
Race, History, and Imperialism

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

(b. Stuttgart, 27 August 1770; d. Berlin,
14 November 1831)

In the following excerpt from *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (1822–8), Hegel argues that, from a philosophical point of view, non-European peoples – American Indians, Africans, and Asians – are/less human than Europeans because, to varying degrees, they are not fully aware of themselves as conscious, historical beings. This state of ahistoricity, Hegel argues, is evident in the inferiority of what he thought was African religion (Africans “worship” themselves and objects of nature instead of God), and politics (Africans kill their kings, which is a failure to recognize that the king is a superior being).

Note that Hegel attributes a major cause of the supposed ahistoricity of non-European peoples to the geographical element of climate. According to Hegel, extreme climatic conditions, which are “torrid” or “cold,” cannot “provide basis for human freedom or world historical nations”; and so it is only Europe – because of its geographical location in a “temperate zone” – that “must furnish the theatre of world history.”

Geographical Basis of World History

General determinations

The universal premise of this investigation is that world history represents the Idea of the spirit as it displays itself in reality as a series of external forms. The stage of self-consciousness which the spirit has reached manifests itself in world history as the existing national spirit, as a nation which exists in the present . . .

When the spirit first enters existence, it takes on the mode of finitude and hence of natural existence in general . . . This natural dimension leads us to consider the influence of geography; for the latter includes all that belongs to the purely natural phase. But in natural existence, we can immediately distinguish two aspects of determinate reality: on the one hand, it includes the nation's natural will or subjective disposition; but on the other, it is also present in the shape of a particular external nature. In so far as man is unfree and natural, he can be described as a creature of the senses. The world of the senses, however, consists of two distinct aspects: that of subjectivity and that of external nature. The latter is the geographical aspect, which can be recognised at first glance as part of external nature in general. What we have to consider, therefore, are differences which are grounded in nature. They must also be seen first and foremost as particular possibilities from which the spirit germinates, and they accordingly lend it its geographical basis . . .

This consideration would seem to tally with what is usually said concerning the influence of *climate* on human affairs. It is a general and widely held opinion that the particular national spirit is linked with the climate of the nation in question, and that the nation is by birth a single people. This is a very commonly expressed sentiment. But however necessary the connection between the spiritual and the natural principle may be, we must not rest content with everyday opinions and ascribe over-specific effects and influences to climate. For example, a great deal is often said about the mild Ionic sky which supposedly produced Homer, and it did undoubtedly contribute much to the charm of the Homeric poems. But the coast of Asia Minor has

always been the same, and is still the same today; nevertheless, only *one* Homer has arisen among the Ionic people. It is not the nation which sings; a poem is composed only by one person, by a single individual – and even if several persons were involved in the composition of the Homeric songs, they were still only a group of individuals. Despite the mild sky, no further Homers emerged, particularly under the Turkish rule. The effect of climate is limited to minor particulars; but we are not concerned with these, and they have no real influence in any case.

Climate does have a certain influence, however, in that neither the *torrid* nor the *cold region* can provide a basis for human freedom or for world-historical nations. At his first awakening, man possesses an immediately natural consciousness in relation to nature in general. Since this is so, there is necessarily a relationship between the two: all development involves a reflection of the spirit within itself in opposition to nature, or an internal particularisation of the spirit as against its immediate existence, i.e. the natural world. The moment of naturalness is itself part of this particularisation, because it is itself of a particular nature; and in this way, an opposition arises between the spirit and the external world. Nature is therefore the original basis from which man can achieve inward freedom. For in so far as man is primarily a creature of the senses, it is imperative that, in his sensuous connection with nature, he should be able to attain freedom by means of internal reflection. But where nature is too powerful, his liberation becomes more difficult. His sensuous existence and his withdrawal from it are themselves his natural mode of existence, and the latter, as such, embodies the determination of quantity. It is therefore essential that man's connection with nature should not be too powerful in the first place.

