

Heidegger's Race

for the volume

Heidegger and the Human

The Place of the Human in Heidegger's Philosophy

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Abstract

This article asks 'what was Martin Heidegger's understanding of race?' in the context of recent discussions of that question by Sonia Sikka, Robert Bernasconi and Jeffrey Barash. It takes a now notorious remark made by Heidegger in lectures delivered immediately after his resignation as Rector of Freiburg University (in 1934) that there are those "blacks, in particular, African blacks" of whom it is said "they are without history" and shows that this was not a once-only comment, but has a longer history in Heidegger's oeuvre. The article examines that history, and then shows the extent to which Heidegger is commenting on and coming to terms with a tradition of commentary on race established by Hegel. The article proceeds by contrasting Hegel's and Heidegger's respective understanding of history within the wider understanding of Hegel's metaphysics. The article concludes by showing how Heidegger's understanding of race is connected both with his critique of Hegel and the question of his criticism and his support of the Nazi state.

Keywords

Heidegger, Hegel, Race, Racism, Africa, Metaphysics, History, Philosophy of History, Nazi.

What was Heidegger's understanding of race? This question is usually asked of Heidegger personally: to what extent is Heidegger himself racist? To ask the question in this way presupposes that we already understand what "race" is and means, and yet, even as race has become an element of contemporary discourse, it is far from clear that we have an answer to this question. To what extent does "race" explain the being of being human? If we answer "hardly at all" then we explain only with difficulty not only a certain preoccupation of the West with race (at least since the Seventeenth century), but also the ways in which the contemporary discourses of race call for our attention. To refuse the discourses around race – race itself, indigeneity, colonial rule and post-colonialism, the demand for racial justice and the recognition of race – risks being, or being defined as, a gesture concerned with race.

If, however, we answer that race is, or is part of, the being of human being, we are left only with further questions: to what extent and in what ways? The current discourses of race can seem confused, and refuse to run in straight lines. Is this because they are so new, or because they are emerging from places of dispossession or silence? If it is taken for granted, for instance, that colonialism as a historical phenomenon is immoral (as most commentators seem to agree), how are we to understand or explain that the establishment of what we now recognise as Europe was itself achieved through practices of colonisation (Greek, Hellenic, Roman), or that the last North African colonisers of much of the Iberian Peninsula departed Spain only in 1492, while Turkish and Ottoman occupations and "threat" to Europe long persisted beyond this date? Is the colonialism that we have in question a consequence of race, or is the emergence of the discourse of race only an effect of colonial rule – or is neither of these the case? Is there indeed a "long history of racism", of which "Europe's oldest racisms [are] anti-Semitism and Islamophobia",¹ or does the current drive to conflate religious identity with race conceal far older continuities and affinities? Have we forgotten that the origins of anti-Semitism lie, not in any doctrine of race, but in differences in theological doctrine among proselytising groups who (disputatiously) shared a religious outlook – one full of divisions even before the arrival of Christianity? Have we even yet understood the extent to which the Islamic schools of Baghdad, and later Granada and Cordoba, preserved an advanced religious reading of Aristotle, bequeathing it to Latin Christianity in translations not from Greek, but Arabic? Have we even begun to comprehend the extent to which Christianity absorbed an understanding of God from Islam, in, for instance, the form of those "divine attributes" of God that were reworked from Qur'anic names of Allah? What Heidegger named as the

¹ Sonya Sikka cites Tariq Modood in making this claim. See "Was Heidegger Racist?", 156.

“Christianisation of philosophy” was, as he himself knew, better understood as philosophy’s transformation by three, and not just one, traditions that claimed roots in the patriarchs Adam and Abraham.²

Heidegger’s own discussions of race as a formal topic are few, and scattered, mainly found in those *Nachlaß* volumes of his *Collected Works* (or *Gesamtausgabe*) which contain material not published in his lifetime. Aside from the now many considerations of Heidegger’s anti-Semitism, three studies in particular have paid attention to Heidegger’s understanding of race: all began as contributions in journals. Robert Bernasconi’s “Heidegger’s Alleged Challenge to the Nazi Conceptions of Race” appeared first in 2000, followed by Sonia Sikka’s “Heidegger and Race” in 2003, since expanded to become part of a monograph of 2018. Jeffrey Barash published “Heidegger and the Question of Race” in French in 2008. They gather a breadth of scholarly enquiry, coincident with the developments in the issue of race underway in the last decades. Barash undertakes meticulous research into the racial ideologues who based themselves in Freiburg during the Nazi period, and to whom Heidegger had access, concluding that Heidegger had little truck with Nazi racist ideology. All three studies focus to a greater or lesser degree on the question that Sikka foregrounded when revising her initial study: “Was Heidegger Racist?”³

How we deal with issues of race is often a question concerning intellectual hygiene. This issue also marks Emmanuel Faye’s research: to what extent do – or even, can – we read Heidegger without “contamination”, either by his own Nazism, or the racism and crimes perpetrated in Nazism’s name? Is there a Nazi taint to his thought? This is the title of Faye’s major work: *The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy*, and drives his readings of Heidegger. Witness the panic at the appearance of the supposedly loaded word *das Volk* (twice, no less, in the whole book!) in *Being and Time*, a full six years before the Nazis take power.⁴ The presupposition of almost everyone is that the only possible answer to the question whether Heidegger is racist is “yes”. To read Heidegger seriously forces us to take up the position of

² See Martin Heidegger’s comments on the modern anthropological determination of humanity as a “Christian Hellenistic-Jewish” affair in the *Black Notebooks* (*Überlegungen VII–XI* [GA95], 322), as well as his remarks on “Arabic-Jewish and Christian philosophy” in *Sein und Wahrheit* (GA36/37), 60.

³ Sikka’s title parallels that of a chapter in the English translation of Rüdiger Safranski’s biography of Heidegger, “Is Heidegger Anti-Semitic?”, 248–63. I cannot address here the question of Heidegger’s anti-Semitism, but see my “Heidegger’s Hegel, The Christian Jew: ‘Europe’ as ‘Planetary Criminality and Machination’”. I do not provide summaries of Sikka’s, Barash’s and Bernasconi’s wide-ranging surveys of the literature on Heidegger and race, but taken together they provide an appraisal of the state of the question to date.

⁴ See James Phillips, *Heidegger’s Volk*, for a discussion of this topic, esp. 1–53. *Das Volk* (people, nation) is an everyday German term, no closer in political meaning than “nation” is to “nationalist”. The Nazi term was *völkisch*, “the people’s”, “popular” (in the populist sense), a kitsch, folksy term implying kin, hearth and home, and supposedly all that was dear to the loyal Aryan heart.

accuser or rescuer, of the man or his thought, without, therefore, having had to address the question *as a question* of the origins and meaning of race, first in the West and only then in the specificities of Heidegger's writing. This contribution offers to take a step in the direction of answering that question, not as a question about Heidegger's personal racism, but Heidegger's understanding of the historical category of race, its possibilities and effects (and so its being), and its significance for the being of human being. In a study of this length it will not be possible to give a full answer, but perhaps we can at least open the door to show from where, and how, the question can be addressed. It will, as it must, reach beyond Heidegger himself.

Establishing that someone is racist is often a process of pursuing and justifying an act of devaluation. If we can show that someone is racist, we can forever after suggest that everything they say is suspect until proven otherwise. Heidegger's involvement with Nazism opens him immediately to such a devaluation, especially in anything he has to say concerning race. It is for this reason that different commentators have come to Heidegger either (as with Faye) to claim that everything Heidegger has to say is tainted, or to attempt to adjudicate the degree and the particularities of the taint: to claim, in other words, that Heidegger was racist, but just not very racist (pressing, for instance, the distinction between "biological" and "cultural" racism), or, as Julian Young and others have attempted, to define racism in such a way ("biological") that an opponent of "the biological" such as Heidegger could (by definition, therefore) not have been racist. Young (and he is not alone) attempts to rescue Heidegger as, not so much a racist, rather a German "chauvinist", as if that made anything better or the man more palatable.⁵ None of these, from Faye to Young, nor from Bernasconi to Sikka, address what Heidegger himself understands by the category of race. Few, with the exception of Bernasconi, address directly the question of the meaning of race in itself.

A basic insight of the thinking of race, especially in the contemporary situation, is that we always begin in an *unthinking* relation to race, even when we cannot see it. It is only when race becomes a question – when we are able to move from an unthinking to a thoughtful relation with it – that the question of judgement and culpability can even become clear.

