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Reconciling Hegel with the Dialectic: On Islam and the Fate of Muslims in Hegel's Philosophy of History

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Abstract

The absence of Islam from recent scholarship on Hegel's account of world religions is puzzling. In the first part of the article, we argue that Hegel's neglect of Islam in his systematic account of religious phenomena is not accidental and that he did not think of Islam as a determinate religion. Its size and believers aside, we suggest that it is not possible to assign any determinacy to Islam as a world-historical phenomenon under Hegel's rubric, because such determinacy that applies to other religions would be in conflict with what Hegel takes to be Islam's emphasis on the negative moment of truth, its revolutionary tendencies, and its lack of any novel conceptual content as a response to Christianity. In the second part of the article, we point out how one could respond to Hegel's characterization of Islam when it is mentioned in relation to other religious traditions. First, we argue that Hegel overemphasizes the significance of Islam qua religion in explaining the history of Muslim peoples. More than that, Hegel does not see that the history of Islamic philosophy and science can be characterized by sublation and that it can be integrated into conceptual developments in the West on these terms. However, our critique of Hegel's Eurocentrism does not remain at this level, for in the third part of the article we argue for the significance of considering the response of Muslim philosophers to Hegel. In particular, we look at the responses by Mohammed al-Khosht and Mahmoud Haider, respectively. We conclude that Hegel's exclusion of Islam from any involvement in the history of the Concept indicates an undialectical commitment on his part and that to this extent being Hegelian today requires that we rectify this oversight.

Islam now exists as only an inessential moment. The Christian world has circumnavigated the globe and dominates it. For Europeans the world is round, and what is not yet dominated is either not worth the effort, of no value to rule, or yet destined to be ruled.

—Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, 464/442



Introduction

Hegel's lack of a systematic treatment of Islam as a world-historical phenomenon has puzzled commentators interested in both his account of world history and his philosophy of religion, two layers of his dialectical enterprise aimed at demonstrating the emergence and development of self-conscious freedom throughout human history.¹ Despite evidently not qualifying as a world religion that requires its distinct categorization in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel problematizes Islam throughout his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* as a proselytizing spiritual phenomenon that comes to rival Christendom only to be pushed off the stage of world history soon after.

Attempts to categorize Islam under Hegel's existing rubric of determinate religions, an attempt he himself did not quite bother with, have proven more problematic than useful. For one, commentators have to grapple with the sublation, or in this case 'consummation', problem that Islam's determinacy as a world religion could develop outside of Christianity. For if, as Hodgson suggests in the 2007 translation of the third volume of the lectures on religion, Islam had already been sublated into Christianity before its distinct emergence (*Rel* III: 242n210), then it could not have come to rival Christianity on theological grounds. If the rivalry is not theological, but rather as it has been suggested, geographical and political (Thompson 2013: 106; Almond 2010: 126), then it is very difficult to categorize Islam under Hegel's determinate religions, let alone as a world religion, despite its numerical grandeur.

Hegel's consistent declaration of the ongoing or already completed 'vanishing' of Islam from the stage of world history presents another problem. This 'vanishing' would be no small feat not only because of the well-documented empirical history of Muslim civic life around the globe but also because Islam, according to Hegel, is a religion of the Sublime which does, for better or worse, represent the Universal Idea in some capacity. How is it, then, that we could be properly Hegelian and at the same time distrust that the dialectic could work itself out in Muslim societies? Understanding the origins of this distrust must lead us not only to a re-examination of the history of Muslim societies but also to an internal critique of Hegel's premises which led him to see matters in this light.

In the first part of the article, we argue that Hegel's neglect of Islam in his systematic account of religious phenomena is not accidental and that he did not think of Islam as a determinate religion. Its size and believers aside, we suggest that it is not possible to assign any determinacy to Islam as a world-historical phenomenon under Hegel's rubric, because such determinacy that applies to other religions would be in conflict with what Hegel takes to be Islam's emphasis on the negative moment of truth, its revolutionary tendencies, and its destruction of

secular determinacy. Instead, we should understand Hegel's interpretation of Islam as a stagnant state of consciousness not moving past this indeterminate stage of religion. Since according to Hegel, what Islam brings to the table conceptually is not new, but another form of the Jewish God, Islam does not enter into his categorization of world religions at all. We maintain that only this interpretation of Islam as a non-determinate social phenomenon could justify how its confrontation with another world religion could allow its other to internally develop, and rise from the status of a particular spirituality to concrete universality while depriving Muslims of the same dialectical fate. Such a vision, we contend, is undialectical in pushing one particularity out of sight so that a false universality can be attributed to the other. In the second part of the article, we point out how one could respond to Hegel's characterization of Islam. First, we argue that Hegel overemphasizes the significance of Islam qua religion in explaining the history of Muslim peoples. More than that, Hegel does not see that the history of Islamic philosophy and science can be characterized through sublation and that it can be integrated with conceptual developments in the West on these terms. However, our critique of Hegel's Eurocentrism does not remain at this level, for we argue for the significance of considering the response of Muslim philosophers to Hegel. In the third part of the article, we point to two critiques of Hegel by Muslim philosophers. First, we reconstruct Mohammed al-Khosht's critique of Hegel's characterization of Islam. Second, we point out the limitations of al-Khosht's critique, and we reconstruct Mahmoud Haider's critique as a more promising internal critique of Hegel on the basis of Hegel's rejection of the possibility of purity. We conclude by pointing out how this critique shows that Hegel, qua Eurocentric philosopher, is not Hegelian enough.

I. The vanishing of Islam from the stage of world history

The intimate relationship between religion and philosophy is a persistent theme throughout Hegel's works. While their representational means differ, they both seek to explicate 'the eternal truth, God and nothing but God' (*Rel I*: 152/63).² Absolute self-consciousness might well be out of reach to us historical, finite subjects. And yet, Hegel contends, religion reveals the Absolute to us in the form of feeling, and philosophy in the form of propositional knowledge. Religion brings the believer to the realization that '*I am the conflict*' (*Ich bin der Kampf*) between her empirical person and the ethical universality in which she is determined to participate (*Rel I*: 213/121). At once an attempt to raise the human to universal character, and an attempt to represent universality in the concrete form of human life, religion produces 'determinate content' to confront the individual with her ethical obligations (*Rel I*: 178/87). Only such a conflict could drive individuals to mediate

their shared rationality, pursue relations of mutual recognition, and integrate themselves into a living, ethical whole. In this section, we will examine attempts to categorize Islam under Hegel's account of world religions. We contend that these attempts are not fruitful because Islam, for Hegel, does not qualify as a determinate religion proper, and did not deserve a place in the conceptual movement unfolding between other world religions. Its world-historical relevance on the other hand, we suggest, is to be attributed to what Hegel interprets as its revolutionary character and not its theological content. Since revolutionary logic, for Hegel, is not epoch-building, but rather destructive of determinacy, Hegel can utilize Islam in his world-historical teleology while also disqualifying it as a theological response to Christianity.

