

Hegel Against Hegel and His Lumbering of Reason on the African Race

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Abstract

One of the scholars that made sustained contributions to the development of philosophy of history is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel offers a dialectical conception of history in which the absolute spirit moves towards self-actualization. However, Hegel's idea of history appears prejudiced and misguided because he not only derided and battered Africans using his imprudent racial schemes, he even excluded Africa from historical considerations in his uncouth racial agenda. This paper uses the critical analytic model to deleted ultimately show that not only was Hegel uninformed to comment on the ontology of Africa and Africans, but that even the system was self-defeating. That is, it was a case of *Hegel against Hegel*. This is the novelty of this paper since a Hegelian system that is against itself cannot muster the necessary guts and logic to lampoon and destroy another system, worse still, thoughtlessly and irrationally too. The paper also argued that the disposition to colour-brand people using racial scheme is uncritical and inhumane.

Keywords: Africa, Geist, Hegel, Reason, History, Western, Spirit.

Introduction

In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence - as for example, God, or Law - in which the interest of man's volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being. This distinction between himself as an individual and the universality of his essential being, the African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his existence has not yet attained; so that the Knowledge of an absolute Being, an Other and a Higher than his individual self, is entirely wanting. The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality - all that we call feeling - if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character. (HEGEL 2001, 110-111)

The above quotation disposes the mind about the drive of this paper which is about how Hegel modern philosopher relegated Africans and their rational model. Besides the uncritical and irrational disposition of Hegel vivid in his remarks above about Africans, another example of this lack of rational and critical culture is the submission of Hume below;

I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely was ever a civilized nation of that complexion, nor ever any individual, eminent wither in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers among them, no art, no sciences. On the other hand, the most ride and barbarous of the white, such as the ancient GERMANS, the present TARTARS, have still something eminent among them, in their valour form of government or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of man. Not to mention our colonies, there are NEGROE slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of whom none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; though low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In JAMAICA, indeed, they talk of one Negroe as a parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishment, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly. (HUME 1987, 208)

The unfortunate submission of Hume fully accentuates the impression of Hegel and this goes to highlight the point that there were lots of irrationality in the modern era, the same era that boasts of the highest number of system builders of which Hegel was foremost. This paper concentrates on the rational imprudence of Hegel flowing from his philosophy of history. In his modern translation of Hegel's [Introduction to the Philosophy of History], Leo Rauch (1988) consciously and purposely omitted more than half of the text of Section Five (Geographical Basis of History) of Hegel's work.¹ This conspicuous omission by a contemporary authority on Hegel speaks volumes. Omitted are the twelve pages in which Hegel attacks Africa and excludes it as part of world history. Obviously, this section of Hegel has become an embarrassment even to his adherents. But such omission is no courageous response to Hegel's philosophy of history. This also informs the quest of this paper to examine the logic of the so-called 'rational' system of Hegel and how it affects the African race. This flows from the fact that some of these suppositions and submission of Hegel on Africa were quite debilitating, spurious and disappointing.

This paper critically interrogates Hegel's idea of universal history, it examines his disdain for Africa and also shows how at intervals Hegel's system was also self-defeating. Agreed that some of the above have been the topic of discourse over the years, considering insights from a scholar like Emmanuel Eze (1997, 2002) and some other scholars with the same impression. The concern of these scholars would not only be that Hegel and his likes were rationally jaundiced and cynical in their remarks about the African race, but the critical concern was the complicity of the Western tradition of philosophy towards this very gaffe. Obi Oguejiofor (2007 68, 69) calls this rational indiscretion "the grave errors of the enlightenment," because the history of philosophy presents these scholars without

¹ See G.W.F. Hegel, [The Philosophy of History], trans. J. Sibree (Dover: New York 1956), pp. 88-102. These pages are entirely omitted in G.W.F. Hegel: [Introduction to the Philosophy of History], Leo Rauch, trans, (Hackett Publishing Company: Cambridge, 1988).

reference to their scathing and irrational remarks on the African race in particular. Oguejiofor cites Chukwudi Eze who highlighted the fact that a recent work, [A Kant's Dictionary] (CAYGILL 1994) did not take account of the views of Kant on race even though the latter wrote five treatises on race matters (EZE 1997). Furthermore, even when Kurt Steinhauer wrote [Hegel: Bibliography] in 1995, which was a compilation of essays on Hegel in the past one hundred years, he refused to add one article of Hegel on Africa. The implication of these deleterious sophistry and pseudo-science is that the Western tradition is not sincere in its analytic endeavours and also wants to perpetrate the annihilation of other races through all forms of prejudices.

The above argument is hinged on the fact that the Western tradition prides itself as a rational tradition that takes logic and rational discourse more serious than other traditions and eras in philosophy(sic); but it is unfortunate that this same tradition will amplify the illogical, racist, irrational, inhuman and unscientific positions of Hegel and the likes, especially during the modern era of philosophy that was involved more with system building predicated on science, logic, humanism and rationality. However, this is what this paper is attempting to interrogate and that is why the novelty of this paper is in showing how Hegel's views are themselves self-defeating. The work has a simple structure. It discourses Hegel's idea about African history briefly in the first part. The second part discusses the idea of Hegel against Hegel. It examines how the schemes of Hegel were self-defeating. It also highlights how racism and colour-branding were uncritical, unprofessional, unhistorical, unsuccessful, and inhumane enterprise.