I do not propose in this contribution to summarise the arguments that previous authors have made. Bernasconi's, Sikka's and even Barash's work is not difficult to find, and each is a master of her or his material. I do want to take one text of Heidegger's that is common to each of them (and mentioned by many others, Faye not least), and ask whether interpreting it rather differently than they and others have might yield insight, not only into Heidegger's own

⁵ Julian Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism*, 36–7, 44–6, 215 f.

thought, but into the question of the category of race and its origins as a mode of thinking of human being.

It is, I propose, only when we have understood how the category of race arises in Western thought, and so have brought ourselves into a thoughtful relation with it, that we are in a position to understand what race and racism mean. What follows is an attempt to show how Heidegger himself undertook this passage of thinking, so that we might also think through the meaning of race and its place in the history of Western thought. This is the question of real importance in addressing race and its part in Heidegger and the human. Is race only a thought that arises in the West? Let me turn this thought on its head: let me address myself and all those who think already as Westerners, and as ones who think in a way that the West in its global reach has defined in advance of itself. Wherever “the West” has established itself as the dominant mode of enquiry, is where we need to begin: thus we begin where we ourselves are thoughtlessly already rooted (“thrown”). We begin by undertaking a formally historical enquiry, and seeking to understand race as it has been thought historically in the West. Such a beginning may entail that we will come to leave the Western thought of race behind, and assign it to belonging only to a certain point in Western history, but that is not my concern here.

How, then, to begin? Concerning the question of race itself (rather than of anti-Semitism), reference to one text of Heidegger’s runs as a thread through all discussions of Heidegger and race. The text has been well known among Heidegger scholars, even before its appearance in the Heidegger *Gesamtausgabe*, from one of the many typescripts of his lectures made by, and circulating among, his students.⁶ In 1934, shortly after resigning as Rector of

⁶ It was from one of these transcripts that I first became aware of the passage. The typescript that long circulated was primarily material from one present at the lectures, Wilhelm Hallwachs. It is likely that Heidegger not only had a copy of it, but even suggested corrections before it was typed up. The 1998 text of these lectures published in the Heidegger *Gesamtausgabe* (GA38) was based on this transcript, while including material and references from four others. The original hand-written text prepared by Heidegger as the basis of the lectures was believed to have been lost: an explanation of the history of the published text is given in the *Nachwort* or *Postscript* to the volume.⁶ Very often the volumes of the *Gesamtausgabe* that cover Heidegger’s lecture courses combine Heidegger’s prepared script with material from at least one (sometimes multiple) student transcript(s), following a well-established German convention – Hegel’s and Kant’s lectures, for instance, have often, even recently, been prepared posthumously in this way, although often providing detail of variations between the scripts, which the *Gesamtausgabe* does not do. In 2020, quite unannounced, a supplementary volume (GA38A) edited by Peter Trawny and containing Heidegger’s lost script appeared in print. The two texts are very close, frequently identical, but the original script in GA38A contains material that was not delivered (or at least not reported) by the transcripts in GA38, whereas the transcripts report numerous asides and developments of themes that are absent from the original script. Which is the more authentic text? Formally we must say both are authentic, assuming the Hallwachs and other transcripts are accurate (which the verbatim closeness would appear to confirm), inasmuch as both are utterances of Heidegger, one from the pen, the other verbally. Far more important, however, is that both repeat positions that can be found, and are consistent with, and in many places are even common, elsewhere in Heidegger’s work. What is most remarkable about the original script is that it seems to contain few, if any, surprises at all.

Freiburg University, Heidegger was scheduled to lecture on the subject of politics and the Nazi State. He instead went to the lectern and announced (to the consternation of the student Nazi lackeys present) “I’m teaching *Logic*”.⁷ In the Spiegel interview, Heidegger cited these lectures, together with those on Hölderlin and Nietzsche in these years, as one of the places where “everyone, who could hear, heard that this was a confrontation with National Socialism”.⁸ This claim is often written off by commentators as among Heidegger’s more self-serving statements, especially in the area of race, and so its significance is overlooked. For Heidegger is making explicit that these lectures, in their confrontation with National Socialism, were delivered in a code for those “who could hear”. We, who have come in the present climate to fear the accusation that we are, *I am*, wittingly or unwittingly, racist, perhaps have little comprehension of what it means to speak and write in a context where at any point one can be denounced for not being racist enough. Such were the times. Public language concerned with race is often coded (what else is “dog whistle” speech?). This is also true of Heidegger’s discussion and critique of race. To read without attention to the irony, the code, the *tone* of Heidegger’s lecture, is to risk not being among those who could, and can, hear what is being said.

As these lectures on *Logic* proceed, Heidegger says “if we now take up the question concerning the essence of history, one could think that we have arbitrarily decided what history is: namely, history is what is distinctive for the being of humanity. One could, on the other hand, object that there are human beings, and human groups (blacks, in particular, southern African blacks), that have no history, of whom we say, they are without history”.⁹ These remarks have often been received with incendiary effect, and, taken at face value, well they might be. The discourse of race has had a remarkable effect in re-shaping language itself. Terms at one time common have been erased, made objectionable or problematised (to be reclaimed only in certain contexts or by those against whom they were once negatively used – I think, in this context, and in my own life, of the word “queer”), and often with good reason. Yet in historical texts we can encounter these terms used in good faith, and because we would now never use them ourselves, they shock us, or our most immediate and unthinking reaction

⁷ See “Editor’s Postscript” of Martin Heidegger, *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache* (GA38), 172. “Ich lese *Logik*.” Emphasis in original.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, “Spiegel-Gespräch mit Martin Heidegger, 23. September 1966 (GA16)”, 664. “Alle, die hören könnten, hörten daß dies eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus war.”

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache* (GA38), 81. “Wenn wir jetzt die Frage nach dem Wesen der Geschichte aufnehmen, könnte man denken, wir haben willkürlich entschieden, was Geschichte sei, nämlich Geschichte sei das Auszeichnende für das Sein des Menschen. Man könnte einerseits einwenden, daß es Menschen und Menschengruppen (Neger wie z.B. Kaffern) gibt, die keine Geschichte haben, von denen wir sagen, sie seien geschichtslos.”

is to presume that they were, or are only ever, deployed with purpose, to negative or pejorative effect. This is not always the case.

Bernasconi, commenting on this passage, is excoriating of Heidegger's use of language: "Heidegger repeated the longstanding idea that the Negro has no history", which he says is a "familiar trope of European racism".¹⁰ He argues that Heidegger repeats this slur "when, the following semester, Heidegger drew the consequence that "only an historical people is truly a people".¹¹ It is therefore important for us to note is that "to be historical" has quite different senses across Heidegger's work, and, as we shall see, especially around the issue of race. If Bernasconi's instinct is correct, that what it means to be historical is the issue here, as I will make clear, the quick inference he draws between two quite disconnected texts is not. Indeed, it is because Heidegger rejects the *historical* basis on which the statement that there is anyone who "has no history" is made, that he then attempts to develop further and elucidate what the historical basis of being human actually is.¹²

If we look more closely, we see that not only one position is stated ("blacks, particularly southern African blacks, have no history"), but that this is a second claim, distinguished from a prior (and more important) one, which actually *is* that "history is what is distinctive for the being of humanity". The real question at issue (which Bernasconi correctly identifies) is: *how* is history distinctive for the being of humanity? Heidegger is therefore disagreeing with what "is said" (generally) because *to be*, to be human, and to have a history cannot be taken apart. It should be stressed that Heidegger's procedure here is exactly in line with his understanding of language in *Being and Time*: we move from "inauthentic" "idle chatter" ("one says") to authentic understanding, in order to uncover the *being* in question. Who is it, then, if it is not Heidegger, that says that there are those who "are", but have no history? With whom did this general assertion begin?

The phrase "we might say" refers to a passage from Hegel. Heidegger is dealing with an authoritative source, familiar to most of those present, whose interpretation has become generally ("inauthentically") accepted, and with whom he disagrees: Hegel. Heidegger takes up a term deployed by Hegel at the end of a long discussion of Africa and its inhabitants from

¹⁰ Bernasconi and others (see below, note 15) are snifty about Heidegger's use of the term *Negern*, but only because they insist on translating it with the loaded, often derogatory *negroes*. In German there need be no loaded meaning (nor was there at the time): the term just as accurately means black people.

¹¹ Robert Bernasconi, "Heidegger's Alleged Challenge to the Nazi Conceptions of Race", 51. The remark from the following semester is from the first of Heidegger's lecture course on Hölderlin, published as Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen: 'Germanien' und 'Der Rhein'* (GA39), 284.