Despite Hegel's frequent characterization of philosophy and religion on a level playing field in terms of their object of inquiry, he also suggests that thought 'penetrates [*durchdringt*] this object' (*Rel I*: 153/63), whereas the religious consciousness devotes itself to it from without, comes to feel it, and at best brings it to representation. This latent hierarchy between religion and philosophy is not the entire story. Different religions, according to Hegel, develop different representational capacities to deliver their object to the believer, indicating that religions too must be understood in terms of a hierarchy. This is dependent on their determinate content, the ritual and customary ways by which they represent God, the Absolute Subject, to consciousness. Once again in hierarchical terms, Hegel names the venues of immediate certainty (that God is) or faith (*der Glaube*) (*Rel I*: 385–86/282), feeling (*das Gefühl*) (*Rel I*: 390/285), representation (*die Vorstellung*) (*Rel I*: 396/291), and thought (*der Gedanke*) (*Rel I*: 403/298). In response to theological doctrines forbidding any claim to knowledge about God, Hegel suggests that as a form of Spirit, human consciousness cannot help but cognize God, or at least be immediately certain of its existence (*Rel I*: 164/74). This is preparatory material: Hegel's categorization of religions will be rooted in how much he thinks their representations of the Absolute accommodate his logic of the Concept.

At times, Hegel appears to be acutely aware of the monotheistic problem, that all these religions envision an Absolute Subject with the same divine properties: 'Jews and Moslems because they know [*wissen*] God merely as the Lord, but also all the many Christians who regard God merely as the unknowable, supreme, and other-worldly being' (*Enz I*: §151, 224/296). Qua religions of the Sublime (*Religion der Erhabenheit*), Judaism and Islam uphold a notion of infinity that excludes the finite life of the human. When Christianity identifies God with the human body of Christ, it also initiates a historical process where humanity can respond with its own kenosis to unfold in historical time, elevate human experience above the merely finite, and actualize self-conscious freedom in rational institutions that embody the divine will in finite terms. Trinitarian incarnation extends well into the emerging secular institutions of the Western world. Where our observation of

the divine is not properly identified with our own reality, our reality cannot determine itself, and in turn, we cannot determine ourselves and live up to our divine calling (*W*: 85/22–23). Thus, the monotheistic threat still holds: some Christians, then, could really join the ranks of Jews and Muslims in their blind worship of a sublime object that does not mediate itself in concrete human life, and in the form of an unhappy consciousness restrict themselves to an ethical monotheism that awaits demands from a beyond. But Hegel contends that they should not, and he takes that to be the immanent purpose of Christianity, as well as of his own thought. In surveying Hegel's vision, one question we must be able to answer is whether incarnation can only be represented in the trinitarian form specific to Christian theology and whether other religious traditions such as Islam are truly unable to mediate any movement between the representation of absolute freedom in the form of divine agency and the emergence of secular institutions that embody human agency. If we cannot respond to this question affirmatively, then Hegel's disqualification of Islam among other religious traditions as a determinate religion will be vulnerable to criticisms of a parochial commitment to Christianity.

We suggest two lines of reasoning to interpret Hegel's exclusion of Islam from his categorization of determinate religions: 1) Islam, according to Hegel, offers no novel conceptual content to be dialectically treated and 2) Islam misconceives the Absolute as an opposition to concrete human life, and therefore takes on the fanatical forms of proselytization, destruction and conquest. The consequence of these two lines of contention is that Islam, for Hegel, does not qualify as a determinate religion, or as he emblematically announces: 'The [stance of] "reflection" [*Reflexion*] that we have been considering is on a par with Islam in that God has no content' (*Rel* III: 243/173). If under Islam, God has no determinate content to be consciously represented, then Islam cannot qualify as a determinate religion. As a historiographical tool that only antagonistically serves Western historical development, Islam's history does not supply the eschatological means to account for a vision of Muslim peoples' history. We maintain that for Hegel, while there is such a thing as an Islamic history in so far as it can be justified under the teleology of Western (and therefore, universal) history, there is no such thing as a history of Muslims, as particular peoples and communities sharing in the consciousness of their historical experiences.

A determinate religion has moved past mere certainty in the existence of God and has given this certainty a determinate shape across 'the definite stages of the consciousness and knowledge of spirit' (*Rel* II: 516–17/415). Examining a determinate religion reveals how its texts and symbols configure the Absolute and the relationship the believer can maintain with it in the form of rites, customs and participation in a *cultus*. In relation to each other, determinate religions are subject to a dialectical logic in the development of the Concept. On the other hand, Hegel's references to Islam in the religion lectures are scarce and scattered. Islam either comes up in relation to Judaism, as a 'denationalized' form of Judaism

(Steunebrink 2012: 208) with no distinct conception of the Absolute, or as an apparent antithesis to Christianity contending for world dominion. Hegel holds that because Islam and Judaism are both grounded in an ‘abstract category of the One’, their God only demands service, rather than inspiring free action (*Rel II*: 156).³ As such abstraction turns believers against every concrete form of human life not aligned with servitude to the One, Islam, Hegel holds, is fanatical and antagonistic against preexisting determinacy, while Jewish fanaticism is only triggered when the Jews’ servile way of life under the Jewish law is externally threatened (*Rel II*: 438/337). While both religions lack a distinction between human and divine law, a distinction that could only be occasioned by the human, trinitarian mediation of God, Judaism is characterized by a ‘formalism of constancy’ (*Formalismus der Beharrlichkeit*), of obstinacy, while Islam is characterized by a ‘formalism of expansion’ (*Formalismus der Verbreitung*) against all forms of ethical life not in line with servitude to divine law (*Rel II*: 742/628). As action is not inspired by one’s consciousness of freedom, but rather justified by demands from a beyond, in Islam, the human is simply ‘subordinated to the purpose’ of ‘world dominion’ (*Herrschaft über die Welt*) aimed at erasing forms of concrete life not aligned with the divine law (*Rel II*: 500/399). A misconceived Absolute creates, rather than a theological challenge with new conceptual content for the dialectic to process, a political antagonist against those mediating their rationality in concrete social formations, institutions and states built around human laws. Islam, as the ultimate form of Oriental spirituality, embodies a final attempt at evacuating Spirit of determinate content and subjectivity. Islam’s pursuit of world domination comes to justify the teleological commitment to colonialism, where Western violence is not thought to *domineer*, but rather is welcomed as a force that evangelizes, frees and diversifies Spirit with human particularity.⁴

Islam revolutionizes, and that is not at all to its benefit according to Hegel. While it only recognizes ‘believers’ as opposed to an exclusive nation, its fanatical ethos allows for little social ties to subsist beyond the family (*Rel II*: 158/577–78). No social hierarchies can emerge, no social difference can be mediated in the form of work, and no property relations can take hold among the believers. Hegel argues that this is mostly problematic for Muslims themselves since the fanaticism of negation does not allow for the concretion of ethical life among them:

In this One, all the particularity of the Orient drops away, all caste differences, all birthrights. No positive right exists, no political circumscription of individuals. Property and possessions, all particular purposes, are null and void. There is no establishment of cause and effect, and when this nullity is realized it becomes destructive and devastating. That is why Islam devastates (*vernichtet*), converts (*bekehrt*) and conquers (*erobert*) all. (*W*: 475/459)