PART ONE

The ideas of Hegel about Africa and racism will be discussed very briefly under some sub-headings.

Ignorance, Irrationality, Savagery and Primitivity: Hegel derogatorily refers to Africans as Negroes and claims that they are ignorant beings lacking in consciousness of themselves and of any objective existence. In a dialectics that turns against him, Hegel claims that the Negro is unconscious and unaware of higher knowledge. Hegel counsels that the European must clearly give up normal Western categories and principles of deduction. Yet Hegel himself failed to remove peculiar categorical prejudices; and went on to judge the African as unconscious and ignorant. More significantly, Hegel acknowledged his ignorance of Africa when he claimed that Africa is shut-up and unknown to outsiders. He stated that Africa, which is a land of childhood, and is enveloped in the "dark mantle of Night." Consequently, it is isolated from the rest of the world (HEGEL 2001, 91). That is why the Upland has remained according to Hegel 'unknown.' For Hegel, that Africans lack self-consciousness means that they lack rationality. In this line of thought, Hegel is not alone. In his book, [Primitive Mentality], Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, after studying African peoples mainly through missionary reports concluded that the African race has a primitive, barbaric and pre-logical mentality (LEVY-BRUHL 1966). The argument here is that for Lévy Bruhl and Hegel, Africans lack rational power, they can only be judged as lower animals *vis-à-vis* the European who possess rationality. Hegel obviously posits that the African is a lower species of being than the European. But in Hegel's time, a Ghanaian

William Amo (1703-1753) studied and taught philosophy just as Hegel himself in Germany and even in Holland. Still, Hegel pursues his negative descriptions of Africans in this often cited remark:

These peoples have never emerged out of themselves, nor have they gained a foothold in history. In the sixteenth century, to be sure wholly known peoples irrupted from the interior; but these hordes were merely destructive and of no cultural significance. These bands displayed the most frightful savagery and barbarism. But encounters with them in peaceful circumstances found them to be as affable as any others. This Africa remains in its placid, unmotivated, self-enclosed sensuality and has not yet entered into history; its only further connection with history is that in darker days its inhabitants have been enslaved. (HEGEL 2011, 197)

Superstitious, Anthropocentric and Lack of Morality: African traditional religion for Hegel is nothing but fetish, magical and superstitious. Taking off from the Jewish historian Herodotus who called the high-melanated people sorcerers. Hegel contends that Africans do not have the idea of God or moral faith. He states that Africans are involved only in incantations and used images as they worship the dead (HEGEL 2001, 93). Hegel contends that Africans do not believe in the immortality of the soul, and that they manipulate the gods/spirits to do their will. Then humans become the highest being elevated over nature and above God. So for Hegel, the summit of all reality is the pure thought of the human's spirit and not the almighty God of religion. Hegel's critique of African religion is, therefore, on methodological grounds. For Hegel, among Africans, moral sentiments are weak or even non-existent. "Through the pervading influence of slavery all those bonds of moral which we cherish towards each other disappear, and it does not occur to the Negro mind to expect from others what we are enabled to claim." (HEGEL 2001, 96). Hegel presented Africans as those who live like beasts without self-control. Clearly on historical grounds, each people, including the Negroes have evolved and have continued to evolve before, during and after Hegel's day. Hegelian dialectics of history contradicts itself when it says Africans do not, or even cannot evolve. Hegel forgot Heraclitus (*omnia flux*; all is in flux).²

Lack of Political Organization: For Hegel, there is a total absence of political organization and, only fanaticism, which is due to the nature of the race itself. After writing this, however, Hegel immediately goes on to give a bitter account of African kings, chiefs, and their subordinates and how they rule and relate to the populace.

² For Heraclitus the ancient process thought metaphysician, everything is in constant flux. Constant and steady movement of things.

Contempt of Humanity: For Hegel; “the Negroes indulge...that perfect contempt for humanity which in its bearing on justice and morality is the fundamental characteristic of the race” (HEGEL 2001, 95). Exactly what Hegel means in the text by the ‘contempt’ that Negroes have for humanity is not clearly stated by him. But from his preceding statements, he most likely meant that, since Africans elevate themselves about God and nature, they have no basis for real reverence. This is because, for Hegel, what inspires reverence in humanity is the consciousness of a Higher Being. To miss this is to miss the status of humanity.