¹² It could plausibly be argued that Heidegger's turn to Hölderlin (that very year) reflected the beginning of the attempt.

the compilation of material based on Hegel's plan for a volume on the *Philosophy of History*.¹³ Africa, Hegel says (in the version that Heidegger knew) is “*geschichtslos*”, “history-less”, and so Africa, and Africans, are without history.¹⁴ Heidegger's reported phrase “Neger wie z.B. Kaffern” draws attention to a distinction that was important *for Hegel*.¹⁵ Hegel specifically distinguishes between the different parts of Africa: North Africans, Muslims especially, according to Hegel, do have history, but Africans “proper” are different entirely. Heidegger's use of the term *Kaffern* draws attention to Hegel's specification of the black Africans of the south, who inhabit what Hegel calls “Africa proper”, the place, Hegel says, that has been “as far as history goes back”, a “child-land”.¹⁶

To explore Hegel's thoughts on Africa in full would require a much fuller study. Let me, however, show how it is proper to challenge the assumption that Heidegger uses the notion of history and the history-less in a racist sense in 1934. The word *geschichtslos* and its accompanying phrase “ohne Geschichte” (“without history”) can be found quite frequently across Heidegger's works, not always in connection with Hegel, or matters of race,¹⁷ but often enough to make clear that Heidegger was well aware of what was being claimed, and that it troubled him.¹⁸ Heidegger discusses what *geschichtslos* means twice: once in 1920, and again

¹³ The first version of this volume, appearing in 1837 (updated again 1840), was edited by Eduard Gans and Karl Hegel as part of the collected edition of Hegel's works published shortly after his death, from 1832 until 1845, based on transcripts of Hegel's lectures on the subject from 1822 and thereafter every two years until Hegel's death. Gans, the main editor, based them principally on the transcript of Adolf Heimann (itself published as a single volume in 2005). George Lasson revised and expanded the material from one to four volumes between 1917 and 1920, using Hegel's notes and various lecture transcripts from 1822–1830. The first volume, *Reason in History*, was revised again by Johannes Hoffmeister in 1955. The editors of the Academy Edition have taken a different approach, reissuing the various extant manuscripts and transcripts of Hegel's Berlin lectures both in the *Gesammelte Werke* (with the various introductory texts from GW18, and in five volumes of transcripts, GW27.1–5, of which the last is still to appear) and one volume in the *Manuskripte und Nachschriften* series (NM12).

¹⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (Lasson), 224. “Was wir eigentlich unter Afrika verstehen, das ist das Geschichtslose.” This (Lasson's) edition was the one that Heidegger used. The section on Africa can be found at 203–224.

¹⁵ The word *Kaffern* in German has not always had exclusively negative connotations, and has a complex etymology from different sources. One of these is its use by anthropologists of the eighteenth century and later (Blumenthal, Buffon, etc.) to designate both the land (“*Kaffraria*”) and inhabitants of a region of southern Africa, and this is contextually the sense in which Heidegger deploys it. Sikka translates the term as Xhosa, which is not wrong, although the reference is wider than a single people, and Heidegger himself at one time speaks of *Zulukaffern*. The term is not used by Hegel. Sikka also objects to Heidegger's use of the term *Negern*, but see note 10 above.

¹⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen* (Lasson), 204–5. “Das eigentliche Afrika . . . soweit die die Geschichte zurückgeht . . . das Kinderland.”

¹⁷ The term appears already in Heidegger's first lecture course in 1919 (GA56/57), 130, in a discussion of the concept of culture in the Nineteenth Century. Despite the importance of the arguments constructed on the term *geschichtslos*, and its frequency of occurrence, the term is not listed in *The Heidegger Concordance*, although the term *Geschichtslosigkeit* (which does not figure in these discussions of race) is.

¹⁸ The term appears again in a lecture from the end of 1934, “The Present Situation and Future Tasks of German Philosophy”. See “Die Gegenwärtige Lage und die künftige Aufgabe der deutschen Philosophie (GA16)”, esp. 328.

in a text that cannot be dated exactly, but that makes explicit reference to the *Logic* lectures of 1934, and that was most likely written in the late 1930s.

In lectures delivered in the Summer Semester of 1920, Heidegger considers “six meanings of history”. Heidegger compares his initial definitions of history with “the talk about ‘history-less tribes and peoples’, whether justified or not”, noting that “history-less” here has nothing to do with the notions of history he has already dealt with as the lectures have progressed. Heidegger is clearly alive in 1920 to the complexity of this term *geschichtslos*, and assumes its wide reception in his audience. Moreover the qualification “whether justified or not” indicates that already in 1920, Hegel’s claim is far from an unchallengeable. Heidegger speaks of Zulus (by example), and notes that while tribes-peoples without a written culture therefore hold no records or public documents, “this does not therefore mean these tribes lack a developed knowledge of history” even if they have no formal tradition (in the sense, he says, that the Middle Ages had a tradition). Heidegger is trying to illustrate different relations to time in real, lived contexts, in which history as such is at work, beyond a mere “sense of the past”, where the meaning of the past is understood and preserved, even if it lacks a formal record (“a tradition”).

Heidegger speaks not as an anthropologist, nor even as an historian, but as a philosopher: his characterisations are, we might say, somewhat clumsy. Nevertheless, they are neither disrespectful nor negative, let alone formally racist. Heidegger seems ignorant of what contemporary anthropology now understands as the preserving power of the oral and story-telling traditions of many indigenous and first nations peoples, even if his point is to draw a distinction between the sense of history as it has been developed in modern Western philosophy and those who do not, in the same way, “cultivate the past”. The one statement that appears to run in this direction is the claim Heidegger makes in the lecture that those who do not have history in the Western sense therefore have “no future and no tasks”,¹⁹ but the point that is being made here is the opposite of what we might at first assume.²⁰

¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks* (GA59), 45–6. “Die Rede von ‘geschichtslosen Stämmen und Völkern’, mag sie berechtigt sein oder nicht, meint wieder etwas anderes mit dem Wort ‘Geschichte’. [. . .] Damit ist nicht gemeint, diesen Stämmen fehlte es an einer ausgebildeten Geschichtswissenschaft [. . .] sie pflegen nicht die Vergangenheit [. . .] Sie haben auch keine Zukunft, keine Aufgaben.”

²⁰ The same must be said for Bernasconi’s reference, aimed at buttressing the claim for Heidegger’s racist use of *geschichtslos* and discrediting his claim that the Nietzsche lectures were a confrontation with Nazism, when contrasting “historical Western man” with what is “spared an African tribe” (Robert Bernasconi, “Heidegger’s Alleged Challenge”, 51, citing the English translation of *Nietzsche* GA6.1, 498 [= GA47, 134]). In fact the distinction that Heidegger makes in this text has nothing to do with having no history: Heidegger is merely making a passing contrast between Western humanity and the mode of being of life in a tribe. He is precisely

These lectures are preoccupied (as was much of Heidegger's thinking at the time) with delineating philosophy not as a scientific practice which grounds the factuality of everyday life, but rather the other way about. Heidegger wants to ground, not everyday facticity in prior structures of reason, but rather to ground philosophy's capacity to reflect in everyday facticity. The assignment of a future and tasks to humanity is a feature of German Idealism and what followed it. Idealism *does* assign a future, and tasks, to historical humanity, as humanity's "work" overall: as we shall see, Hegel's understanding of race flowed directly from this. For Hegel the southern Africans' *lack* of a sense of historical destiny – of a universal future that is to be striven towards, and of "tasks" – is the source of his judgements about race, and the reason that he places Africans outside history, and even, as we shall see, outside humanity as a whole. There is no negative aspect, no pejorative element, to Heidegger's observation that the Zulu tribe holds before itself no future tasks. Indeed, quite the reverse, the implication from the text is that to live within the day is itself a perfectly adequate mode of *Dasein*. Pindar, no less, had said the same.²¹

The second text is from Heidegger's background and preparatory notes *Concerning Eventual Thinking*. This material, as with so much of Heidegger's vast *Nachlaß* of private notes, is cryptic and difficult to interpret. The remark comprises just a few words, naming the 1934 *Logic* course, and says: "people – never historyless – no more than [they are] speechless".²² To be capable of speech is to have history. To be capable of speech, for Heidegger – to be ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, the animal having and held by speaking – is the definition of what it is to be human. To understand what follows we must make a distinction that many of the commentators have simply refused to make: in history itself. For Heidegger, especially by the time this second passage was written, all history is the history of being. But the history of being is not the *necessary* course of the history of humanity toward an absolute goal (the "end" of history). The history of being is not programmatic: quite the reverse, it is itself a danger, and fraught with risk. History puts before historical humanity the question of destiny, but does not define the content of that destiny. *Every* people, to be genuinely a people, is confronted with the question of destiny *as a question*. This destiny is not, however, a collective

acknowledging the validity and reality of difference. To understand what is really being said, Bernasconi would do well to contemplate the second *Zusatz* to the 'Age of the World Picture', written almost certainly around the same time, where the relations between a constellation of terms – *Besinnung*, *geschichtslos*, and Hegelian negation, is worked out, without reference to African tribes.