Islam's domination of others is predicated on its willingness to absolve itself from all determinacy, that of others as well as its own, the concrete life of its believers, and its political order, which are always ready to be eradicated for the purposes of the revolutionary representation of the Idea, that is, through the negation of another. The conceptual de-differentiation of the Absolute leads the believer 'to submerge [*versenken*] itself in the unity of God', undermining the possibility of any social order ahead (*Rel* III: 242/171). Oriental despotism constitutes a settlement, the 'only rational relationship' these people hold onto as a vestige of civility, all believers subordinated to 'an iron rule' coercing them into 'not bringing themselves to ruin' (*W*: 326/259–60). We disagree with the interpretation that Islam's denationalization of Judaism indicates 'a step forward' for Hegel's Islam (Steunebrink 2012: 215), or that its revolutionary tendencies separate it from the rest of the Orient (Ventura 2015: 69) since Islam's proselytizing fanaticism is predicated on its opposition to concrete human life and determinate representations of the Absolute. Hegel argues that Judaism has a representation, albeit an inadequate one, of the Absolute:

That the Jewish people gave itself up wholly to this service is connected with their representation of God as the Lord. This explains also their admirable steadfastness, which was not a fanaticism of conversion [*Fanatismus des Bekehrens*], as exists in Islam, but a fanaticism of stubbornness [*Fanatismus der Hartnäckigkeit*]. (*Rel* II: 685/577)

The legal mediation Judaism requires for its believers to interact with the profane side of existence creates an obstinate civic life around those laws. No such determinacy subsists among Muslims, according to Hegel. If Islam is to be understood as an 'advance over the other religions of the East' (Stewart 2011: 53), it could only be as the culmination of an unmediated universal, the largest possible space an unmediated universal can take up in empirical human history, and its ultimate overcoming by the mediated universal of the West. As Habib has emphasized, for Hegel, Islam's fanaticism, which is rooted in the 'abstract nature of their worship' of the divine, never reaches the kind of concretion evident in the secular institutional development across the Western world of the nineteenth century (Habib 2018: 66). We suggest that this vision renders Islam not the mere 'antithesis of Christian historical development' (Habib 2018: 67), but rather, the historical precondition of Christian historical development. For Hegel, Islamic fanaticism depends on the existence of determinate social and institutional structures that can be destroyed in the interest of the abstract representation of the divine idea. It is because of this dependence that Islam is 'essentially negative' towards the outside world (*W*: 475/459) and is characterized by a 'formalism of expansion' (*Formalismus der Verbreitung*) in its historical emergence and development (*Rel* II: 742/628). When the Christian world still depended on '[o]utward relations' to

‘constitute epochs’ (*W*: 464/442), Islam’s challenge of abstract unity against European states was a necessary moment for ‘lasting, enduring, and intelligible establishment of relationships’ to take hold in the West (*W*: 499/493). Therefore, Islam can hardly be considered the last teacher unto the West (Schulin 1958: 122), at best, it is the ultimate training ground for the World-Spirit to take hold in the West.

Even if Islam shares in Judaism’s abstract conception of God, we suggest that for Hegel’s Islam, the same conception does not take on any determinate character. Islam’s representation of the One is always predicated on the indeterminate negation of another. As with any other abstract unity, when external content has been negated to uphold it, the representation of the One vanishes along with the negated determinacy. Hegel often compares Islam’s indeterminate representation of the One to the ‘epistemological renunciation’ with which he characterizes the Enlightenment (Almond 2010: 118). As ‘the religion of the Enlightenment’ (*die Religion der Aufklärung*), Hegel states, Islam cannot afford to preserve its elevation above all that is worldly by way of reflection (*Re*/III: 244/173). Such renunciation is always coupled with voracious consumption, both in the case of Islam and Enlightenment reasoning or the French Revolution for that matter. Enlightenment reasoning, too, is cursed by the demand ‘that difference, diverse being, is to become for the I what is its own’ and loses itself as it ‘rummages around through all the innards of things’, never reaching determinacy through the consumption of empirical content (*PbG*: §241, 143/186). Its other modern parallel, the French Revolution is characterized by a negation of all that is ‘incompatible with its own indeterminacy’ (*PR*: §5, 39/52). The desire to maintain one’s own indeterminate truth in the face of concrete life creates no determinate representation of the Concept. Hegel concludes that Islam could rival Robespierre’s ‘*la liberté et la terreur*’ with its own ‘*la religion et la terreur*’.⁵

If Hegel provided a strictly temporalized teleological movement, the emergence of Islam after Christianity would be problematic for his account of religions. While a temporal progression can be recognized between the distinct stages of determinate religions (i.e. between natural religion, supra-natural religion, Roman religion and Christianity), the rule is not as strictly held between the determinate religions of a particular stage (e.g. Buddhism before Hinduism). Instead, Hodgson has suggested in his editorial introduction to the 1827 lectures that Hegel’s ordering of world religions was not a priori, but rather experimental, and consisted in a kind of ‘conceptual play’ stimulated by growing research in the nineteenth century (Hodgson 1988a: 14). While the emergence of world religions can still be understood in logical continuity, Hodgson contends that this view does not require Hegel to commit to an evolution of religions unfolding strictly temporally (Hodgson 1988b: 12). So, the movement of the Concept does consummate itself in Christianity and its Protestant ethic, but that does not require a commitment to the evolutionary model that allows only for linear temporalization.

With regard to the original problem, we maintain that the non-temporal teleology of world religions does not justify Islam's absence qua religion as a response to Christianity. Hegel could have well considered Islam's ostensibly unmediated, unhuman God in response to the trinitarian God, and afterwards declare it dialectically defunct, and thus still uphold Christianity as the consummate religion. Islam did not emerge far away from the reach of Christianity. In fact, in the Eastern Mediterranean where Islam found its initial moment of expansion, the trinitarian mediation of divine agency as a representation of absolute freedom could not have been an absent insight. Of course, Hegel's immediate retort would be to reduce the expansion of Islam to the function of military conquests. However, as Islam describes, like Judaism, a state of consciousness that guides ethical orientation and activity, how far could it have been imposed on its believers from without? This vision is further complicated by the fact that according to Hegel, the same people had occupied an ostensibly superior phenomenological state before their subjugation during the rise of Islam as a world religion. Moreover, it is Hegel's contention that '[t]he state is the actuality of the ethical Idea', which represents the development of consciousness as manifested in the ethical relations of a people (PR: §257, 275/398). So, if we follow Hegel's views more strictly, we must maintain that states do not impose new shapes of consciousness, rather, the actuality of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) produces its own institutional organization in the form of a state as such. Accordingly, so-called Islamic states could not have been anything but an expression of the development of consciousness among their peoples. Hegel can either follow the blind conquest premise and argue that the Islamic fanaticism of conversion (*der Fanatismus des Bekehrens*) did not disseminate any genuine insight, or he must concede that Islamic theology sparked a genuine moment of conceptual development. With regard to the first option, if we were to reduce all Islamization to the function of military conquest, Hegel would still have to concede that so-called Islamic states still embodied the ostensibly superior Christian insight known to their inhabitants. 'Spirit is for Spirit', Hegel states when responding to the doctrine that God lies beyond the limits of human knowledge (*Rel* I: 164/74). Accordingly, no act of conquest should be able to convert consciousness out of its fundamental property of being an expression of Spirit objectifying itself. With all our means exhausted, the question remains as to why Islam does not officially enter the dialectic.