Nature, in contrast to the spirit, is a quantitative element whose power must not be so great as to render it omnipotent in its own right. Extreme conditions are not conducive to spiritual development. Aristotle has long since observed that man turns to universal and more exalted things only after his basic needs have been satisfied. But neither the torrid nor the frigid zone permits him to move freely, or to acquire sufficient resources to allow him to participate in higher spiritual interests. He is kept in too insensible a state; he is oppressed by nature, and consequently

cannot divorce himself from it, although this is the primary condition of all higher spiritual culture. The power of the elements is too great for man to escape from his struggle with them, or to become strong enough to assert his spiritual freedom against the power of nature. The frost which grips the inhabitants of Lapland and the fiery heat of Africa are forces of too powerful a nature for man to resist, or for the spirit to achieve free movement and to reach that degree of richness which is the precondition and source of a fully developed mastery of reality. In regions such as these, dire necessity can never be escaped or overcome; man is continually forced to direct his attention to nature. Man uses nature for his own ends; but where nature is too powerful, it does not allow itself to be used as a means. The torrid and frigid regions, as such, are not the theatre on which world history is enacted. In this respect, such extremes are incompatible with spiritual freedom.

All in all, it is therefore the *temperate zone* which must furnish the theatre of world history. And more specifically, the northern part of the temperate regions is particularly suited to this purpose, because at this point, the earth has a broad breast (as the Greeks put it), i.e. the continents are closely connected. This formation calls to mind the distinction which is commonly made between north and south; for the earth is widest in the north and divided in the south, where it separates out into many distinct points as in America, Asia, and Africa. The same peculiarity shows itself in natural products. All the interconnected northern countries, as we know from natural history, have many natural products in common; but in the widely separated promontories of the south, they diverge much more widely. In terms of botany and zoology, the northern zone is therefore the most important one; the largest number of animal and vegetable species is found in it, whereas in the south, where the land is broken up into separate points, the natural forms also diverge widely from one another.

The New World

The world is divided into the Old and the New – the latter taking its name from the fact that America and Australia only became

known to the Europeans at a later stage of history. But the difference between them is not merely an external one, for the two are in fact essentially distinct: the New World is not just relatively new, but absolutely so, by virtue of its wholly peculiar character in both physical and political respects. Its geological age does not concern us here. I will not deny it the honour of also having risen from the sea at the time of the world's creation (or however we wish to describe it). Nevertheless, the archipelago between South America and Asia displays a physical immaturity even in respect of its origin; for most of the islands are based on coral, and are so situated as to be, so to speak, merely a superficial covering for rocks which rise up out of the bottomless depths and bear the marks of relatively recent origin. *New Holland* appears geographically no less immature; for if we proceed further inland from the English settlements, we encounter vast rivers which have not yet reached the stage of cutting channels for themselves, but lose themselves instead in marshy plains. *America*, as everyone knows, is divided into two parts; and although these are connected by an isthmus, it does not facilitate communications between them. On the contrary, they remain quite definitely separate. In *North America*, we first of all encounter a broad coastal strip along the eastern seaboard, beyond which a mountain range – the Blue Mountains or Appalachians, with the Allegheny Mountains to the north – extends. The rivers which flow from these water the coastal regions, which are admirably suited to the needs of the free North American states which first grew up in this area. Beyond this mountain range, the St Lawrence River, which is connected with the Great Lakes, flows from south to north, with the northern colonies of Canada along its banks. Further west, we meet the basin of the great Mississippi, with the other territories of the Missouri and Ohio Rivers which flow into it before it empties itself into the Gulf of Mexico. To the west of this region lies another long mountain range which runs on through Mexico and the Isthmus of Panama; under the name of the Andes or Cordilleras, it cuts off the entire western side of *South America*. The coastal strip formed by these mountains is narrower and less hospitable than that of North America. Peru and Chile are situated on it. To the east of the mountains, the vast Orinoco and Amazon Rivers flow eastwards; they have formed wide valleys, which are not, however,

a suitable setting for civilisation, for they are really no more than vast steppelands. To the south flows the Rio de la Plata, some of whose tributaries rise in the Cordilleras, and others in the northern mountain ridge which separates it from the basin of the Amazon. The basin of the Rio de la Plata includes Brazil and the Spanish republics. Columbia is in the northern coastal region of South America, and in its western half the Magdalena River flows along the Andes and into the Caribbean.