²¹ Pindar, Eight Pythian Ode, l. 95. Anyone with a classical education from this period will have known these lines by rote, and, indeed, Heidegger did.

²² Martin Heidegger, *Zum Ereignis Denken* (GA73.1), 370. "Volk – nie geschichtslos – sowenig wie sprachlos . . . S. S. 34."

pinnacle over against every *other* people (as Nazism and Stalinism, in ways that had been put before everyone in Germany, right in 1934, both claimed). To live from one's destiny is not to live a "mission", either of civilising others or lording it over them. It is to live, not merely from the present moment (what in *Being and Time* is called the "they"-self), but with *immediate* resolve, as an understanding that time is always, and immediately, a coming-towards us, as *presencing*.

What is the basis for Heidegger's rejection of Hegel's understanding of history? It is grounded in the difference between Hegel's and Heidegger's understandings of the phenomenon of time. Hegel's discussions of time are often confused, even contradictory, so that Kojève, for instance, claimed (as he – wrongly – thought Heidegger had himself) that Hegel had privileged the future over the present and the past.²³ Heidegger rejected that view from the outset, stressing that what he had actually emphasised is "not: the essence of the present is the future, but: the meaning of timeliness (*Zeitlichkeit*) is the future [. . .] the meaning of the thesis that I hold is, therefore, diametrically opposed to what Hegel [. . .] says".²⁴

What is this diametric opposition? The reason for the confusion in Hegel's understanding of time, and, therefore (for Heidegger), his confused understanding of history, lies precisely here. In his 1924 lecture on time Heidegger made a simple point about history, the significance of which has barely been grasped: "*The possibility of access to history lies in the possibility by which any specific present understands itself to be futural*".²⁵ For Heidegger, time is a singular, constantly arriving, which the being of human being both "expects" (*gewärtigt*) and "makes present" (*gegenwärtigt*), in denotative speaking, λόγος. It is neither subjective, nor objective: for the later Heidegger, this is the basis of eventuality, *das Ereignis*. History, for Heidegger, is the factual appropriation of the future's ever-arriving, at the highest: it necessitates not just individuality, as *one* who makes the advancing future present, but community as such, as a "wherein", where the experience of making-present is shared across individuals and across time itself, and is formally and fundamentally an event of language (λόγος). At its most basic, this making-present occurs in "community" (*Gemeinschaft*), but at its highest, within a "people" (*Volk*). A people is not an aggregation of individuals, and

²³ Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, 372 f.

²⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (GA21), 264–5. "Der Sinn der Zeitlichkeit ist die Zukunft. Der Sinn der These, die ich vertrete, ist aber diametral dem entgegengesetzt, was Hegel hier sagt." The reference is to the lecture "Der Begriff der Zeit (Vortrag 1924) (GA64)", 118. Heidegger says "*das Grundphänomen der Zeit ist die Zukunft*." ("*The basic phenomenon of time itself is the future*.") (Heidegger's emphasis)

²⁵ Martin Heidegger, "Der Begriff der Zeit (Vortrag 1924) (GA64)", 123. "*Die Zugangsmöglichkeit zur Geschichte gründet in der Möglichkeit, nach der es eine Gegenwart jeweils versteht, zukünftig zu sein*." (Heidegger's emphasis)

certainly not a “race” or aggregation of races, but has a (historical) sense of itself, a “from where” and a “whither”. Indeed, it is not so much that “a people has a history” as that “history is disclosed *as* the specificity of being-a-people”.²⁶ This is as true in the most generalised sense for a first-nation people as it is for a contemporary European nation (comprised, perhaps, of many different peoples), but the factual experience of it will manifest itself, and *be*, entirely different from one to the other: it will be “proper” for each. Above all, we *need* make no valuation of one factual manifestation over another – that this one is “better” than that one, as a way of distinguishing the relative “value” of nations, tribes, or races. This does not mean that some moments, some historical periods, will not be greater than others: but the greatness has nothing to do with “race”.

For Hegel, however, time, as the sequence of nows, is necessarily subjective. In this, as Heidegger explained, Hegel’s understanding of time is entirely in accord with Aristotle’s claim that without soul there would be no time, since soul does the counting,²⁷ and so Hegel retains the understanding of time as subjective time that runs through the entire philosophical tradition in the West from Aristotle forwards. Simply put, time is “in the mind” (is a function of *spirit*). However, Hegel’s understanding of subjectivity is not merely as the subjectivity of the “I think”, but at the same time of absolute subjectivity (sublated time, eternity, is the time of *absolute spirit*). It is this that secures time *and history* both as subjective and as absolute (and why, for Hegel, the subjective is formally-absolutely privileged over the objective, even as objectivity’s “negation”). For Hegel every present “now” is secured against absolute time, which is eternity. Individual moments of time are (negatively) coeval with absolute time, which is the temporality of absolute *Geist*, or absolute subjectivity. The coequality is necessary because eternity does not come “after” time, indeed, is not a moment of time at all “since were eternity to follow time, it would thereby be made a moment of time”.²⁸ Time has the same character as the contiguity of space, indeed space *is* this contiguity, or as Heidegger puts it, Hegel “determines the being of space not *from* time but *as* time”.²⁹ For Hegel, history culminates in its end as the absolute, realising itself. History, thought like this, is (oddly)

²⁶ This, we should remember, was also true for Marx, for whom the proletariat was itself the ground of a coming people, or future nation.

²⁷ Aristotle, *Physics* 233 a 23. Πότερον δὲ μὴ οὐσίας ψυχῆς εἶη ἂν ὁ χρόνος ἢ οὐ, ἀπορήσειεν ἄν τις.

²⁸ See G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830)* (GW20), §258, esp. 248. “So würde die Ewigkeit zur Zukunft, einem Momente der Zeit, gemacht.” See for this whole discussion, §§254–259, 243–251. Heidegger discusses Hegel’s presentation of time and space in *Sein und Zeit* (GA2), 571–575 and *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (GA21), 251–262.

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (GA21), 256. “Und nicht etwa bestimmt [Hegel] das Sein des Raumes *aus* der Zeit, sondern *als* Zeit.” (Heidegger’s emphases)

“outside” time, and only properly understood as the absolutisation of time. Fulfilled history *is* (is the realisation, the making-present, of) eternity.

It is this that secures the metaphysical ground of Hegel’s understanding of race. How else would we understand a text of Hegel’s (to which it is unlikely Heidegger had access) that says “the shapes which we see in world-history through the succession in time we also see standing perennially next to one another in space. That these forms subsist next one another and have their necessity in the concept, is essential for us to take note of, and we must convince ourselves of this.”³⁰

Sikka recognises that Heidegger’s use of *geschichtslos* “recalls” remarks of Hegel’s,³¹ but seems unwilling to recognise that Heidegger is making the connection explicit – as explicit as it is possible to be in the racist context of the Nazi lecture room. What is the connection that Heidegger makes with Hegel? In lectures from 1925 at Marburg, and at an adult education institute at Kassel on Dilthey’s “struggle for a historical worldview”, Heidegger had discussed Dilthey’s method of enquiry: “the task to view ‘life itself’ in its structures as the basic reality of history”.³² This description is remarkably close to the task he sets himself of exhibiting what he was to call in *Being and Time* “the structural analytic of *Dasein*”. Heidegger had distinguished in these lectures the difference between a “natural worldview” of human being and the “scientific” one that had grown up, in philosophy especially, with Kant.

Heidegger’s engagement with Dilthey, and what has been called the “crisis of historicism” was an engagement with the failure of what the early nineteenth Century thinkers of the West had meant by “world-development”. We could almost say that the nineteenth century – if we also include Kant – is *par excellence* the century of *theories* of world-development: Heidegger makes plain in 1925 that what is at issue is the bringing-together of a “natural worldview” of human being with a “scientific” one, but inasmuch as it is scientific, he insists that not only theoretical knowledge (*theoretische Kenntnis*), but practical disposition (*praktische Stellungnahme*), what we will direct ourselves to do, will be in question. The “historical” understanding that Heidegger suggests is the struggle for a historical worldview is a composite of just the way we ordinarily or “naturally” take ourselves to be *together* with the

³⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte (Berlin 1822/23)* (NM12), 40. “So sehen wir die Gestalten, die wir in der Weltgeschichte als Folge der Zeit sehen, auch perennierend nebeneinander im Raum stehen. Daß diese Gestalten nebeneinander bestehen und ihre Notwendigkeit im Begriff haben, dies ist wesentlich zu bemerken, und davon muß man sich überzeugen.” Something close to this does appear in Hoffmeister’s 1955 version of the first volume of Hegel’s lectures on world history. See *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 154.