Africa as Non-historical: Africa proper (Hegel arbitrarily excludes some parts of Africa, all the North and Nile Delta including Egypt) is “the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature.” [Then Hegel concludes] “at this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again.” (HEGEL 2001, 99) That was the great Hegel’s dismissal of Africa. That was a direct positive rejection of the African people, by Hegel, whose professional duty is to seek, search into, and discover what other branches of science forget or neglect. If Hegel were consistent, however, he would have advised his European brethren, the slave-trading and colonizing Westerners to withdraw from this ‘empty’ continent. To do this would be consistent because Hegel’s history has nothing for African history. Of course, he allowed Europeans to stay and to exploit, perhaps because he knew that Africa had something for Western history. Though Hegel swore not to mention Africa again, he nevertheless continued to be haunted by the Africa, yea, Negro Vital *Spirit*, and Hegel continued to pour venom on Africa until the last page of his [Introduction to the Philosophy of History]. Charles Taylor, one of the authorities on Hegel entirely avoided this anti-Africa part of Hegel. However, while commenting on the self-positing spirit, that summarizes the entire Hegelian philosophy, Taylor accurately remarks “*Geist* is at the root of everything, and hence mediation becomes a cosmic principle.”

PART TWO: Hegel Against Hegel

In his philosophy of history, Hegel made a false take-off, which led him to erroneous judgements and which, in turn, resulted in a tragic landing that vitiated his philosophical account of Africa. We support this argument by drawing attention to several fundamental contradictory characteristics of Hegel’s thought. And it is these inconsistencies that gave rise to the position of this paper that it was basically a case of Hegel against Hegel; meaning that the submissions of Hegel were all dead on arrival. Some of the points that have been put up as juxtaposition of the Hegelian logic are stated below, starting from the method of dialectics that he propounded.

Non-dialectical Nature of Dialectics (Philosophical and Historical): Hegel started with the dialectical method, but ended not just without, but against dialectics. A genuine and visible philosophical method must be consistent. Hegel’s method is not. For when at the highest development of *Geist*, when the thesis of

Art joins in the antithesis of Religion to yield the synthesis of Philosophy. Consistency demands that Philosophy now becomes the new thesis toward another level of reality, perhaps in view of a universal communication or language, culture or a future global village. To end the dialectical process with philosophy contradicts the process itself, and so renders it suspect as a valid interpretative method. That is, indeed, a clear mark of Hegel himself ‘against Hegel;’ as he closes history, true novelty and further development. Reality must be open-ended, not closed as Hegel says. The same critique applies to historical dialectics. That world history is progressing there is no doubt. But to use dialectics to explain that progress is problematic when Hegel narrowly sees only the Oriental, Greek and Roman worlds which culminate, according to him, in his home-nation: the Germanic World. This is nothing short of German chauvinism!³ Falsehood obviously by history itself, the central stage of world events is no longer the old German European world. Not only have other European nations rejected the Hegelian imposition of Germany over them; but more generally the Americas are taking their turn as major actors on the world scene. Tomorrow, it may be other nations, other continents. It is open! Authentic philosophy of history must consider the whole of history and the entire world in their open-endedness. It is never closed as Hegel closes it in his historical dialectics. Hegels’ is a false start in the methodology of philosophy and the philosophy of history.

Divisiveness of Africa: Hegel divided Africa into unintegrated pieces in a way that smacks of a hatred of a whole continent. While he recognized the continent as one, he at once started to split the North from the rest of Africa south of the Sahara and called this southern part, Africa proper, or the Upland. In the North, which he calls European Africa, he excised the Nile delta from the rest of the North. The Nile delta or river region, Hegel links with Asia. It is also, Hegel writes, the only valley land of Africa (HEGEL 2001). Hegel’s geographical spite for Africa can be demonstrated from his caricature of the beauty of Africa’s mountain ranges, the thick green vegetation and the labyrinth of rivers that characterize the coastlands. Instead of seeing any beauty, hateful blindness pushed him to describe it as; “the home of ravenous beasts, snakes of all kinds, a border tract where the atmosphere is poisonous to Europeans, a zone lacking any union with the interior and whose waterfalls and torrents cross each other in wild confusion” (HEGEL 2001, 92ff). Hegel insinuates that as the people are wild, savage and disorderly, so also is their environment. Hegel’s Africa has nothing but dark, frightful characteristics. Where there are some positives, in Hegel’s sense (e.g. in Egypt and North Africa) these are not really Africa.

This negative treatment of the African continent reflects divisiveness. It is more than geographical, Hegel and some others have undertaken great geographical violence, but they also committed a historical injustice to mutilating

³ This is the idea that the German race is the best and should be the standard for all. This is in all spheres of human endeavours. At some point, it had imprints of racism and racial segregation and that was mostly during the time of Hitler and others. The German chauvinists drew strength from theories of scholars like Kant, Hegel and some others. It is a sort of *Deutschland über Alles* (Germany over all).

and un-integrating Africa as one continent. This geo- historical butchery by Hegel is the blackmail of indigenous Africans. The great African civilizations of Morocco, Alexandria, Algiers, Tunisia, and the rest are to be denied Africa; even Egypt and the Nile, the cradle of all world civilization, history, philosophy and culture is not insulated from this schism. As a matter of fact, it was long believed, that philosophy started in Europe, in Greece. Europe, even claimed, it was the first high culture, and Africa was nothing but (in Hegel's words) 'enveloped in the dark mantle of night.' But this falsehood has since been exposed. Africa is one continent that includes all North Africa, all of the Nile Delta, all of Egypt, Alexandria, and Ethiopia. "These with their flourishing ancient civilizations and philosophers are part and parcel of Africa. The truth has now been set out into the open and can no longer be denied" (OGUNMODEDE 2000, 28-9).⁴

