tortuous relations between competing scientific theories and ideological agendas in the half century after Hegel’s death. Thanks to his artistic talent and vast learning, Haeckel did more than most to divulge Darwin’s Origin of Species. At the same time, however, he also rejected some of evolutionism’s fundamental tenets. Relying heavily on August Schleicher’s⁴⁶ theory on the ‘organic’ nature of languages and their multiple geneses, which fit ‘scientific’ polygenism like a glove, Haeckel proposed an alternative to Darwinian monogenism, namely, an evolutionary polygenism assembled from Lamarckian views on inheritance and Schleicher’s linguistic polygenism. In so doing, Haeckel at once pioneered twentieth-century theories of the linguistic origin of consciousness and racist theories of race. The upshot of Haeckel’s logically opaque theory of multiple ‘human species’ (sometimes referred to as ‘stems’ and sometimes as ‘races’) is the following. Humans are conscious animals. But it is language that produces consciousness (an assumption apparently in need of neither proof nor semantic clarification), and there exist multiple language stems that are demonstrably unrelated to one another (Schleicher had provided ‘proof’ of this). Thus there must be multiple human stems unrelated to one another.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the academic battle is still ostensibly one about polygenic or monogenic origins. In their effort to counter sacrilegious polygenism, Bible-monogenists find themselves in painful proximity to Darwin’s followers. These in turn feel uneasy when depicted as repudiators of creationism. To make matters worse, some polygenists accommodate Darwinism by allowing for a common descent (one species, many types) while simply expanding the range of race-forming factors to include, beyond mutation and selection, ‘orthogenesis’, that is, separate and parallel evolutions determined by different factors internal to each type.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Haeckel, 1868; id., 1899.
⁴⁶ Schleicher, 1861/62.
⁴⁷ On the idea of orthogenesis see for example Wolpoff & Caspari, 1997, Ch. 8.
5. Conclusion

At the turn of the nineteenth-century, the need to justify the economic-political realities of globalizing industrialization, including its destruction of pre-modern ways of life, forced mass migrations, and capital’s need for the exploitation of ever new human resources, makes it increasingly challenging for the Western ‘science of man’ to embrace a universalism of Blumenbach’s type. The spread of anti-Enlightenment and anti-universalist philosophy and ideology in the twentieth century makes it ever harder (or unpopular) to appeal even to ambivalent and evasive solutions of Hegel’s type, namely: let us cut the Gordian knot of the separate or common origins of mankind by proving that, no matter which we may scientifically embrace, no path leads from either to the theoretical and ethical recognition of human beings as creatures of right.

In closing, it may be interesting to note that the controversy between monogenists and polygenists is still alive today, though in an importantly modified form, in physical anthropology, where a major debate pits the multiregionalism of paleoanthropologists against the matrilinealism of molecular geneticists. Both sides today recognize one species, *homo sapiens* as common origin of all ethnic variations – races as much as ethnicities or *Lokalgeister*. But ‘multiregionalists’ identify the last primate speciation in the separation of *homo sapiens* from *homo erectus* a few million years ago, from which time on racial diversifications would have taken place through evolutionary mechanisms confined to regional patterns. Matrilinealists’ views have been popularized as ‘Eve theory’ (most famously by S. J. Gould’s work). This perspective stresses a much more recent date for *homo sapiens*’ speciation, thus making evolutionary change in our species pre-date all racial variations of the same. The ‘Eve theory’ is based on studies of lines of descent of mitochondrial DNA, which is inherited only matrilinearly. Thus this genetic material can never be affected by selection mechanisms while being of course subject to mutations. Therefore, the argument goes, all present-day mitochondrial genetic variations must have split from one common and relatively recent ‘maternal’ source (Goethe, who first introduced the notion of morphology in the study of organic nature, would have been pleased to call it *die Urmutter*). Despite the claim common to both sides, namely that races are variations internal to the same species, the debate acquires at times ugly ideological undertones because of their conceptual affinities with polygenism and monogenism, respectively. From a Hegelian point of view, however, one would have to object that what is missing from this debate is awareness that the human species is a product of its own reason – as implied perhaps even in the scientific designation of *homo sapiens sapiens* – which renders the species
capable of relating to itself not just as animal species (a remarkable feat in itself) but as the universal species – a genus of persons.

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