³¹ Sonia Sikka, “Was Heidegger Racist?”, 159.

³² Martin Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (GA20), 19. “[Die] Aufgabe, das ‘Leben’ selbst als die Grundwirklichkeit der Geschichte in seinen Strukturen zu sehen.”

way a “scientific” or theoretical understanding takes the world to be. In the course of this development of a new “historical” viewpoint, Heidegger comments that “primitive peoples live, and we ourselves have lived, for a long time without history”.³³ Heidegger is wryly mocking the understanding of history as a finality, a goal, an absolute.

Heidegger adds that neither a knowledge of change, nor even a “national consciousness” constitutes historical consciousness, nor indeed, does the development of humanism, nor the reformation in its confrontation with Catholicism (another sideswipe at Hegel, among others), and he concludes that an awakening and wakened historical consciousness is more like a task to advance towards (*zu entwickeln*) than anything else. The task is to understand history as universal history: in this context Heidegger now refers directly to Kant, Herder, Humboldt, and Hegel. The culmination of the modern understanding of history is, however, to be found in Hegel, for whom “the humanity of European cultures [are] embodied in the state”.³⁴ The essential movement of history becoming world history, the task to be developed in this understanding, is the movement in German Idealism from dependency and limitation to freedom, but this is embodied in the state. With Hegel, freedom is subjectivity becoming absolute subjectivity. Absolute subjectivity finds its embodiment in the state as such, and in God. Eduard Gans reports Hegel as saying that the state is none other than “the path of God through the world”.³⁵ the state, therefore, is the realisation of the absolute concept in the world: the embodiment of absolute subjectivity as such.

The remarks about “primitive people” are a reference to race, but Heidegger is being ironic. Bernasconi has asked the question “who invented the scientific concept of race?”,³⁶ and clarified this question to specify “the one who gave the concept sufficient definition for subsequent users to believe that they were addressing something whose scientific status could at least be debated” – he points, more than to anyone else, to Kant. He adds “it is usually agreed that the term ‘race’ was first used in something like its contemporary meaning at the end of the seventeenth century”.³⁷ In fact the development of the “scientific” definition of race

³³ Martin Heidegger, “Wilhelm Diltheys Forschungsarbeit und der gegenwärtige Kampf um eine historische Weltanschauung (16–21 April 1925) (GA80.1)”, 111. “Primitive Völker leben, und wir selbst lebten lange Zeit ohne Geschichte.”

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, “Wilhelm Diltheys Forschungsarbeit (GA80.1)”, 112. “Hegel: die Humanität der europäischen Kulturen [ist] verkörpert im Staat.”

³⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (TWA7), 403, Zusatz. “[Der] Gang Gottes in der Welt.”

³⁶ Bernasconi lays the blame at Kant’s feet: Jon Mikkelsen, in a careful essay provides context (and not a little nuancing) for Kant, and Bernasconi’s thesis, noting “the many discussions of this subject that played out in the intellectual discourse of the ‘enlightened’ societies of Europe” as the eighteenth century progressed. See Jon Mikkelsen, “Translator’s Introduction” to *Kant and the concept of Race*, 19.

³⁷ Robert Bernasconi, “Who Invented the Question of Race?”, 11, 12.

is coincident, and necessarily so, with the development of the idea of history as a task. It is only with the development of history as a *universal* task for humanity, for humanity's self-realisation, that any concept of the universal essence of humanity could form the unifying concept behind the different expressions of the human race. We must ask: what presents itself in the concept of the human race, of humanity as comprising "races"? Why might this also be a question about "human" history?

How is it that both Western humanity and so-called "primitive peoples" lived so long without "history"? We are already aware of the answer from the texts of Heidegger's I have cited: because there are here entirely different conceptions of history at work. Emmanuel Faye attempts to drive a wedge between the remarks of 1934 and those in Kassel in 1925:³⁸ on the contrary, we may be certain (from the context itself) that the remarks in Kassel from the Dilthey lectures make the same reference to Hegel as those of 1934, and indeed to the same argument that Hegel makes, but in 1925 Heidegger was less sure of their consequences, which is why he reports them somewhat equivocally, as if our own living without history for a long time could qualify Hegel's argument. What has changed? By early 1934 (when these lectures were delivered) the Nazis were well on the way to seizing total power in Germany: they would do so only in the Autumn of that year. Heidegger had by then resigned as rector of Freiburg University – in part rejecting the Nazi programme, and in part feeling himself to be forced out of the office. Heidegger does not tell us what of the Nazi worldview he abandoned (certainly he remained sympathetic to the movement behind it). If, as Heidegger had noted, the state is the ground of (European) culture, it has now become clear what kind of state this can result in: a state determined on the basis of a claim about race. This is what he rejects.³⁹

By 1934 Heidegger is patently and unequivocally rejecting Hegel's understanding of a "scientific" (*wissenschaftlich*) understanding of history, and most importantly because he rejects how it had come to be embodied by the Nazi state. A few months after the *Logic* lectures, Heidegger would say that in "1933 it was said Hegel was dead: on the contrary, he has only just begun to live".⁴⁰ This was a flat put-down to the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt who had claimed in 1933 that when Hitler came to power "Hegel died".⁴¹

³⁸ Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger : l'introduction du nazisme dans la philosophie*, 169, n. 72.

³⁹ It is from this period on that Heidegger frequently attacks the notion of "culture" in general, together with the claims of people like Spengler).

⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, "Anhang II: Protokolle und Mitschriften: 23.1.1935 (GA86)", 606. "Man hat gesagt, 1933 ist Hegel gestorben; im Gegenteil: er hat erst angefangen zu leben."

⁴¹ Carl Schmitt, *Staat, Bewegung, Volk*, 31 f. "Erst als der Reichspräsident am 30. Januar 1933, den Führer der Nationalsozialistischen Bewegung, Adolf Hitler, zum Reichskanzler ernannte [. . .] an diesem Tage ist demnach, so kann man sagen, 'Hegel gestorben'."

Hegel represents the absolute pinnacle of that development of the understanding of history and the state that coincides with what Robert Bernasconi has identified as the European concept of race, which begins at the end of the seventeenth century. Hegel planned, but never prepared, the published version of his lectures on the philosophy of world-history: that fell to his son, Karl Hegel, and to Eduard Gans. Nevertheless, as Heidegger claimed, Hegel was the first to introduce a systematic, metaphysical, understanding of history into Western philosophy, such that philosophy itself is understood, and only can be understood, as an historical thinking driven by a force of necessity. Never mind that it has at its centre a claim about freedom: the freedom in question is of a strange kind.

At the centre is the thought of the human being as an historical being. Commenting on Hegel's understanding of history in 1958, Heidegger argued: "Therefore for Hegel philosophy as the self-production of spirit toward absolute knowledge and the history of philosophy are identical. No philosopher *before* Hegel had achieved such a fundamental position, one which enabled and required that philosophising itself and at the same time move within its history and that this movement is itself philosophy".⁴²

If, in Hegel, this question of history came to be answered through the question of race, in Heidegger the understanding of history is carried out in opposition to Hegel, and in part as an attack on Hegel's understanding of race. This became clear to Heidegger only in the crucible of the formation of a state built on an understanding of race which was not intended by Hegel, but took its justification from the claim to universality, and universal acceptance, of what he had said. It is almost impossible to speak of Nazi ideology: Nazism was a fractious amalgam of warring factions – in a divisiveness encouraged by Hitler himself – who built their state on a terror of devastating criminality, and deployed race as pretext and weapon in that terror. Heidegger took the view that Hegel's metaphysics laid the foundations for such a terror: it is the way in which the Nazis constructed their terror-state on those foundations that constituted Heidegger's view that Nazism was a form of liberalism. I suggest that he came to this view around 1934, at the time the *Logic* lectures were delivered.

As early as 1924, however, Heidegger had distinguished his own historical understanding from Hegel's. He noted that his early concept of historicity, *Geschichtlichkeit*, "should be *understood* not as history (world-history). Historicity indicates *being*-historical

⁴² Martin Heidegger, "Hegel und die Griechen (GA9)", 428 f. "Demnach sind für Hegel die Philosophie als die Selbstentwicklung des Geistes zum absoluten Wissen und die Geschichte der Philosophie identisch. Kein Philosoph *vor* Hegel hat eine solche Grundstellung der Philosophie gewonnen, die es ermöglicht und fordert, daß das Philosophieren sich zugleich in seiner Geschichte bewegt und daß diese Bewegung die Philosophie selbst ist." (Heidegger's emphasis)

of that, which is as history”.⁴³ *Geschichtlichkeit* is factual history, of what actually is and is present, not the history of the absolute, of (absent, negated) absolute subjectivity realising itself in time. Heidegger’s understanding of history is neither subjective in the sense of securing time as an intuition of the “I think” of the subjectivity of the subject, nor on an understanding of the necessity of the unfolding of the eternal-absolute in time.