The response Islam receives from Christendom is a political-historical one, rather than a theological-conceptual one, rendering Islam 'an *internal* moment of the Christian tradition' and nothing else beyond it (Harris 1991: 102). Internal, that is, not to the conceptual development of the Christian Absolute, but rather to the development of secular institutions to regulate Christian civil society in its reign over the rest of the world. We can thus distinguish between external and internal ways of Islam's implication in the development of the Concept: Hegel

contends that Muslim societies are only *externally* involved in the conceptual movement, that is, their interactions with Christendom constitute a necessary condition for the secularization of the Universal Idea as a set of institutions and laws throughout the Western world. However, we suggest that Hegel, due to his own parochial commitments, neglects to recognize the possibility that this transformation of the idea can be manifested *in* the experiences of Muslim societies themselves, and not merely in the experiences of others to which they historically contributed. The latter possibility would require Hegel to view Islam, not as a mere historical contender for world domination, but as a determinate religion whose representation of absolute freedom makes such confrontation possible to begin with. Doing so in Hegel's place is not a denouncement of his systematic premises, but rather a continuation of the same.

A more amenable interpretation of Hegel's categorization of world religions is Thompson's reading that Christianity and its temporal unfolding of the Absolute leave open a temporary space for alternate conceptions of the Absolute to emerge and contend for their own claims to universality (Thompson 2013). Thompson's solution explains the possibility of religion after Christianity, so long as Christianity is not reconciled with a concrete, institutionalized form of ethical life. Similarly, Stewart describes Hegel's characterization of Islam (along with Deism) as 'retrograde movements' which recycle the already-processed contents of the dialectic as though they were new insights (Stewart 2022: 15). However, this characterization does not justify Islam's disappearance from the stage of world history as a non-controversial interpretation of the history of Muslim peoples. Quite the contrary, if Islam simply reprocesses content that Christianity has pushed further down the dialectical logic, that should render Islamic societies all the more amenable to negotiation, interpretation and reconciliation. While we will question whether Islam truly forbids any form of mediation between divine agency and human history, even if we granted Hegel this highly problematic premise, it does not justify the lack of any reconciliatory survey of Muslim peoples and their traditions in light of their place in world history, which Hegel affirms abundantly. Hegel's reconciliatory work with Islam as a representation of the Concept does not get past declaring it conceptually abstract and dialectically unamenable. The complexity of Muslim civic life, the vast array of theological disputes and distinctions among Muslims, and ongoing modernization reforms in Europe's Muslim capital figure nowhere in his commentary. Something lacking in determinacy cannot be reconciled with, instead it can only be sublated into determinate form in order to live on. Yet, pushing something out of sight in the way Hegel does in his account of Islam cannot amount to sublating it. But then, by what Hegelian means do we reckon with Hegel's undialectical treatment of Islam?

Hegel suggests that history is a dialectical process (*Dialektik der Endlichkeit*) characterized by conflict, exchange and reconciliation, which finite set of

interactions will ultimately create the universal Spirit with its own court of judgement (*Weltgericht*) against all contenders (PR: §340 371/503).⁶ So, any judgement issued against any contender should be the immanent product of this process, and not imposed from without. Moreover, Hegel contends that the execution of this judgement is not the function of blind necessity, but rather the consequence of ‘spirit’s self-consciousness and freedom’ as it is manifested in the actions and experiences of the different contenders being judged (PR: §342, 372/504). But since the judge is also Spirit as embodied in its increasingly rational institutions, Hegel’s vision runs the risk of universalizing a set of premises for evaluating the different contenders when these originally pertain to no more than the interests, passions and customs of one of the many contenders. Being that these institutions are now Western spaces with exclusively internal deliberations, then the court of world history becomes a partisan venue that renders normative what is originally no more than a particular habit, taste, or opinion, no longer delivering judgements which spontaneously emerge out of the ongoing negotiations between the different contenders. In doing so, Hegel makes the Occident vulnerable to a criticism he levies against non-Christian and non-Western traditions: Spirit is supposed to embrace its future ‘perfectibility’ (*die Perfektibilität*) and further education into higher, evermore complex shapes of consciousness (PR: §343, 372–73/504). But it was Hegel himself who foreclosed this possibility for the Western world when he declared that its ‘[o]utward relations no longer constitute epochs’ and that the only differences yet to be worked out by the dialectic are its internal affairs (W: 464/442). If the Europeans have been made to think that history was essentially over for them, that they no longer stand to be negated by any other contender, it is for them that the conceptual movement has decisively stopped since they were crowned with this unmediated title of purity. With no more negation to experience and therefore no ‘higher shape’ to assume, it is the European who has ironically been condemned by Hegel’s own premises to the ‘superficial play of contingent and allegedly “merely human” aspirations and passions’ for the rest of time (PR: §343, 373/504).

To suggest that Muslims or others are incapable of mediating the Concept in their historical experience is to assign a ‘cannot’ that is as illegitimate as the ‘ought’ Hegel suggests political critics are prone to assigning to actuality. The fact that something has not been thus far is not certain knowledge that it will not or cannot be in the future. Hegel contends that philosophy ‘deals solely with the idea which is not so impotent as to demand that it merely ought [*sollen*] to be actual without being so and, hence, it deals with an actuality of which those objects, arrangements, situations, etc., are only the superficial exterior’ (*Enz*: I: §6, 34/49). The kind of critical gaze that assigns an ought to actuality rather than engaging it is not philosophical, that is, it is not willing to respect the ongoing conceptual movement, let alone be a part of it. We should recognize the same spoilsport in Hegel’s assignment of *cannot*,

that Islam cannot accommodate the conceptual movement, that Muslim societies cannot transform their social reality, that Muslim culture cannot create determinate representations of the Absolute, and that a non-trinitarian God cannot concretize ethical life. This time around, it is Hegel holding up a normative yardstick frozen in time, dismissing entire traditions of people instead of observing the possibility that the conceptual movement manifests itself in their experiences. None of his assumptions concerning Muslim peoples are treated with the same caution Hegel grants European societies, with the grace that what does not correspond to one's *ought* might be the superficial exterior of the Concept working itself out through a myriad of less-than-ideal conditions of actuality.

Even though self-conscious freedom might have its chance of emerging anywhere, Hegel suggests that this is no guarantee that every attempt will be successful. His notion that '[t]he impotence of nature, however, brings with it an inability to exhibit the logical forms in their purity' (*Enz* I: §24, 61/84) grants him the unphilosophical assignment of the *cannot* at his whim, which proves especially contentious when applied to the possibility of non-European ethical life. To suggest that the logical forms cannot be mediated to their purity in the ethical lives of certain communities as opposed to Europeans is to suggest that those communities belong more to the blind realm of natural processes rather than that of self-conscious ethical life. Hegel's characterization of Muslims as sensuously driven and submerged in their passions (*W*: 476/460) is further evidence that for Hegel, Spirit has not transcended nature among them to find its way into self-determination and concrete individuality. If these conditions are not met, then perhaps Muslims will vanish as Muslims, or be pushed into world-historical insignificance under European domination with no epoch-constituting step forward. As we argue in the following two sections, Hegel's premature assignment of concrete universality to Europe in its conclusive reign over World-Spirit is not dialectically justified.