The New World may even have been connected with Europe and Africa at one time. But the recent history of the transatlantic continent indicates that, although it did possess an indigenous culture when it was first discovered by the Europeans, this culture was destroyed through contact with them; the subjugation of the country amounted, in fact, to its downfall. We do have information concerning America and its culture, especially as it had developed in Mexico and Peru, but only to the effect that it was a purely natural culture which had to perish as soon as the spirit approached it. America has always shown itself physically and spiritually impotent, and it does so to this day. For after the Europeans had landed there, the natives were gradually destroyed by the breath of European activity. Even the animals show the same inferiority as the human beings. The fauna of America includes lions, tigers, and crocodiles, but although they are otherwise similar to their equivalents in the Old World, they are in every respect smaller, weaker, and less powerful. We are even assured that the animals are not as nourishing as the food which the Old World provides. And although America has huge herds of cattle, European beef is still regarded as a delicacy.

As for the human population, few descendants of the original inhabitants survive, for nearly seven million people have been wiped out. The natives of the West Indian islands have died out altogether. Indeed, the whole North American world has been destroyed and suppressed by the Europeans. The tribes of North America have in part disappeared, and in part withdrawn from contact with the Europeans. Their degeneration indicates that they do not have the strength to join the independent North American states. Culturally inferior nations such as these are gradually eroded through contact with more advanced nations which have gone through a more intensive cultural development. For the citizens of the independent states of North

America are all of European descent and the original inhabitants were unable to amalgamate with them.

The natives have certainly learnt various arts from the Europeans including that of brandy drinking, whose effect upon them has been disastrous. The only inhabitants of South America and Mexico who feel the need for independence are the *Creoles*, who are descended from a mixture of native and Spanish or Portuguese ancestors. They alone have attained a higher degree of self-awareness, and felt the urge for autonomy and independence. It is they who set the tone in their country. But it would appear that only a few native tribes share their attitude. Admittedly we do hear reports of native peoples who have identified themselves with the recent efforts of the Americans to create independent states, but it is probable that very few of their members are of pure native origin. For this reason, the English have also adopted the policy in India of preventing the rise of a native Creole population, i.e. a people of mixed European and native blood.

We should also note that a larger native populace has survived in South America, despite the fact that the natives there have been subjected to far greater violence, and employed in gruelling labours to which their strength was scarcely equal. The local populace is subjected to every kind of degradation. One must read the accounts of travellers to appreciate their mildness and passivity, their humility and obsequious submissiveness towards a Creole, and even more towards a European; and it will be a long time before the Europeans can succeed in instilling any feelings of independence into them. Some of them have visited Europe, but they are obviously unintelligent individuals with little capacity for education. Their inferiority in all respects, even in stature, can be seen in every particular; the southern tribes of Patagonia are alone more powerfully constituted, although they still live in a natural state of lawlessness and savagery. The religious brotherhoods have treated them in the correct manner, first impressing them by their spiritual authority and then allotting them tasks calculated to awaken and satisfy their needs. When the Jesuits and Catholic clergy first set out to acquaint the Indians with European culture and manners (for, as everyone knows, they founded a state in Paraguay and established monasteries in Mexico and California), they went into their midst and

prescribed their daily duties for them as if they were minors; and, however idle the natives otherwise were, they duly carried them out in compliance with the authority of the fathers. The clergy also built storehouses for them and instructed them in their use, so that they might provide for their future needs. They chose the most appropriate means of bettering them, treating them much as one would treat children. I even recollect having read that a clergyman used to ring a bell at midnight to remind them to perform their matrimonial duties, for it would otherwise never have occurred to them to do so. These precepts at first served – quite rightly – to awaken their needs, which are the springs of all human activity.

The Americans, then, are like unenlightened children, living from one day to the next, and untouched by higher thoughts or aspirations. The weakness of their physique was one of the main reasons why the Negroes were brought to America as a labour force; for the Negroes are far more susceptible to European culture than the Indians. The Portuguese were more humane than the Dutch, Spanish, and English. For this reason, it was easier on the coast of Brazil than elsewhere for slaves to gain their freedom, and large numbers of free Negroes were to be found in this region. Among them was the black physician Dr Kingera, who first acquainted the Europeans with quinine. An English writer reports that, among the wide circle of his acquaintances, he had encountered instances of Negroes becoming skilled workers and tradesmen, and even clergymen and doctors, etc. But of all the free native Americans he knew, he could think of only one who had proved capable of study and who eventually became a clergyman; but he had died soon afterwards as a result of excessive drinking. The weakness of the human physique in America is further aggravated by the lack of those absolute instruments which can alone establish a firmly based authority – namely horses and iron, the principal means by which the natives were subdued. And if at any time we speak of free citizens in South America, this applies only to peoples of mixed European, Asiatic, and American blood. The true Americans are only now beginning to adapt themselves to European culture. And where they do take steps to achieve independence, it is foreign means which have enabled them to do so: the cavalry of the Llanos, for example, is excellent; but it employs the Euro-