Hegel argues the contrary. His lectures on world-history are intended to show “that world history has been given as the necessarily rational course of world-spirit: – and world-spirit is *Geist* as such, as the substance of history, the one *Geist* whose nature [is] one and the same and that explicates its one nature through the existence of the world [*Weltdaseyn*]”.⁴⁴ World history is universal, it is absolute *Geist*, realising itself. For Hegel, German Protestantism represents the end and goal of history from the land, race, political state and religion within which humanity, the “human essence”, is fully realised as free and capable for subjectivity realising its absolute form.

The extreme position on race that Hegel describes in his final lectures on world-history, delivered in the last year of his life and so within the full development of his system, has a direct bearing on the underlying motivation for the volume for which this essay is a part. These lectures were among the better-known of Hegel’s texts not least because of their more accessible content, when compared, for instance, with the *Logic* or even the *Rechtsphilosophie*. They were the basis of the Lasson edition already referred to, because they were primarily based on Hegel’s son Karl’s transcript. Karl had been present at these lectures in 1830/31. From the first edition of the lectures in 1837, and in a passage with which Heidegger and many among his academic audiences would have been familiar with, Hegel comes close (if indeed he does not actually say) that the southern African stands outside what it means to be human. The African persists in an existence which is marked by immediacy, with no “knowledge of an absolute being”, neither in the form of God nor, therefore for Hegel, as absolute Subject. In this sense the southern African stands outside the meaning of being as such. Such a form of immediate, and so un-mediated, life does not, Hegel argues, not even achieve the formal stance of finding itself in opposition to the nature that surrounds it. The consequence for the southern

⁴³ Martin Heidegger, “Der Begriff der Zeit (Abhandlung 1924) (GA64)”, 3. “*Geschichtlichkeit* soll verstanden und nicht Geschichte (Weltgeschichte) betrachtet werden. *Geschichtlichkeit* bedeutet *Geschichtlichkeitsein* dessen, was als Geschichte ist.” (Heidegger’s emphases)

⁴⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungsmanuskripte II* (GW18), 142. “Es hat sich also erst und es wird sich aus der Betrachtung der Weltgeschichte selbst ergeben, daß es vernünftig in ihr zugegangen, daß sie der vernünftige nothwendige Gang des Weltgeistes gewesen; – der Weltgeist ist der Geist überhaupt, der die Substanz der Geschichte, der Eine Geist, dessen Natur Eine und immer dieselbe, und in dem Weltdaseyn diese seine Eine Natur explicirt.”

African is that “there is nothing of the human to be found in such a character”.⁴⁵ This position is intelligible only if it is understood metaphysically: Hegel believed himself to have described in his system how particular being is taken up into absolute being through a movement, the movement of being-as-spirit from individual to absolute subjectivity. In one sense Hegel shows how human being is to be taken up into highest (divine) being, but far for fundamentally, Hegel bases what it is to be human as, in advancing towards highest being, itself securing the entirety of being in its being such that to be human is to uncover the human as the ground of the being of everything that is (including the divine).⁴⁶ Hegel defines humanity itself as being capable for absolute being, and so makes being in its most universal form an entirely human affair (this is the very basis for Marx’s fundamental metaphysical position).

At the same time Hegel excludes those not capable for being as therefore merely animal, and so not human. Heidegger in contrast, insists that being, even *Dasein*, is *in itself* nothing human. This means that humanity, either in particular or in general, even if it belongs to being, is not represented or defined by being (which is nothing human) and so does not cease to be human, or is not less than human, in relation to its capability for absolute being.⁴⁷ In each case belonging to being means belonging to language. This is why for Heidegger the phrase ζῷον λόγον ἔχον can never be understood or be translated as *animal rationale*. The southern African, as much as every other human, has and is held by language, by speaking. Once again it is possible to see to what extent and how Hegel’s position is diametrically opposed to Heidegger’s.

We are still very far from a comprehensive understanding of Heidegger’s reading of Hegel, and his engagement with German Idealism. If it is true that Heidegger added a paragraph to the end of his *Habilitation* thesis to the effect that what was really required in philosophy was a confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) “with Hegel”, and was capable of describing Hegel in the most elevated terms, he was also said that Hegel’s dialectic lives off a “fundamental sophistry”. More seriously Heidegger argues that Hegel “kills off” (*totschlägt*) the relation between point, line and plane that is the hallmark of Aristotle’s discussions of space

⁴⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, ed. Lasson, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, 208 f. “das Wissen von einem absoluten Wesen . . . es ist nichts an das Menschliche Anklingende in diesem Charakter zu finden” Several (identical) editions of Lasson’s text were issued from 1917. The passage can be found in Karl Hegel’s and Eduard Gans’s 1840 edition, p. 115 (Glockner, p. 137), very close in form to the 1937 version. See for the relevant passages in the *Akademie* edition GW27.4, 1223 and GW27.3, 998.

⁴⁶ Heidegger gives a full, clear, and very accessible account of this movement and its confusions in the early part of the essay ‘Zur Seinsfrage (1955)’. See esp. 397 f.

⁴⁷ This is an argument that Heidegger makes with increasing intensity in a number of places from about 1936 onwards. See, for one example, Martin Heidegger, *Besinnung* (GA66), 83. “Das Seyn – nichts Göttliches, nichts Menschliches, nichts Weltliches, nicht Erdhaftes”.

and time (the implication is that there is much Hegel does not know or understand, despite what is claimed), and concludes: “Hegel can say everything about anything, and there are people who discover deep meaning in confusion of such a kind”.⁴⁸

Numerous authors have assembled Hegel’s scattered, often extraordinary, remarks on the relationship between world-history and race (Alison Stone has made two fine summaries of them),⁴⁹ and so I propose to make only the briefest survey of Hegel’s points. Hegel represents the pinnacle of the understanding of history that coincides with what Robert Bernasconi identified in Kant as the European concept of race. Hegel’s philosophy of world history is coincident with his observations on race (and religion) across the geography of the entire globe, through the Americas and its first nations, through China and the other lands of Asia, India, Persia, Egypt, and finally reaching a nadir in Africa. In ways that are regressive even for his time, Hegel in several places justifies the practice of slavery. If in his last lectures of 1830/31 Hegel says “if slavery were unlawful, then [Europeans] would give them their freedom”,⁵⁰ the British fleet, as Hegel knew, by contrast had since 1807 been blockading the transport of slaves across the Atlantic (and Britain abolished slavery altogether only two years from Hegel’s death). Hegel’s views were neither uncontroversial nor universal.

Hegel’s metaphysical position on race is indicated in all three editions of his *Encyclopaedia* from 1817 to 1830. In §393 of his 1830 edition of the *Encyclopaedia* (sometimes known as the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*) we find: “the universal planetary life of natural spirit (*Naturgeist*) particularises itself through the concrete divisions of the earth and disaggregates itself as particular natural spirits (*Naturgeister*), manifesting within the whole the nature of the geographical continents, determining the differentiation of the races”.⁵¹ It was from the sections of the *Encyclopaedia* that Hegel based his most important lectures in Berlin

⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (GA21), 252, 221, 259. “Eine[] grundsätzlichen Sophistik, von der überhaupt Hegels Dialektik lebt”, “Hegel kann alles sagen über jedes. Und es gibt Leute, die in einer solchen Konfusion einen Tiefsinn entdecken.” Heidegger explicates with patient care Aristotle’s geometrical relations in his lectures on *Plato’s Sophist*.

⁴⁹ Alison Stone, “Europe and Eurocentrism” and “Hegel and Colonialism”. Her bibliographies contain a thorough appraisal of the literature. One figure strangely absent is Domenico Losurdo, who, despite his concerns about its history, does not mention race in connection with Hegel at all, either in his *Controstoria del liberalismo* or *Hegel e la libertà dei moderni*.