II. A place for Islamic intellectual history in Hegel's account

In this section we argue that overemphasis on theology as a key to understanding historical developments leads Hegel to assert that Islam refuses to partake in the game of sublation; this, however, is shown to be false. We point out that the manner in which Hegel's mischaracterization of philosophy in the Muslim world leads him to overlook similarities between his conception of the task of philosophy and similar conceptions which obtained in the Muslim world. Thinking of how we can respond to Hegel's characterization of Arabic philosophy as too closely tied to Islam, raises an important terminological and conceptual issue in relation to discussions of the relationship between Hegel's philosophy and Orientalism, namely

the issue of the manner in which the word 'Islam' is deployed. This terminological confusion emerges in the use of the word 'Islam' to refer to both the religion and the civilization(s) associated with it. The polysemic deployment of the word 'Islam' leads to problems, especially in relation to how one would go about understanding philosophy written by Arabic-speaking Muslim authors. It would be more appropriate to make a distinction between the 'Islamic' and the 'Islamicate', as conceptualized by Marshall G.S. Hodgson. Hodgson distinguishes between the religion which we call 'Islam', whose cultural and social expressions we can call 'Islamic', and 'the overall society and culture associated historically with the religion', whose members often engaged in activities that we can refer to as 'Islamicate', because such activities are not directly an expression of Islam nor of religion as such (Hodgson 1974: 57). This distinction can be helpful for historians of philosophy who want to acknowledge that philosophers who lived in a social and cultural context dominated by Islam did not merely philosophize as an expression of Islam as a religion. Moreover, Hegel does have the conceptual tools to make this distinction because he also makes a distinction between Christianity qua religion and the historical process of the development of Christian civil society. The reduction of Islamicate society to an attempt to actualize a theological orientation towards an abstract absolute cannot explain the manner in which Muslim peoples interacted with previously existing social formations and intellectual traditions.

The most obvious example here is the interaction between the bearers of Islam as a religion and pre-existing relationships of social domination in the societies that they converted—the preservation of slavery (and indeed, its expansion), for example. It is simply false that Islam levelled all distinctions as Hegel claims. While from a theological perspective Islam clearly prohibits the enslavement of Muslims, this prohibition has not been effective in actuality. One way in which we can respond to Hegel's claims is to point out, using specific case studies that can serve as counter examples, that Hegel overemphasizes the dominance of religion in the cultures of medieval Christendom and Islamdom (especially in relation to philosophical activity).

For Hegel, a necessary condition that must be met for a body of thought to be considered philosophy is that it be autonomous in the sense that its standards of evaluation are autonomously assigned (*GPb*: 138/92). For Hegel, Islamic(ate) philosophy is not autonomous. He follows Maimonides in contending that 'they [the Arabic philosophers] were not, however, guided, by the nature of this material [i.e., Greek philosophy] itself but only looked to how it had to be deployed in order to support their assertions [*Behauptungen*, i.e. their religious commitments]' (*GPb*: 36/17). Hegel ignores disputes in medieval Islamicate philosophy aimed at establishing the relative autonomy of philosophy, e.g. Ibn Rushd's *Decisive Treatise*. For Ibn Rushd, both philosophy and religion express the same truth, and when it appears that the results of demonstrative philosophical reasoning are in contradiction with

the claims made in the Law (*Shari'a*), then the latter should be interpreted so that it accords with the former, 'for truth does not oppose truth; rather, it agrees with and bears witness to it' (Ibn Rushd 2001: 9). Hegel overlooks the fact that Ibn Rushd's view of the relationship between philosophy and religion is similar to Hegel's own view. For Hegel, philosophy expresses in clear discursive language that which is expressed only indirectly in religious discourse. Philosophy 'transform[s] our representation [*Vorstellung* i.e., image-laden discourse] into concepts [*Begriffe*]' (*Rel* I: 397/292). In fact, this is similar to Ibn Rushd's view of the relationship between philosophy and Islam. Ibn Rushd is conscious of the fact that qua Islamic jurist he speaks in representational terms, while qua philosopher he deploys clearer conceptual language to express the same content (Ibn Rushd 2001: 19).

Our criticism of Hegel here might appear unfair if we do not address the question of whether Hegel could have known of Ibn Rushd's views on the relationship between philosophy and religion. There is a fairly accurate account of Ibn Rushd's work in Dietrich Tiedemann's *Geist der speculativen Philosophie*. A text which we know that Hegel read when preparing his lectures on the history of philosophy because Hegel himself tells us so (e.g. *GPh*: 225–26, 230–34). Tiedemann distinguishes between Ibn Rushd's discourse as a philosopher (with its emphasis on demonstrative reasoning) and his discourse as a religious judge (*qadi*), which involves popularizing philosophical ideas through the utilization of imaginative representations (Schick 2023: 132). Moreover, an even clearer account of Ibn Rushd's conception of the relationship between religion and philosophy (which also makes salient its similarities with Hegel's own understanding of that relationship) can be found in the work of another historian of philosophy whom Hegel also frequently cites in his lectures on the history of philosophy, namely Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann. Tennemann, in his *Geschichte der Philosophie* accurately describes Ibn Rushd's theory of the relationship between philosophy and religion: 'as an orthodox Muslim, he [Ibn Rushd] believed in the truth of the Quran but regarded it as popular guidance for the common people and a stooping to the level of their way of thinking' (cited in Schick 2023: 132). There seems to be little doubt that Hegel was familiar with Tennemann's work (e.g. *GPh*: 439). Moreover, it would appear that Hegel had access to the Qur'an (Stewart 2022: 187). Thus, the availability of sources makes it clear that one cannot dismiss the criticisms which we have raised against Hegel's account of Islam and Islamic intellectual history as unfair because of the dearth of sources that Hegel had available to him.

Furthermore, Hegel's assumption that the distinction between human law and divine law is overridden in Islamic societies in favour of the latter (i.e. divine law annihilates all human law) is unjustified. This assumption about the annihilation of human law in favour of divine law would seem to follow from Hegel's claim that Islam leads to the obliteration of all determinate historically emergent forms in favour of a fixation on the divine which is an abstract universal. However, the

history of Islamicate intellectual discourse would seem to indicate that the human secular realm was demarcated from the realm in which divine injunctions are dominant. This would indicate that Hegel's account of the theological content of Islam and of its historical actualization in various forms of discourse is not quite accurate. The religious realm did not in fact annihilate the secular realm. Medieval scholars in Islamicate societies frequently distinguished between that which pertains to religion (*din*) and that which pertains to the affairs of 'this world' (*dunya*). For example, the Andalusian scholar, Abu al-Fadl 'Iyāḍ (d. 1149) in his well-known account of the prophet Mohammed's life makes the following claim:

as for the things connected to this world, it is not a precondition that the prophets be protected from a lack of knowledge about them or from believing them to be different from how they actually are. This does not constitute a blemish in them; their chief concern is the afterlife and knowledge of it, and the matter of the *Shari'a* and its laws. The affairs of this world are quite different to that (cited in Abbasi 2020: 203)

A distinction was often made between the norms which govern worship and religious obligations on the one hand and the norms which govern civil political administration on the other. Now in so far as we can say that Hegel believes that, once monotheistic religion emerges on the historical scene,⁷ an adequate recognition of the distinction between human and divine law can only occur through the mediation provided by the trinitarian conception of God in Christianity (i.e. that one needs a trinitarian conception of God for divine law to not annihilate human law), then it would appear to be the case that Hegel is simply mistaken here. That is, a careful examination of the relevant historical facts shows that, even when monotheistic religions emerge on the scene, a trinitarian conception of God is not in fact a necessary condition for an adequate recognition of the distinction between human law and divine law.