Unhistorical Hegel: Although he gave a vehement account of the events and conditions in Africa, it is striking to note that Hegel took no pains to do any research about the true situation of things. Rather and unfortunately too, Hegel reports what missionaries have said and this is without any reference. Instead, he gratuitously described the reports he received as copious and veridical. Hegel for instance, adopts blindly and uncritically the attack of Herodotus against Africans, that Negroes are nothing but sorcerers. On this allegation of sorcery, our un-philosophical philosopher of history, Hegel, would hastily construct a philosophy of African Religion. In another instance, the testimony of a colonial Englishman, Hutchinson (real or imagined by Hegel), was used to support the claim of the practice of Negro carnage against fellow Negroes. "With no verifiable reference, Hegel, the cultural historian of African events, put the number of people massacred in Dahomey after the death of the (unnamed) king, in a year unknown to either Hegel or any other person at 3,333" (HEGEL 2001, 93 and 98).⁵ This Hegel affirms, is the constant state of affairs in Africa and that it is also in the crude nature of the Negro to be so.

It is blatant to state that Hegel's positions on Africa in his [LECTURES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF WORLD HISTORY] are notorious among critics and even defenders alike. Particularly, his unfortunate position that the trans-Atlantic slave trade, while it is unjust, was superior to native African slavery and as a result should be abolished but only gradually. Flowing from this and aligning with the ongoing discourse on African studies about the status of freedom as a structuring desideratum of critical and political practice, this paper subscribes with the position of Andrea Long Chu (2018) that for Hegel, the European enslavement of Africans was essentially an emancipatory project that would rescue the Negro from his impenetrability to world spirit and introduce him to the long dialectical march of world history. Furthermore, this paper states that the

⁴ Ogunmodede, citing numerous scholars like Cheik Anta Diop, George James, Martin Bernal, Innocent Onyewuenyi and Joseph Osei, Ogunmodede defends the growing historical acknowledgement that Africa especially Egypt is the origin of Greek and thereby all philosophy.

⁵ One may retort that after all Hegel is not a historian. He only rationally interpreted the facts he gathered about Africa. We reply, however, that a philosopher worth his salt must verify his history before interpreting it. For false history yields false philosophy of history.

distinction between Atlantic and African slavery reinterprets his distinction between bad infinity and good in his [SCIENCE OF LOGIC]. But as the case of slavery demonstrates, neither distinction can stand and hold. This stems from the premise that Hegel could not envisage any freedom for Africans save for in the form of infinitely more slavery, and the implication is that Africans would never be free. And inappropriately, in such an endeavour, freedom remains forever on the dark side of a middle passage. These conclusions challenge us to consider what radical politics without a concept of freedom would look like [CHU 2018].

Foreign Categories: Hegel writes from his historical and cultural situation. But this is precisely the point; when it concerns judging others, a scholar would be cautious and aware of his limitations. Hegel has European lenses with Western categories of thought and one of the foreign categories that he imported and used to describe Africa is the word Negro. He imposed and was so comfortable with colour politics because it is part of the racist scheme, which gave rise to his theory and scheme, so there was nothing wrong in calling a people black, Negro. And this was used derogatorily and negatively. He did this unchallenged for decades till African scholars came up to interrogate and put the records right though without prejudice to some innocent misrepresentations by some African scholars like Aime Cesaire's *Negritude*, Steve Biko's *Black Consciousness Movement*, and Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* etc. One of the notable and most recent response was Kwasi Tsri's [Africans are not blacks: the case for conceptual liberations] (2016). The thesis of Tsri was further corroborated by Jonathan Chimakonam who in his review (2018) of the same work argued that irrespective of the three lapses in Tsri's text, which includes not putting up an alternative term for negro "the twenty-first-century individual should read this book if not to obliterate her belief on human differentiation or strengthen her resolve on the implausibility of such an idea; [but] to, at least, understand its bases on ancient history and Christian literature and the potentially damaging, silent, mental consequences." (CHIMAKONAM 2018, 368) This stems from the premise that it is not only irrational but uncharitable to use the term 'Negro' to describe Africans/Africa. The position of Tsri (2016a), which this paper subscribes to is that there is no human being in the world whose skin matches any of the colours commonly used for racial categorisation. And instead of talking about or referring to people as 'Negroes,' Hegel would have opted for the use of indigenous Africans or high-melanated people in general.