pean horse. But all of these native states are still in the process of formation, and their position is not commensurate with that of the Europeans. In Spanish and Portuguese America, the natives still have to liberate themselves from slavery, and in North America, they lack a focus of communal existence without which no state can exist.

Since the original American nation has vanished – or as good as vanished – the effective population comes for the most part from Europe, and everything that happens in America has its origin there. The surplus population of Europe has emigrated to America, by a process not unlike that which occurred in former times in the imperial German cities. For these cities had many commercial privileges, and numerous emigrants fled to them in order to settle nearby so that they might enjoy the same rights as they did. In this way, Altona grew up near Hamburg, Offenbach near Frankfurt, Fürth near Nürnberg, and Carouge near Geneva. Similarly, citizens who had suffered bankruptcy and who could no longer enjoy the privileges of their trade in the city itself or attend its institutions without disgrace, would settle in the adjoining territory; they would have there all the advantages which such a town can offer – exemption from the dues which the older cities exacted from them, and from all obligation to belong to a guild. Thus, in the vicinity of the enclosed cities, new settlements arose in which the same trades were practised, but without the controls which the cities imposed upon them. The relationship between North America and Europe is similar. Many Englishmen have settled there, for the burdens and levies which are imposed on trade and commerce in Europe no longer apply in America. They bring with them all the advantages of civilisation, and are able to practise their skills without interference. The accumulation of European methods and skills has enabled them to reap some benefit from the vast areas of hitherto virgin soil. America has also become a place of refuge for the dregs of European society. Indeed, emigration to America offers many advantages, for the emigrants have cast off much that might restrict them at home, and they bring with them the benefits of European self-reliance and European culture without the accompanying disadvantages; and to those who are willing to work hard and who have not found an opportunity to do so in Europe, America certainly offers ample scope.

With the exception of Brazil, the states of South America are generally republics, as in North America. But if we compare South America (including Mexico) with North America, we discover an astonishing contrast.

North America owes its prosperity to the growth of its industry and population and to civil order and firmly established freedom; the whole federation constitutes a single state with various political centres. In South America, however, the republics are based solely on military force and their whole history is one of continuous revolution: federations of states are dissolved and new ones are formed, and all these changes are the product of military revolutions. The more specific differences between the two parts of America reveal two opposing tendencies – the one in politics, and the other in religion. South America, in which the Spanish settled and asserted their supremacy, is Catholic, whereas North America, although a land of innumerable sects, is fundamentally Protestant. A further incongruity is that South America was conquered, while North America was colonised. The Spanish took possession of South America in order to dominate it and to enrich themselves both through political office and by exacting tributes from the natives. Living far away from the mother country on which they depended, they had more scope to indulge their arbitrary inclinations; and by force, adroitness, and self-confidence they gained a great preponderance over the Indians. The noble and magnanimous aspects of the Spanish character did not accompany them to America. The Creoles, who are descended from the Spanish immigrants, lived on in the presumptuous ways they had inherited, and behaved in an arrogant manner towards the natives. The Creoles were themselves subject to the influence of the European Spaniards, and were fired by base ambitions for rank and titles. The people lived under the influence of a strict hierarchy and the dissolute rule of the secular and regular clergy. These peoples have still to extricate themselves from the spirit of hollow interests before they can attain the spirit of rationality and freedom.