Hegel, as we have seen above, thinks of Islam as a religion that flattens everything in its path. For Hegel, there is no room for individual subjectivity in Islam, since there is no way for individual human subjectivity to interact with the substantial (God), except through complete submission to it by way of self-annihilation (Ventura 2018: 30). Not even the thinking subject survives. And it is precisely for this reason that Hegel leaves out the Islamicate world from his account of the conceptual movement of human history. If Islam refuses to partake in the game of sublation, then it simply cannot be incorporated into a conceptual movement which consists in sublation. In fact, Hegel's account discounts the importance of understanding Islam as a religion of late antiquity which carries out a critique of Judaism and Christianity (Hoyland 2012). The Qur'an is thus fundamentally a project which aims at reconciliation, and not the rejection of any pre-

existing socio-historical determinacy. The Qur'an itself makes frequent references to the historical revelations associated with Judaism and Christianity, and presents itself as the consummation of a dialectical development which sublates prior iterations of monotheism:

We have indeed given Moses the Book, and after him We sent one Messenger after another. We also gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear signs and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit. Do you, then, whenever a Messenger brings you what you do not desire, become puffed up with pride accusing some of [them] of lying and killing others? (2: 87).⁸

Just as Islam as a religion should be situated in its historical context as a religion of late antiquity, whose self-image is centred around the determinate negation of Christianity and Judaism, Islamicate philosophy is also characterized by a process of sublation, rather than the mere preservation of ancient Greek philosophy or its sole use for providing justification for religious beliefs. It is precisely here that the work of historians of Islamicate philosophy and science is significant. This work clearly shows that Islamicate philosophers did not merely preserve ancient Greek philosophy (think of the common image of Ibn Rushd as 'the commentator' on Aristotle's work) or reject it out of hand (think of the common image of al-Ghazali as bringing about the end of Islamicate philosophy through his rejection of ancient Greek philosophy). If this were the whole extent of Islamicate philosophers' interaction with Greek philosophy, then Hegel would be justified in his claim that there is no room for a conceptual movement characterized by sublation in Islamicate societies, and that there is no place for Islam and for Islamic philosophical theology in a world-historical account where conceptual movement is characterized by sublation. For Hegel, we know, it is the *Aufhebung* of contradictions that is the driving force behind progressive development (*SL*: 745/6, 562). The interaction between Islamicate philosophy and Greek philosophy can be characterized in such terms (Adamson 2016: 199). In fact, if as Kenneth R. Westphal suggests, Hegel is concerned with showing what account of human reason can explain all the different forms of human mindedness and our ability to interact with the physical world across the globe (Westphal 2020: 57), then leaving out the history of Islamicate philosophy and science amounts to a severe limitation on Hegel's account. Moreover, as the Lebanese philosopher of religion, Mahmoud Haider, notes, the central problem seems to be that while Hegel articulates the historical development of the philosophical discourse of modernity, in Hegel's account 'modernity has not yet been able to transcend Europe's geo-theological horizons' (Haider 2019: 254). As we will see below, for Haider, this manifests itself in a thoroughly un-Hegelian conception of identity that presupposes that absolute cultural or civilizational purity is possible. The Arabic critique of Hegel by Hegelian Muslim

philosophers attempts to demonstrate that Hegel violates his own systematic commitments in his account of Islam.

III. Hegel's self-betrayal: on the Arabic reception of Hegel

In this section we argue that attempts to point out Hegel's Eurocentrism and Orientalism are incomplete without reference to the reception of Hegel's work by thinkers who belong to social groups marginalized in Hegel's philosophy of history. This stems from the requirements of completeness, for without taking those thinkers into consideration our account of the relationship between Hegel's philosophy and Orientalism would be incomplete. It also stems from the internal standards which are implicit in the critique of Eurocentrism in the realm of philosophy, i.e. the claim that Euro-American philosophy does not take into account other philosophical voices and traditions. In other words, a critique of Hegel's Eurocentrism that does not take into account the reception of Hegel's philosophy in the non-European world is still Eurocentric. To this end, we turn to critiques offered by Mohammed al-Khosht and Mahmoud Haider. We suggest that al-Khosht argues that, on Hegelian grounds, not only should Islam be seen as a determinate religion, but it should also be seen as the consummate religion, thus displacing Christianity. While this is an internal critique of Hegel, it still preserves Hegel's hierarchical typology of religions, only inverting it. We then ask whether it is possible for there to be an internal critique of Hegel which does not perpetuate Hegel's hierarchical commitments. We argue that Mahmoud Haider points towards such a critique in emphasizing that Hegel's disqualification of Islam from the conceptual movement which accompanies the historical development of the Western world is really an attempt to preserve purity. We show that one can reconstruct an argument on Hegelian grounds that Eurocentrism qua attempt to preserve civilizational purity is an incoherent project.

Mohammed Othman Al-Khosht, an Egyptian philosopher specializing in philosophy of religion and culture, and current president of Cairo University, has criticized Hegel's account of Islam for being undialectical and therefore insufficiently Hegelian in character. The argument here is that Hegel's understanding of the dialectic involves the suspension of all presuppositions. For Hegel, dialectic involves thinking of one's object without presuppositions. Consequently, Hegel's account of Islam, which is dominated by presuppositions and historical distortions, is in fact not Hegelian at all in the proper sense:

The development of religions as exhibited in Hegel's work is contradictory with their historical development, and this indicates that Hegel attempted to distort history to serve his own purposes, which indicates his lack of objectivity. For he does

not philosophically interpret history as it is. But rather he reconstructs history according to a preconceived model, which in the end serves to buttress his personal prejudices. (al-Khosht 2018: 41)

Yet, for al-Kosht, Hegel is seen as providing a model of Enlightenment modernizing discourse that allows room for religion in contrast to the materialist atheism of some of the Enlightenment *philosophes* such as Diderot and d'Holbach. In fact, it appears that al-Kosht finds Hegel valuable precisely because of Hegel's critique of the abstract formal universalism of the Enlightenment and of the fanaticism that it gives rise to. Most of al-Kosht's publications have concerned the philosophy of religion. He has published at least fifteen books on philosophy of religion over his career, as well as one book on Hegel's theory of civil society. However, it is in the article that we are discussing here that al-Kosht brings Hegel to bear directly on the problems of contemporary Arabic philosophy of religion (which tends to bleed into contemporary Arabic philosophy of culture). The key problem in this context has to do with the place of religion in the modern world, and the possibility of a modernist, non-secular movement for reform. However, for Hegelian thought to be made available for solving this problem, a reckoning had to be made with Hegel's unfavourable portrayal of Islam.