Tsri also stated that these colours have symbolic meanings and questioned why Africans should be categorised with a negative colour, and the unfortunate reason was that the likes of Hegel and other racists were attempting to humiliate and question the humanity of those so coloured and described and in this case, Africans. This prompted him to interrogate the evolution of this appellation. And his intention was to make sure that the use of the term 'black' was abandoned in the categorization of Africans (TSRI, 2016a). He contends that the term black employed to describe Africans is odious and racist and has invidious consequences. He further asserts that the semantics of colour has a direct connection with the use of colours to categorise humanity. It is the

submission of Tsri that it was and remains a racist strategy to humiliate, denigrate and dehumanise those segments of humanity and especially the Africans who the slave masters and eventual colonialist wished to portray as inferior human stock. And for W. E. Du Bois; “herein [the text of Tsri] lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century...for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.” (DUBOIS 1903/1989, 3)

‘Negroe(s)’ and the Morality of Colour-Branding and Racial Politics

Let me remark though unfortunately that Senghor seems to be comfortable using the word *negro-African* and/or *Negro* to describe Africa and Africans. This stems from his amplified usage of the term *negritude*. However, if he was around now and is still teaching and learning as an African scholar, he would not have used those words because more and more research and impressions have been expressed to demonstrate that the words were selfish, immoral, unreasonable and misguided and using it promotes the racist agenda of the likes of Hegel who were comfortable with it and employed it. It is based on the above that an African scholar troubled by this uncritical appellation was tempted to ask:

Is there any human in the world whose skin pigmentation could be described as black or white or yellow or brown or coloured or red? [and he said] The answer is none. [So, he asked further] Why then do some people categorise fellow humans with colours, even when they know that different colours have symbolic meanings, both negative and positive? [And he responded] The answer is simple; politics of division, discrimination and subjugation. (CHIMAKONAM 2019, 1)

The submission above explains why the theoretical disposition of Stokely Carmichael, Marcus Garvey Aime Cesaire’s *Negritude*, Steve Biko’s *Black Consciousness Movement* and Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena* is an uninformed, misguided and an unsuccessful valorization of blackness. And the fact is that any form of valorisation of blackness is reprehensible self-delusion created by deleterious politics. This is because, no human being is actually white, black, yellow, brown or even red. And if these two positions are tenable, the question then is why are people branded along colour-lines and called Negro/Negroes where supposed to say indigenous Africans or high-melanated people in general? If not that traducers like Homer, Hume, Kant, Levy Bruhl and in this context, Hegel are all just bent on using racism and colour-branding politically as a potent tool for oppression, exploitation, dehumanization and annihilation.

The baffling thing is that most if not all the literature on race states that race talk was not really a major concern in the ancient era, rather those in the ancient period compartmentalized and designated beings using their religion, language, culture and environment (HANNAFORD 1996). Meaning that the race-talk was only topical during colonialism. That is, race-talk and racism was predicated on the greed and desire of the European to covert and appropriate

the resources of others and gain more power and control, just because of the dwindling resources in Europe during the period. So, the politics of colour-branding was just a stratagem that they used to validate the inhuman, irrational and uncritical models and modes by Europeans to accomplish their goals of power/control and resources. But the fact remains that colour-branding in any guise is not only specious but quite appalling, this is sequel to the fact that these colours were symbolically used. Now, irrespective of the fact that people like Gay Byron (2002), and others consented to the non-existence of colour-branding in the ancient period, others scholars like Robert Hood (1994, 36) have it on record that the foremost poet in ancient Greece Homer, was indeed the first person to colour-brand Africans. He did this when he described Africans as *Aethiops* or sun-burnt-face or sun-darkened face.

The point here is that anything that has been burnt by fire, or anything under the blaze of the sun, is expected to appear dark or black. Therefore, one cannot say that the designation *burnt-face* is complementary within the race-talk, neither is it neutral. More still, it is even possible to go back in history around the 13th and 12th centuries BCE, some centuries even behind Homer, to have an idea of the initial artistic patterns of colour-brandings of human beings in the tomb paintings of ancient Egyptians. David Goldenberg in his work, [The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam] (GOLDENBERG 2003), made reference to the tomb paintings of the ancient Egyptians and it was palpable that in Egypt there were representations of peoples with different colours. Although, as against that of Homer none of those artistic paintings on the tomb betrayed racial emotions or was geared towards colour-branding. As a matter of fact, the red-brown colour was what the Egyptian was painted with, which means that all they wanted to show was to identify nationalities rather than create any hierarchical structure of branding people with different colours. Flowing from the foregoing, Chimakonam (2019, 19) argued that the politics that stemmed from “colour-branding” have become a moral issue that produced three problems, namely:

1. The dilemma of colour-blindness and colour-consciousness.
2. Categorisation of human (attributes) with colour symbolism.
3. Categorisation of human (attitudes) with colour symbolism.