⁵⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, ed. Klaus Vieweg, *Die Philosophie der Geschichte: Vorlesungsmitschrift Heimann (Winter 1830/1831)*, 70. “Ist die Sklaverei durchaus unrechtlich, so würden [Europäer] Sklaven unmittelbar ihre Freiheit geben”

⁵¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie (1830)* (GW20) §393, 392. “Das allgemeine planetarische Leben des Naturgeistes besondert sich in die concreten Unterschiede der Erde und zerfällt in die besondern Naturgeister, die im Ganzen die Natur der geographischen Welttheile ausdrücken, und die Racenverschiedenheit ausmachen.” This is taken over almost unaltered from the edition of 1817, and also appears in the edition of 1827. See G. W. F. Hegel: *Enzyklopädie (1817)* GW13, §§312, 311; *Enzyklopädie (1827)* GW19, §§393, 392.

from 1816 to 1830.⁵² In 1845 Hegel's student, Ludwig Boumann, added considerable additional material from lecture-transcripts, as the "remarks", or *Zusätze*, to the *Encyclopaedia* – material well-known to Heidegger. Other manuscripts have come to light, as recently as 1994. The remarks do not carry the authority of the *Encyclopaedia* text (and so have a not dissimilar authority to the versions and edited manuscripts of the *Philosophy of World-History*), but what emerges is a consistent account of *Geist*, race, and history across all the texts and manuscripts. If at times Hegel rejects the "science" of physiognomy, at others he speculates on the meaning of the shapes of faces, colours of skin and other physical attributes as he sees fit, even at one point parroting the nonsense of the Dutch anatomist Pieter Camper assessing the relative status of races historically and geographically by the angle of the nose in proportion to the forehead.⁵³ The pseudo-science of Nazis like Rosenberg had precedent in the Nineteenth Century, with Hegel lending authority to at least some of it.

Hegel regards the physiological aspects of racial difference as subordinate to their metaphysical implications. When discussing the "Camper angles" of "Negro" skulls, Hegel is reported as adding "what is of greater concern is how far this corresponds with the relation to spirit",⁵⁴ adding that physiology has *geistige* (spiritual) significance, and that the connection is "essential" (*wesentlich*). A transcript of Hegel's lectures of 1825 draws out the significance of this connection with spirit: "The question of racial variety bears upon the rights one ought to accord to people; when there are various races, one will be nobler and the other has to serve it. The relationship between peoples determines itself in accordance with their reason".⁵⁵

None of the contemporary commentators on Hegel's understanding of race relate his remarks to his understanding of absolute spirit, or to its place within German Idealism, and yet it is clear, even from this briefest of surveys, that Hegel's fundamental position on race is in consequence of the metaphysics of spirit as absolute spirit. Anything like the physiological or "biological", and history itself, is posited on the metaphysics of absolute spirit and the infinite. Heidegger grasps the significance of this when he argues that "Hegel and German Idealism as

⁵² Available as a published text from 1817.

⁵³ See Michael J. Petry, *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, vol. 2, 51, citing the Kehler manuscript of the lectures of the summer of 1825. See also *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes (Berlin 1827/28)* (NM13), 41.

⁵⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen (Berlin 1827/28)* (NM13), 42. Was uns näher angeht, ist, wiefern dieses zusammenhängt mit der Beziehung aufs Geistige.

⁵⁵ Michael J. Petry, *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, vol. 2, 46–7, from the Kehler manuscript of the Summer of 1825. "Die Frage von der Racenverschiedenheit hat Bezug auf die Rechte, die man den Menschen zuteilen sollte; wenn es mehrfache Racen gibt, so ist die eine edler, die andere muß ihr dienen. Das Verhältnis der Menschen bestimmt sich durch ihre Vernunft" (Petry's translation).

a whole can grasp the totality of the being of present being from out of I-hood as infinity”. This is because “the subject, the I, is primarily constituted as ‘I think’.”⁵⁶

We come up against the peculiarity of Hegel’s metaphysics which will explain exactly Hegel’s position on race, and so his ability to privilege one race over all the others: Hegel’s privileging of one race over any other is a metaphysical position before it is either a historical or even a “biological” one.⁵⁷ Hegel’s philosophy is above all a philosophy of the present and the immediate. What is most present and most immediate at every given moment is the *indeterminate* universal, making itself manifest through its *actual* determinations, through what mediates it. Every actual being *actualizes* (makes manifest) the universal at each moment, but the universal is only insofar as that actual being is capable of realising it.⁵⁸ Every actual being is therefore marked by a finitude, a “notness” or negativity, that simultaneously makes present the universal, and makes present its own finite relation *to* the universal. Inward conceptualising, intending, or inward tending towards, is only in order to press oneself *out* to make manifest the universal that one both *is* and at the same time *should be* (this is Hegel’s understanding of freedom).

This character of Hegel’s metaphysics is often the hardest to grasp in its most abstract form.⁵⁹ Hegel draws our attention to the how we already take the materiality of the world as a whole in a particular way, simultaneously providing both for a public and a private appropriation of it that can be at odds with each other, and yet seemingly confront us with no recognisable contradiction. We take everything present for us, *unthinkingly* as a self-evidence, and we do so in the manner that we do, in consequence of the attainment of German metaphysics. What is meant by this? If we can think that the attainment of German Idealism, and of Hegel’s thought in particular, is the relentless assertion and realisation of the overcoming and abolition of any supersensible (*Übersinnliche*) realm, then it becomes clear that absolute thinking requires that everything we think, we think in terms of its immediate *and* total presence, at one and the same time and together, because there is nowhere else, no other

⁵⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* (GA32), 111. “Hegel und der Deutsche Idealismus überhaupt [kann] die Allheit des Seienden in seinem Sein aus der Ichheit als der Unendlichkeit begreifen . . . das Subjekt, das Ich, primär gefaßt ist als ‘Ich denke’.”

⁵⁷ It is here that the connection with Ernst Jünger’s *Der Arbeiter* would, if we had the space, become apparent. Whereas for Hegel the Nordic, Germanic, Protestant race becomes the foremost bearer of Spirit, Jünger attempts to sidestep the “biological” implications of such a theory (as his own rejection of Nazi racial theory), with the “metaphysical” race of the worker. As should by now be abundantly clear, the worker, or any form of *Übermensch*, far from stepping away from Hegel’s metaphysics, is in each case a form of its fulfilment.

⁵⁸ Hegel has in mind here Aristotle’s ἐνέργεια, the “setting into work” of the real.

⁵⁹ However, it becomes immediately clear when we grasp that what Hegel describes is at the same the mirror image of Nietzsche’s “will to power”.

container, nor place, at which, or within which, it can be thought. We no longer think publicly from out of Plato's "beyond", or pre-existent sphere, nor from out of the creative will of God, nor from any ideal or higher realm. We take the world as we now know it out of its most immediate *and* its total presence. Negativity, the "notness" I have named, is the essential corollary of this thought, since, in order to understand each specific and particular actualisation of presence, requires that we grant simultaneity to the *absent* presence that each *present* presence indicates: both in being present as it is now, and having been present before in a different way, and needing to be present in some other way in the future. This is to say no more than that it exists and can change in time. Each presence is therefore in a determinable relation to everything else with which it simultaneously is present, even at the moment when it itself "is not". To think in this way arises in a thoughtful tradition that has existed at least since Aristotle, and Plato before him. It is to think, as Heidegger elsewhere had suggested, on the basis of a certain "notness" (*Nichthafte*) or negativity that arose out of Aristotle's (and Plato's) confrontation with Parmenides, "inasmuch as the aspect of negation itself had now to be included within the essence of being".⁶⁰

We see in Hegel's extraordinary intellectual effort, through geography, religion, race and national identity, but actually through a metaphysics of the present *as* a conception of history and historical development, as the attempt to grasp and seize the planet as a whole. Hegel does not lay the conditions for this: the conditions already exist and have taken hold. Hegel systematises the conditions such that they appear both as order, and as – in his own word – system. The different races in the world are distinguished from each other to the extent that they are more or less (more negatively or less negatively) the realisation of the absolute. The African is without history because the African people is (historically) furthest from – even, Hegel suggests, incapable of – realising the European (Germanic) state. This is the African relation to the absolute, the most negative realisation of the absolute: making here-present (by indicating its absence, its negation) the *absent* presence of what is *there* (in the European state) presently-present. The different "races" are the different degrees of negative realisation of the absolute. This is the metaphysics of race, as the metaphysics of history.