As part of his reformist project, Al-Kosht utilizes Hegel's claim that Islam is a religion of fanaticism, but he re-directs it towards Islamist thought and specifically the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. For al-Kosht it is not Islam which is a religion of fanaticism, rather it is Islamism with its inflexible adherence to abstract formulas which is fanatical, and he thus regards Islamism (or what has come to be called political Islam) as a perversion of Islam. Al-Khosht goes so far as to indirectly argue for an alliance between Hegelian philosophy and Islam, in so far as he argues that it is in fact Islam which should be considered the consummate religion: 'Islam clearly deserves to be considered the Consummate Religion for in it Spirit is discovered as Absolute Spirit abstracted from sensuousness' (Al-Khosht 2018: 48). For Hegel, Christianity introduces the idea that 'God is now known as reconciling himself with the world [...] this includes not merely external nature but, in particular, human individuality' (*GPh*: 18/2). However, while al-Khosht recognizes the significance of this attempt to present Absolute Spirit as diachronically immanent in the world, he thinks that this immanence is accomplished more clearly in Islam, where God's interaction with humanity is not mediated through the incarnation in the figure of Christ who is not completely human, but is rather mediated through the wholly human figure of Mohammed qua prophet who carries forth a divine message which involves a recounting of past attempts to mediate between the divine and human realms. For al-Khosht, this amounts to a greater elevation

of the human individual than the Christian doctrine of incarnation. For Islam, according to al-Khosht, does not claim that the individual human being needs to be anything more than a human being to enter into communion with the divine, and to this extent it places more axiological weight on the individual qua finite human being than Christianity, which in order to elevate the individual human being, must deny his full humanity through the figure of Christ. This is indicated by the claim that while Islam makes clear distinctions between different levels of being, e.g. God and mortal finite humans, it does not allow one level to annihilate the other: ‘Islam separates the different levels of beings without blending them, and *without the tyranny of one level over the other*, divinity is different from nature, and different from humanity and different from animality, and each level [of being] is different from the other’ (Al-Kosht 2018: 47–48).

Humans need not be more than what they are, i.e. finite rational beings, for us to speak of them as creatures ‘in whom God has placed a portion of himself’ (Al-Khosht 2018: 48). In fact, we can read al-Khosht as integrating Islam into Hegel’s philosophy of history through a process of inversion: ‘Islam assimilated all the positive elements of the previous religions, and cleansed the concept of God from imaginative conceptions which likened him to humans, or which conflated God with nature, or which conflated between God and other levels of being’ (Al-Khosht 2018: 47). For al-Khosht, belief in incarnation and the death of God might have been necessary in the historical context within which ancient Egyptian religion emerged. Osiris had to be depicted as dying and then as being reincarnated as Lord of the Underworld, because the concept of divinity had not yet been wholly separated from sensuous finite existence. But in the context where Christianity emerged, the death of God in and through incarnation is an atavism which is superfluous and even regressive: ‘for this [the positing of the incarnation and the death of God] involves regression to the stage of primitive religion in Egypt and Syria, for in this primitive stage the moment of death was necessary for divine existence, as is evidenced in the Egyptian myth of Osiris and the Syrian myth of Adonis’ (al-Kosht 2018: 48). Islam, on this view, dispenses with this atavistic moment in Christianity.

While it is true that in classical Islamic theology God is transcendent, divine immanence was also emphasized. The key problem in the history of Islamic theology was precisely how to affirm God’s immanence in the world without denying his transcendence (Khalil 2006). Muslim philosophers and theologians would agree with Hegel that mediation between the divine realm and the human realm is necessary, but they would deny that this mediation is best accomplished through the trinity. Thus the key issue here is whether it is coherent to think that there could be a Hegelian philosophy of religion which denies the significance that Hegel attributed to the trinity, but which does not deny the significance, or indeed the necessity, of mediation. One approach to thinking about this issue is to distinguish between

necessary and sufficient conditions for mediation. One can say that incarnation in a Christ-like figure is a sufficient condition for mediation but is not necessary. This seems to be al-Khosht's approach.

However, there is a significant issue in al-Khosht's account, namely the fact that al-Khosht merely inverts Hegel's account. He does not deny that there is in fact a consummate religion and that this religion is superior to other religions, he merely claims that Islam is this religion. Moreover, the other world religions are left out of his account. Thus while al-Khosht attempts to criticize Hegel on Hegelian grounds, his critique nevertheless remains afflicted by the kind of narrow parochialism that afflicts Hegel's philosophy of religion. The question then becomes: can one criticize Hegel on Hegelian grounds without replicating Hegel's Eurocentric parochialism?

We suggest that a more universalist critique of Hegel from a Hegelian perspective is offered by Mahmoud Haider. Mahmoud Haider is a Lebanese philosopher of religion who in many ways can be deemed a follower of al-Khosht. Both Haider and al-Khosht are engaged in a critique of the philosophical discourse of modernity as it emerged in the West (Haider 2021). In particular, they are especially concerned with the orientalist elements of the philosophical discourse of modernity. Both Haider and al-Kosht are reacting to what we can describe as the fairly uncritical embrace of the philosophical discourse of modernity by proponents of the project of *tanweer* (Enlightenment; *Aufklärung*) in the Arabic speaking world in the late nineteenth century and up to the first half of the twentieth century. Haider and al-Kosht can be read as attempting to replace this hitherto dominant hermeneutics of innocence with a form of the hermeneutics of suspicion. Both Haider and al-Kosht published their articles in the journal *Al-'esteghrab*, the title of the journal can be translated as 'Occidentalism'. This journal is devoted to the critical study of Occidental philosophy. Its aim is to provide an intellectual platform for attempts to excavate the particularity which inheres in Western philosophical discourse and which has, according to the founders of the journal, been uncritically assimilated by a subset of the Arabic and Muslim intelligentsia during the twentieth century. Occidentalism itself qua research project was first launched by the Egyptian philosopher, Hassan Hanafi, in the 1980s. It essentially aimed at launching a critique of Western knowledge production from the standpoint of the Arab subject with the aim of discerning the limits of some of the claims to knowledge which were uncritically accepted by earlier Arab proponents of *tanweer* (Daifallah 2018: 287). Both Haider and al-Khosht adhere to this project. Yet while they do problematize the Orientalist moments in Hegel's thought in a way that was not done by some of the pioneering Hegel scholars of the Arabic speaking world, such as Imam Abdel Fattah (Abdel Fattah 1996: 354–66), they also do not repudiate Hegel entirely.

For Haider, the fundamental problem with Hegel's account of Islam is that it intends to write out the influence of Islam on conceptual developments in Western Europe in order to preserve the purity of the West:

and in our account we attempt to make clear what the Western philosophical mind [with Hegel serving as a paradigm] holds in terms of theoretical positions which have been tailored in order to diminish the significance of every element which stands outside its [perceived] civilizational purity. (Haider 2019: 248)

Haider does not focus on inverting Hegel's account of the relationship between Western Christianity and Islam. Instead, he notes that the preservation of purity is a thoroughly un-Hegelian commitment. Haider is not quite explicit about his argument here, but we can attempt to provide a rational reconstruction of it. If we take the *Science of Logic* to be at the heart of Hegel's system and to be the text which allows us to understand Hegel's conception of dialectic in the clearest way, then we can say that the opening movement of the *Science of Logic* shows that total purity that stands outside of any relations of mediation with its other cannot be had. As Stephen Houlgate puts it, 'an important key to Hegel's dialectic as a whole is the insight that all *purity* is essentially the process of its own disappearance and loss' (2006: 282). It is precisely through its other-directedness that something has its determinateness: 'Something has its existence [*Dasein*] outside its limit [*Grenze*] (or, as representation would also have it, inside it); in the same way the other, too, since it is something, has it outside it' (*SL*: 99/5, 137). There is no reason why the West as a determinate thing should be exempt from this requirement. But if it is not exempt from this requirement, then Islam (and the West's other others) must be integrated into any account of its development and not cast aside. Hegel's attempt to deny Islamic societies a place in the conceptual development of Western Europe is un-Hegelian in so far as it violates the account of limit and determinacy that he provides in the *Science of Logic*. Having shown that purity is an unstable category in the *Science of Logic*, he proceeds to completely neglect this in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. As Haider notes, a notion of total purity seems to be presupposed in Hegel's approach to Islam 'which deals with the East as if it was an entirely different planet' (Haider 2019: 263). Yet, this notion of total purity is, as we have seen above, entirely un-Hegelian. It is clear that the key problem is that what Haider calls Hegel's 'European fanaticism' leads Hegel to abandon some of the most interesting elements which have been worked out in Hegel's own philosophy. To further develop Haider's point, we should note that this critique of Hegel proceeds without the kind of axiological inversion which characterizes al-Khosht's critique. The critique of Hegel on account of the doomed attempt to preserve purity, which implies the denial of negativity, points towards the possibility of rethinking Hegel's philosophy of history in non-Eurocentric terms. It