So, the issue is that there is a moral problem whenever human beings are branded and profiled with colour, especially when some positive colours are employed to profile some people and the negative colours are employed to profile others. And for Chimakonam (2019, 20), the former is just akin to a neatly printed notice “mind the glass,” and the latter is like a thickly painted warning signpost “danger, keep off,” this approach, which Chimakonam (2019) describes as “colour-branding” becomes a case of colour-conscious racism. Branding beings as either black, red, yellow, brown, or, white is the same thing as putting up a stay off sign around a person as he walks down the road. So, it can be said that colour-branding and racism, remain some of the most nauseating

creations of humankind. But unfortunately, the progenitors and sponsors of this repulsive act of colour-branding would want to create the impression that it is a mode of demonstrating the attributes of different variety of human beings. That is why some of the scholars who subscribed to colour-branding argued that those in sub-Saharan Africa are made of black skin (BRACE 2002). And others attempt to explain the above that the black skin was because of the heat of the sun (GOLDENBERG 2009). Another group posits that the blackness is only surface-deep (BLUMENBACH 1999). However, the ultimate question remains; are Africans really black? In response to this, Tsri (2016b) argues that Africans are not black as no human being has a black skin. He says:

... the use of the terms “black” and “white” as human categories, together with the symbolic use of these terms, help to sustain the perception of Africans as inferior, because their categorical use was accompanied by a long-standing set of conceptual relationships that used the terms symbolically to connote a range of bad and good traits, respectively. This set of associations creates an underlying semantic system that normalised the assumed superiority of those labelled white and the assumed inferiority of those labelled black. The use of this dichotomy as a human categorising device cannot be separated from its symbolic use. It is therefore incumbent on egalitarians to abandon either the symbolic or the categorical use of the dichotomy. (TSRI 2016b, 120).

This negative symbolism of the term black is vivid in the submission of an African philosopher, Tsenay Serequeberhan who stated that David Hume and the German scholar Immanuel Kant were of the opinion that Africans, because of their blackness, are excluded from the realm of reason and civilization” (SEREQUEBERHAN 1991, 84). Using any model, this is simply a moral judgement. But it was Hegel, the German philosopher, who really associated skin colour with human attitudes. In his [LECTURES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF WORLD HISTORY] (1975) he says that:

Africa ... they behaved with the most unthinking inhumanity and revolting barbarity. The characteristic feature of the Negroes is that their consciousness has not yet reached an awareness of any substantial objectivity-for example, of God or the law-in which the will of man could participate and in which he could become aware of his own being. All our observations of African man show him as living in a state of savagery and barbarism, and he remains in this state to the present day. The Negro is an example of animal man in all his savagery and lawlessness. Thus, in Africa as a whole, we encounter what has been called the *state of innocence*. This primitive state of nature is in fact a state of animality. (HEGEL 1975, 147)

It is good to note that this mode of presenting peoples and branding them with colour is not tenable, as a result of the fact that in biology and in the sciences generally, there is no logic that has been used to establish that there is any form of character and intellectual differences among peoples and races (HOLLADAY 2000). The implication of this is that a racist disposition and attitude that creates a gulf between superior-inferior people, nations or races as a result of colour is mistaken, immoral and unprofessional. Although the likes of Theodore Allen (1994), in his work [The Invention of the White Race], and Browne (2016) in his text [The Retreat of Reason] argues that the ideology of race was meant to create, define and maintain hierarchical boundaries among humans, but those hierarchies that are been created are not real; rather they are just illusions and they are irresponsible and immoral models. Invariably, “the Western world feeds on illusion to sustain the perpetuation of the evil of racism on other peoples. The immorality associated with colour-politic is exactly the main reason colour-branding of humans should be discontinued...So, when one identifies as black, white or coloured, they are fostering colour-branding and perpetrating colour politics, which is the last frontier of racism” (CHIMAKONAM 2019, 18). Consequently, it is either the likes of Hume, Kant and, in the context of this paper Hegel are uncritical in creating and disseminating this disposition to colour-brand people as black or white, or they are just being out rightly immoral, unhistorical, unprofessional and inhuman.

Absolute, Yet Non-Absolute, Hegelian Geist: How can Hegel acknowledge that Africa is part, even the first part, of the (known) world and, at the same time, exclude that first part when it comes to the dialectical evolution of Spirit, from what Hegel calls “[The Classification of Historical Data]” (HEGEL 2001, 103). Prejudices, as usual, beclouded Hegel’s mind here. Either *Geist* explains all reality, including the African reality, and is therefore absolute as Hegel posits it to be, or *Geist* (because it is unable to include Negro identity and African history as part of history) loses its absoluteness. Hegel is free to choose anyone, but he cannot maintain both without self-contradiction, which he has done and that sets Hegel again, against Hegel. The *monistic* Hegel holds all reality to be one element, summarized in the word *Geist*. All that is, is *Geist*, but at differing stages of evolution. At the same time, Hegel presents a view of reality, which we know to be, not one, but plural. He proposes a dynamic dialectical process in the expression of reality. Yet, dialectics is replaced by closeness of development and continuous unfolding. This is obvious in Hegel’s methodological and historical dialectics.

Hegel states that freedom is central in reality, especially in human historical reality. Yet, he tries forcibly to comprehend the whole of history (outside the African one) within the *necessity* of the Absolute. While Hegel presents a very *individualistic* philosophical interpretation of reality and history, which led him to see philosophy as the end point of all knowledge and being (*Geist*), at the same time he ends up as an *absolutist*. No wonder he insisted that the true is the whole and the whole is the true. In the end, what counts is not the individual, not even Hegel himself, but the Absolute. This point is close to Hegel’s

spiritualistic rationalism. In the Spirit, Hegel sees everything, he sees everybody, and he sees every situation. Though he explicitly challenges Kant's critical approach, at the same time, Hegel is a victim of that critical tradition of Western philosophy. All reality is deconstructed with the hammer of rationality and, to an extent even greater than Kant, Hegel enthrones man's reason over all else, including the Divine Spirit, the God of religion.