The North American states, however, were entirely colonised by the Europeans. Since Puritans, Episcopalians, and Catholics were constantly at loggerheads in England, with each party gaining the upper hand in turn, many of them emigrated to

another continent in search of religious freedom. These were industrious Europeans who applied themselves to agriculture, tobacco and cotton planting, etc. Soon, their whole concern was with their work; and the substance which held the whole together lay in the needs of the populace, the desire for peace, the establishment of civil justice, security, and freedom, and a commonwealth framed in the interests of the individuals as discrete entities, so that the state was merely an external device for the protection of property. The mutual confidence of individuals and their trust in the goodwill of their fellows had their source in the Protestant religion; for in the eyes of the Protestant Church, religious works constitute the whole of life and human activity. Among the Catholics, however, there can be no grounds for any such confidence. For in worldly affairs, force and voluntary subservience rule supreme, and the forms which go under the name of constitutions are in this case merely a necessary expedient, offering no protection against mistrust. Thus, the population which has settled in North America is of a completely different order from that of South America. They had no united church to bind the states together and impose restrictions upon them. The industrial principle was imported from England, and industry itself contains the principle of individuality: for in industry, the individual understanding is developed and becomes the dominant power. In North America, therefore, the various states were shaped in conformity with the various religions of the citizens . . .

In physical terms, America is not yet fully developed, and it is even less advanced in terms of political organisation. It is certainly an independent and powerful state, but it is still engaged in developing its purely physical assets. Only when the country is completely occupied will a firmly established order be introduced. Such rudiments as already exist are of a European character. For the moment, the surplus population of the European states can continue to settle there; but when this comes to an end, the whole will turn in upon itself and become consolidated. It is therefore not yet possible to draw any lessons from America as regards republican constitutions. Consequently, this state does not really concern us, any more than do the other American states which are still struggling for independence. Only its exter-

nal relations with Europe come into consideration, inasmuch as America is an annex which has accommodated the surplus population of Europe ...

America is therefore the country of the future, and its world-historical importance has yet to be revealed in the ages which lie ahead – perhaps in a conflict between North and South America. It is a land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical arsenal of old Europe ... Napoleon is said to have remarked: *Cette vieille Europe m'ennuie.* It is up to America to abandon the ground on which world history has hitherto been enacted. What has taken place there up to now is but an echo of the Old World and the expression of an alien life; and as a country of the future, it is of no interest to us here, for prophecy is not the business of the philosopher.

The Old World

Putting aside the New World and whatever dreams we might build upon it, we now pass on to the *Old World*. It is essentially the setting of those events which we have to consider here, i.e. the setting of world history. Here again, we must first direct our attention to the moments and determinations of nature. America is split up into two parts, and although these are connected by an isthmus, the connection is only a superficial one. The Old World consists of three parts, as the Ancients, with their eye for nature, correctly discerned. These divisions are not fortuitous, but the expression of a higher necessity which accords with the underlying concept. The whole character of its territories is composed of three distinct elements, and this tripartite division is not arbitrary but spiritual, for it is essentially based on determinations of nature. The three continents of the Old World are therefore essentially related, and they combine to form a totality. Their distinguishing feature is that they all lie around a sea which provides them with a focus and a means of communication. This is an extremely important factor. For the connecting link between these three continents, the *Mediterranean*, is the focus of the whole of world history. With its many inlets, it is not an ocean which stretches out indefinitely and to which man has a purely negative relationship; on the contrary, it positively invites

him to venture out upon it. The Mediterranean Sea is the axis of world history. All the great states of ancient history lie around it, and it is the navel of the earth. Greece, that resplendent light of history, lies there. Then in Syria, Jerusalem is the centre of Judaism and Christianity; south-east of it lie Mecca and Medina, the fountainhead of the Moslem faith; to the west lie Delphi and Athens, with Rome and Carthage further west still; and to the south lies Alexandria, an even greater centre than Constantinople in which the spiritual fusion of east and west took place. The Mediterranean is therefore the heart of the Old World, its conditioning and vitalising principle. It is the centre of world history, in so far as the latter possesses any internal coherence. World history would be inconceivable without it; it would be like ancient Rome or Athens without the forum or street where all the life of the city converged. The whole eastern part of Asia is remote from the current of world history and plays no part in it; the same applies to the north of Europe, which appeared in world history only at a later date and had no share in it in ancient times; for ancient history was strictly confined to the countries around the Mediterranean. Julius Caesar's crossing of the Alps, the conquest of Gaul, and the resultant contact between the Germanic peoples and the Roman Empire, were epochmaking events in world history; for world history crossed the Alps along with them. The eastern part of Asia is one extreme and the lands to the north of the Alps are the other. The eastern portion lives on in its monolithic unity; it does not enter into the movement of world history, which takes place rather at the other extreme, at the western end. The lands which lie beyond Syria constitute the beginning of world history, and this beginning itself lies suspended, as it were, outside the historical process; the occidental portion marks the end of this process, and its agitated centre lies around the Mediterranean. The latter is a major natural feature, and its influence is truly considerable; we cannot conceive of the historical process without the central and unifying element of the sea.