If Julian Young is correct that "the Heidegger literature contains, unfortunately, a great deal of unhelpful and confusing talk about Heidegger's alleged 'metaphysical' [. . .] racism", Heidegger himself does not agree that "there is no such thing", nor can we concur when Young

⁶⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ 1–3* (GA33), 27. "Indem jetzt das Nichthafte selbst in das Wesen des Seins mithineingenommen werden mußte."

says “biological racism is the only kind there is”.⁶¹ It is easy to see now that Heidegger can reject anything like a biological understanding of race, because not even Hegel bases his understanding of race on “biology”. However, Heidegger also insists that “the biological” is in fact a metaphysical designation.⁶² For “the biological”, as it is applied to the human, has become a way of determining the human “rational animal” in the facticity of its life, thus through categories like “the anthropological”, which take the human being as an object of study in the sciences that demark the way those studies are to be carried out: anthropology; sociology; and, as we shall see, above all historiography. For Heidegger, “the biological”, like all these scientific designations, is a way of taking the human as object to the subject of (human) subjectivity. As a discourse, especially a scientific one, it depends on the objectivity that already arises on the basis of a metaphysics of subjectivity. This is how Heidegger comes to secure the discussion of race: “race is a power-concept [which] presupposes *subjectivity*.” Speaking of the situation of the present (Nazi) state, Heidegger says “the cultivation of race is a necessary measure, to which the end of modernity is driven . . . a ‘cultural politics’ which itself persists only as a means of empowering power.” This occurs in “the age of the fulfillment of metaphysics”. Heidegger adds that the connection of race with power prevails in the being of what is present in “a veiled and uncomprehended way”.⁶³

Heidegger developed this position, not accidentally, around 1940, at the height of the powers of the racist Nazi state. Here Heidegger mentions not only the end of modernity, but also the way in which the discussion of race appears in Ernst Jünger, and in Jünger’s essay *The Worker*, and Heidegger’s own consideration of that text. In this rare consideration (rather than mere mention) of race, Heidegger connects Jünger’s figure of the worker as the bearer and representative of a new race with those two thinkers whom he argued are themselves the thinkers of the end of modernity and the consummation of metaphysics: Hegel and Nietzsche, while naming neither. This passage appears as supplement to the *History of Beyng*, but there is also a discussion of race in the body of this text. Here Heidegger is even more explicit: “the

⁶¹ Julian Young, *Heidegger, philosophy, Nazism*, 36.

⁶² Heidegger does this in many places: two, however, stand out. The first is in Heidegger’s discussion of “the biological worldview” (Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit* GA29/30, 39, 283), and of animality and discussion of the zoologists and thinkers von Uexküll and Driesch (Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe* GA29/30, 374–88 and beyond). The second pervades Heidegger’s readings of Nietzsche, but see especially “Nietzsche’s Alleged Biologism” in *Nietzsche* GA6.1, 465–74 (=GA47, 58–93).

⁶³ Martin Heidegger, *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, 223. “‘Rasse’ ist ein Machtbegriff – setzt *Subjektivität* voraus, vgl. zu Ernst Jünger (GA90) [. . .] wo das Sein des Seienden wengleich verhüllt und unbegriffen als Macht west [. . .]. Die Rassenpflege ist eine notwendige Maßnahme, zu der das Ende der Neuzeit drängt, [. . .] eine ‘Kulturpolitik’, die selbst nur Mittel der Machtermächtigung bleibt.” (Heidegger’s emphasis)

metaphysical ground of racial thinking is not biologism, but the metaphysically [] thought subjectivity of the being of all that is present”.⁶⁴ What Heidegger means by this formula “metaphysically thought subjectivity” is what he often refers to as “Ich-heit”, I-ness, or the securing of the being of everything on the (prior) basis of Kant’s “I think”, which began with Descartes, and reaches its culmination in Hegel and Nietzsche.

Heidegger provides one further insight into the connection between power and race in this text. Rarely does Heidegger explain what power is – indeed, quite the reverse, especially in connection with Jünger, Heidegger asks (several times in the marginal notes he wrote in his copy of *The Worker*): “what is power?”, because he thinks Jünger’s is a romantic, dream-like understanding of power. Power, as will to power, therefore as an expression of the will itself, has “its basis only in the I, which, from itself out, wills spontaneity. Here is its connection with ‘freedom’ ”.⁶⁵ What does power seek to represent and order itself towards? Heidegger cites Nietzsche: the inner, victorious will, with which to create “God and the world”.⁶⁶ The unconditioned will is, however, none other than the absolute will. The will to create God and the world is the will to attain *through* the productive will of the human being the realisation of the absolute in the world. Here, in other words, Nietzsche is indistinguishable from Hegel, from Hegel’s metaphysics of absolute subjectivity, secured on the *I*, the willing self.

What has this to do with race? Heidegger speaks at this point in the text of *Rassenpflege*, a Nazi term meaning the cultivation and “hygiene” of race, but we would now say the racialisation of everyday life through bureaucratic means and through understanding social life as constituted by race (which infected every aspect of life under the Nazis). Thus “racialisation is a measure in keeping with the measure of power. It can as soon be deployed as it can be held back”.⁶⁷ Race, the interpretation of everything through race, is both a means of the exercise of power and a display of power’s arbitrariness. Its decisions and effects have no reason, no predictable ground, but become the basis for the manifestation of the spontaneity of freedom as such. Heidegger speaks with no approval: quite to the contrary. He is attempting to describe how in the hands of the Nazi, racialised, state, race has become a weapon. In Heidegger’s own text of the 1934 *Logic* lectures, Heidegger mentions and dismisses what had

⁶⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, 71. “Der metaphysische Grund des Rassedenkens ist nicht der Biologismus, sondern die metaphysisch zu denkende Subjektivität alles Seins von Seiendem.”

⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger, “Seminarprotokolle: Einübung in das philosophische Denken 1941/42 (GA88)”, 299. “Er hat seinen Grund einzig im Ich, das von sich aus, spontan will. Hier ist sein Zusammenhang mit der ‘Freiheit’.”

⁶⁶ Heidegger is citing aphorism §619 of the *Will to Power* (= Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachlaß 1884–1885* [KSA11 [36] 31]). Martin Heidegger, “Seminarprotokolle (GA88)”, 301.

⁶⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Die Geschichte des Seyns*, 70. “Rassen-pflege ist eine machtmäßige Maßnahme. Sie kann daher bald eingeschaltet bald zurückgestellt werden.”

already become a term of Nazi propaganda, *Rassezüchtung* or “selection (and improvement) through breeding” (a precursor of *Rassenpflege* and related to it), a term still used in animal farming, but which was being applied to human populations, in a sentence that does not appear in the Hallwachs transcript of the lectures.⁶⁸ We can only presume that the relevant section was not delivered to the audience, and that Heidegger thought already in 1934 that such a clear rejection of Nazi terminology was too dangerous a provocation.⁶⁹

Anyone who takes the trouble to read beyond the notorious *geschichtslos* passage in the volume of the 1934 *Logic* lectures discovers in nearly one hundred pages following, an excoriating critique of Hegel’s view of history, coupled with an only thinly disguised attack on the Nazi view of the state. Heidegger’s claim, made around this time, that “the state is the being of the people” is as close as Heidegger ever came to Hegel’s thought,⁷⁰ and yet it is a statement made in confrontation with Hegel. At the end of 1934 Heidegger even took up the language of “future tasks” (although even here, he quotes Hölderlin), only to drop it almost immediately: returning to his more authentic thought that destiny is what is *sent*, is what addresses and befalls us, and is not what anyone, any “people”, tribe or nation, produce for themselves.⁷¹ Heidegger’s principal aim, especially in unfolding his understanding of the history of being, is to free every understanding of being, and of the being of the human being, and above all every understanding of history itself, from the force of necessity or determinations of (historical) causality: in particular, from every understanding of history as the necessary realisation of a finality or “end” for human life as the fulfilment of humanity’s appropriation of the planet as a whole. This is the source of Heidegger’s criticism of liberalism, and his rejection of Nazism as a form of liberalism, and the source of his critique of race. To free history from the force of necessity is not to deny the question of destiny – quite the contrary. It opens a way for the possibility of conversation between places, rather than a racialised discourse of superiority of one body, nation, or one group of humanity over another. We should recall that when, in the *Spiegel* interview, Heidegger is challenged about his German nationalism and his claims for the superiority of the German language, he immediately speaks, not of Germany and nationalism, but of Hölderlin.⁷² In the poet, not the nation or the race, is the voice of superiority to be heard.

⁶⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache* (GA38A), 73. Compare (GA38), 72–75.

⁶⁹ There are other similar indications in the difference between the two texts.

⁷⁰ Martin Heidegger, “Hegels ‘Rechtsphilosophie’ WS 1934/35 (GA86)”, 117. “Staat als Sein des Volkes” This phrase is reported from several lectures and protocols of seminars in the Summer and Winter Semesters of 1934.

⁷¹ See note 16 above, the title of a short series of politically oriented addresses in late 1934.

⁷² Martin Heidegger, “Spiegel-Gespräch mit Martin Heidegger, 23. September 1966 (GA16)”, 679.

Was Heidegger racist? We should rather say that Heidegger shows both how the metaphysics of race appear in the history of being (and to what baleful effect), and how in this history nothing like race has any place at all.

9,500 words.

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