In religion, man brings his imaginative and pious supernatural sense to bear on his life as a transcendent tending being. Yet the same Hegel does not see religion as anything higher than a construct of man. Religion remains the work of the lower reason when contrasted to pure thought, what Hegel calls self-thinking thought or Philosophy. The God of religion is, therefore, lower than the human most mature self, his reason. Hegel is seen by many to be *atheistic*, for a God that is below human reason is no God. The God of the believers, the God of faith, does not exist if one follows rigorously the Hegelian triad of Absolute Spirit: Art, Religion, and Philosophy. Also, religion with a supernatural God is precluded by Hegel's monistic view of reality already mentioned above. If all is one, then pantheism or panentheism is the result, in which case there is no transcendent. God, which constitute the subject of religion is one-sided and abstract and far from the realities of daily life. Hegel forgets the human qualities of will, love, intentionality and communications which, unlike a pure abstract Absolute Spirit makes the world go round. We recall the development approach given to knowledge and history of Hegel. One must acknowledge that Hegel had a very extensive knowledge of world history at least, of the world known in his time. Hegel's history of the world is universal history. Yet, he made that history serve a particular motive of an absolute history, culminating in the Germanic world. And when this is interrogated critically, it can be seen that Hegel's scheme is a philosophical justification for what German *authoritarianism* of the last century, *Deutschland über Alles* (Germany over all) is, and it stands as the political goal and culmination of the Hegelian theory of the absolute state.

The Uniqueness of African History and World and the Fallacies of Hegel's Racism

This paper argues contra Hegel that Africa is part of the World Spirit even on a higher level. This is because one would ask whether it really makes any historical, cultural and geographical, sense to tear Africa into three parts. Again, it is palpable that the ethnocentrism of the European wraps and traps itself in obvious contradictions by racially stating that the real Africa is south of the Sahara, while geographically asserting that Africa is a continent. Additionally, the word "European Africa" does not exist. As a result of the fact that Europe and Africa are two distinct continents. Thus, Egypt is neither connected to nor influenced by Asia. Since prehistoric times, Africans have existed at the territory north of the Sahara (DIOP 1974). For Senghor, science requires abstract thought and rigorous logic and he argued that Africans are more attached to concrete things. Although, Senghor, for the sake of validating blackness by affirming its specificity, did not hesitate to reproduce the prejudices of an era when Egyptology was in its infancy and thus, ignored the fact that Ancient Egypt, located in the northeast of the African continent, was peopled by Africans and that its impressive civilization

was the product of African spirit.⁶

In an attempt to further demonstrate Hegel contra Hegel, this paper employed Senghor's Négritude as a benchmark and as a portent scheme in refuting Hegelian racism. What Hegel saw as a lack is seen as an asset in Negritude. For Senghor, Negritude is an African theory that is a critical, thematic, coherent, existential and systematic collection of ideas that tend to react to the colonial past. It is also a form of humanism that transcends racial partitions and highlights the racial particulars peculiar to all Africans. He went ahead to talk about the African's unique culture, strong emotional scheme coupled with sensuality, and the African's natural disposition towards art and rhythm. To put his position into perspective, he used geo-climatic determinism, which he used to bring in a historical analysis, showing that psychology and race, when developed in well-determined geo-climatic contexts, are not temporal but rather historically situated. For him, this geo-climatic universe of the African Paleolithic explains African sensitivity. He says; "it is a joy to live, for all things are close by and easy, even all beings: air, water and wind, tree and bird, fish and animal. In the youthful vigor of his body, the elation of his senses, homo-sapiens is open to all objects, to all contacts, to all appeals, and even to the slightest whisper." (SENGHOR 1971, 50) From this interpretation of Negritude, it is quite obvious that nature's generosity, combined with the tropical climate, has shaped Negroes' souls and more particularly, their sensitivity, for "the Negro-African is a man of nature⁷. The abundant environment gave him a heightened sensuality." (SENGHOR 1971, 202).