may be objected that Hegel is in fact not a proponent of cultural purity. For example, Hegel thought of the ancient Mediterranean as a place characterized by interactions between different cultures and in his lectures on the philosophy of world history of 1822–23, he notes that ‘the historical context as a whole points to the fact that Greeks acquired many of their arts and many cultic elements—technical and other matters—from beyond the sea [i.e., from other peoples]’ (*W*: 384/333). However, while Hegel emphasizes the positive role that such cultural interactions had for developments in the ancient Mediterranean, he restricts this mixing to the ancient period—i.e. from the early modern period onwards, European developments are seen as purely internally driven, and emphasis is placed on Europe’s cultural purity.

IV. Concluding notes

It is the internal consequence of Hegel’s own thinking that universality can, in principle, emerge anywhere in the world, and where it has not yet been adequately expressed, it cannot be disqualified from anticipation. But that leaves us with the question: how concrete is Hegel’s universal when it casts most of the world out of the purview of conceptual development? Is it not revelatory of a presuppositional principle that renders the philosopher’s gaze blind to the actuality of the Concept across the non-European world? We have argued that Hegel by foreclosing this possibility betrayed the core of his philosophy. First disqualifying Islam as a determinate religion, Hegel imposed a restriction on whose historical agency can be implicated in the emergence of World-Spirit. His, though non-temporal, ultimately still hierarchical typology of religions led him to defer the explanation of history outside of Europe to Europe, exclusively. Where non-European historical experience fails to bear on European historical experience, it is conceptually vacuous, or as good as not having occurred at all. No empirical evidence should constitute the a priori assurance that non-Europeans have either disappeared from the stage of world history or that they cannot make their way back onto it. Thus, the reason why the Muslim philosophers we have examined can still identify as Hegelian philosophers is that despite Hegel’s attempt to write Islam out of the process of historical-philosophical development, this attempt can be demonstrated to be a thoroughly un-Hegelian failure to grasp the consequences of Hegel’s approach to conceptualizing world history. The idea that Hegel’s philosophy is more open-ended than Hegel himself at times allows it to be is not new. During his lifetime, some of his students had pointed this out to him. Christian Hermann Weisse notes in a letter dated 11 July 1829 to Hegel: ‘you yourself, honoured teacher, intimated orally to me one day that you were entirely convinced of the necessity of new progress and new forms of the universal Spirit even beyond the form of Science

achieved by you' (L: 540/261). The anti-colonial movements in the mid-twentieth century embody the continued self-actualization of Spirit. For if 'world history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom' then the movements which brought about freedom from colonial rule to hundreds of millions of people around the world in the second half of the twentieth century cannot be ignored in one's philosophizing about world history. What one does when one attempts to grapple with Hegel's Eurocentrism is simply respond to the new demands made by the universal Spirit. After all, it was Hegel who said that 'philosophy is *its own time comprehended in thoughts*' (PR: 21/26). The demand to recognize the existence of other ethical and intellectual traditions partaking in the conceptual movement which Hegel purports to describe is both legitimate and necessary on Hegelian grounds.

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Notes

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² Abbreviations used:

Enç I = Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline, Part I: Science of Logic*, trans. K. Brinkmann and D. O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)/*Werke* 8, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989).

GPh = Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume III: Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, trans. R. F. Brown and J. M. Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990)/*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie 4, Philosophie des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit*, ed. W. Jaeschke and P. Garniron, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986).

L = Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984)/*Briefe von und an Hegel. Band 3 1823 bis 1831*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1969).

PbG = *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. T. Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)/*Werke* 3, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989).

- PR = Hegel, *Elements of The Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)/*Werke* 7, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989).
- Rel I = Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume 1: Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson and J. M. Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984)/*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Teil I: Einleitung der Begriff der Religion*, ed. W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983).
- Rel II = *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume 2: Determinate Religion*, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson and J. M. Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)/*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Teil II: die bestimmte Religion*, ed. W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1985).
- Rel III = Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume 3: The Consummate Religion*, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson and J. M. Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)/*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Teil III: die vollendete Religion*, ed. W. Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1984).
- SL = Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)/*Wissenschaft der Logik I*, *Werke* 5, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986); *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, *Werke* 6, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003).
- W = Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1: Manuscripts of the Introduction and The Lectures of 1822–3*, trans. R. F. Brown and P. C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011)/*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, ed. K. Brehmer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996).

³ This formulation stems from the ‘Cultus’ section from the lecture manuscripts on determinate religions which is reflected in a later version of the edition used in this article, cf. *Rel II*: 62.

⁴ As noted by Pradella (2014) and Stone (2017), colonialism and imperialism do not figure as one-sided errors in Hegel’s world-historical thinking, as opposed to, say, Kant’s thought on the matter as articulated in his 1795 *Perpetual Peace*. Hegel’s use of Islam as an antagonistic source of agency against world history thus transcends his philosophy of religion, where Islam appropriates the Jewish God for the creation of an Absolute that dominates without distinction. Beyond any theological challenge, Islam creates the urgency that Western institutions follow a different course of domination, one that follows a course of cultivation that sublates social distinctions without annihilating them altogether. As Dudley argues, Islam, according to Hegel, advances the belief that self-determination is incompatible with pre-existing particularity (Dudley 2013: 127), and is as such incompatible with modernity.

⁵ This is a reference to the *Werke* edition, as in *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, *Werke* 12 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989), 431.

⁶ Just as consciousness, while mediating its self-certainty, has to overcome its contradictory premises by negating the shapes it takes on, human history is also fraught with conflicts in its endeavour to establish a ‘reconciliation of reason with reality’ (Lukács 1975: 459). But if, as

Pinkard suggests, the non-European cast members of Hegel's account are only enlisted as 'failed Europeans', that is, as people who fail to self-consciously rise above 'their natural and social worlds' that they are 'absorbed in' (Pinkard 2017: 53), then their historical experience only functions as a foil against which Reason as a phenomenon endogenous to the Western world emerges as a self-sustaining form of life. For more on Hegel's account of history as the historical experience of consciousness, see Houlgate (1990).

⁷ It appears that Hegel believed that, once monotheism emerges on the historical scene, one needs a trinitarian conception of God in order to ensure that the divine law does not eliminate the particularity of the human subject (through the annihilation of human law and its complete subsumption under divine law). This is evidenced by his discussion of Judaism (Yigit 2022).

⁸ Translations of the Qur'an generally follow the translation in the bilingual edition by Majid Fakhry (2004).

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