He presets *négritude* as the totality of African values expressed in life itself, "permeating into the entire existence of the black man in his relation to the universe" (SENGHOR 1964, 9). Talking about the vision of Senghor, Kluback projects Négritude this way; "it is a culture...Négritude was intuitive reason, the embracing reason; it was not the eye of reason. To be precise, it was the communal warmth, the image symbol and the cosmic rhythm which did not sterilize by dividing but nourished by uniting" (2017, 10-11). Seeing Senghor's Négritude as typically an African model of thinking, it is apt to use its scheme then to confront Hegel's ideas. And our basic disposition stems from the fact that as Hegel sees life just from an idealistic and rational standpoint, Senghor, as an African was more interested in the actual reality. He even makes a general comparison between the Africans and the Europeans, exemplifying that faced with an object, the European

⁶ Senghor was well aware of the anteriority of Black African civilizations. He says, "Egypt founded the first of the historical civilization. Europe have tried in vain to refuse it this honour. In any event, it is the first of African civilizations" (SENGHOR, 1971, 88)

⁷ Let me remark that Senghor seems to be comfortable using the word *negro-African* and/or *Negro* to describe the being of African and Africans. That stems from his amplified usage of the term *negritude*. However, if he was around now and still teaching and learning as an African scholar, he would not have used those words because more and more researchers, information and impressions have been expressed to demonstrate that the words were misguided and using it now further promotes the racial schemes of those who are comfortable with it. An extensive reading of Kwesi Tsri (2016) and Jonathan Chimakonam (2018; 2019) among many others will be very significant and useful.

keeps the object at a distance, he immobilizes and fixes it; the African, on his part does not draw a line between himself and an object. He touches feels, smells and abandons his personality to become identified with it. He does not assimilate; he is assimilated. He lives a common life with the other; he lives in a symbiosis (SENGHOR 1964b). Wrapping up this point, Basile Sede Noujio notes that;

It is proven that Hegel, with his stereotype mentality, rebels against historical pragmatism, a theory stating that the historical experiences be taken seriously to learn from their strong points and evade their weaknesses. This is demonstrated in his rationalistic metaphysics which conditions him to consider Africa as a stagnant continent, doomed to remain in slavery. As a historical pragmatist, Senghor, without any intension of justifying slavery, considers it as a movement to freedom, in which nations contributed, though in a rash and inhuman manner to the development of other nations. (NOUJIO 2020, 61)

It is obvious that Hegel (2011) rather adopted a more idealistic approach. This is based on the fact that Hegel perceives every state as an end in itself, and as an external self-preservation whose internal development and evolution are on the path of necessary development and progression where the rational, i.e. justice and the consolidation of freedom, gradually emerges (HEGEL 2011). This same Hegel sees heroes like Napoleon and Caesar as world personalities whose disposition and structure was to become agents of the World Spirit. They do not have any calm enjoyment as their life was all about labour and trouble and their complete nature was naught else but their master passion (HEGEL 2007). This, however, is not in tandem with the position of Senghor, who subscribes to the conscious and responsible personalities of historical figures, Hegel perceives them as mere 'passive' instruments, only designed as passages of the spirit that is manifesting itself. For him, they were "managers of the world spirit." This implies that natural human consciousness has little or nothing to do with history. This Hegelian conviction seems to be the source of the greatest difficulty one may find in his philosophy of history. Firstly, assuming that people act from ideals or principles may be implausible. Secondly, it does not give any place to freedom, for if everything happens necessarily, then what choice do we have? Hegel conceives that the end of history; that is, the complete finality is the limit that the Spirit sets for itself: freedom (NOUJIO 2020). However, this is just a fallacy, especially against the backdrop that for Beisier, a freedom realized out of necessity cannot really be considered as freedom (BEISIER 2003). Therefore, the implication of this Hegelian gaffe is that the leader of people and even the world is the Idea, or Reason or Providence, or God, is only a real and candid expression of pantheistic thought laced with panlogicism and this ultimately leads to full-blown nihilism. So, it can be said that while Senghor can boast of a practical and phenomenological disposition towards reality, Hegel prefers to be idealistic and panlogistic. And it is blatant that this distinction remains the baseline of his anchor of the major difference between Africans and the European. And this also accounts for why he employed the term Negro to describe indigenous Africans and this is unfortunate.

Conclusion: Hegel Contra Hegel

Hegel set out to interpret world history philosophically. He identified the parts of the world known to him; Africa, Europe, and Asia. He also foresaw the New World, the Americas, as the land of the future. However, when he provided an account for those parts of the world that were important and thereby relevant to history, Hegel immediately went off track. Hegel intentionally excluded Africa. His reason was that indigenous Africa, still in the childhood of development, did not have the qualities of rationality, civilization, and material progress that he saw in Europe. Nevertheless, this paper argued that his account of Africa was false and was based on misguided eurocentrism, racism and economic greed. This is because, ignoring the contributions of Africa was in contradiction with dialectics. At least, this error makes Hegel irrelevant and at worst, noxious. And the implication is that his own models turned against him. And this makes him appear confused and complicated, as a working university academic with a career to make and an overriding desire to publicize his own thoughts and ideas on African studies. And interestingly, African scholars are still trying to come to grips with the long and enduring shadow cast by Hegel over both the past and present of the African continent (MCCASKIE 2019). Thus, given his very philosophical and historical method Hegel runs into a headlong philosophical conflict by refusing to give indigenous Africa, its rightful place in his philosophy of history and in the history and development of humanity, thought and philosophy.

Declarations

The author declares no conflict of interest and no ethical issues for this research.

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This issue is dedicated to our Assoc. Editor and a second-generation member of the Calabar (Conversational) School of Philosophy (CSP): **Prince. Prof Mesembe Ita Edet (1965-2023)**