We have already specified the geographical distinctions which can be observed within each continent as a whole – the upland regions, the broad river valleys, and the coastal lands. They occur in all three continents of the Old World, so that we can classify these according to which of the three principles is dominant

within them. Africa, generally speaking, is the continent in which the upland principle, the principle of cultural backwardness, predominates. Asia, on the other hand, is the continent in which the great antitheses come into conflict, although its distinguishing feature is the second principle, that of the broad river valleys; these support a culture which broods for ever within itself. The totality consists in the union of all three principles, and this is to be found in Europe, the continent in which the spirit is united with itself, and which, while retaining its own solid substance, has embarked upon that infinite process whereby culture is realised in practice. (The only principle left over for America would be that of incompleteness or constant non-fulfilment.) The spiritual character of the three continents varies in accordance with these natural differences. In Africa proper, man has not progressed beyond a merely sensuous existence, and has found it absolutely impossible to develop any further. Physically, he exhibits great muscular strength, which enables him to perform arduous labours; and his temperament is characterised by good-naturedness, which is coupled, however, with completely unfeeling cruelty. Asia is the land of antithesis, division, and expansion, just as Africa is the land of concentration. One pole of the antithesis is that of ethical life, the universal rational essence which remains solid and substantial; the other is the exact spiritual opposite, that of egotism, infinite desires, and boundless expansion of freedom. Europe is the land of spiritual unity, of retreat from this boundless freedom into the particular, of control of the immoderate and elevation of the particular to the universal, and of the descent of the spirit into itself. It was *Ritter* who formulated these distinctions between the continents and expressed them in a direct and tangible form. His works offer interesting sidelights on the historical implications of geography.

Africa

Generally speaking, Africa is a continent enclosed within itself, and this enclosedness has remained its chief characteristic. It consists of three parts, which are essentially distinct from one another. The divisions in its geographical configuration are so pronounced that even the differences in its spiritual character

remain tied to these physical peculiarities. One might almost say that Africa consists of three continents which are entirely separate from one another, and between which there is no contact whatsoever. The first of these is Africa proper, the land to the south of the Sahara desert; it consists of almost entirely unexplored highlands with narrow coastal strips along its shores. The second is the land to the north of the desert, a coastal region which might be described as European Africa. And the third is the region of the Nile, the only valley land of Africa, which is closely connected with Asia.

North Africa lies on the Mediterranean Sea and extends westwards along the Atlantic; it is separated from southern Africa by the great desert – a waterless sea – and by the River Niger. The desert is a more effective division than the sea, and the character of the people who live immediately on the Niger reveals the difference between the two regions particularly clearly. The northern region stretches across to Egypt, interspersed with numerous sandy wastes to the north and traversed by ranges of mountains; between the mountains lie fertile valleys, which make it one of the most fruitful and attractive of territories. It includes the countries of Morocco, Fas (not Fez), Algeria, Tunis, and Tripoli. It could be said that this whole region does not really belong to Africa but forms a single unit with Spain, for both are part of one and the same basin. With this in mind, the prolific French writer and politician *de Pradt*¹ has said that, in Spain, one is already in Africa. This northern region is the non-independent portion of Africa, for it has always been subject to foreign influences; it is not itself a theatre of world-historical events, and has always been dependent on revolutions of a wider scope. It was originally colonised by the Phoenicians, who established themselves as an independent power in Carthage, then by the Romans, the Vandals, the Romans of the Byzantine Empire, the Arabs, and finally by the Turks, under whom it dissolved into various piratical states. It is a country which merely shares the fortunes of great events enacted elsewhere, but which has no determinate character of its own. This portion of Africa, like the Near East, is orientated towards Europe; it should and must be

¹ Dominic Dufour de Pradt, *Mémoires historiques sur la révolution d'Espagne* (1816).

brought into the European sphere of influence, as the French have successfully attempted in recent times.

Egypt, the land of the Nile, depends on this river for its entire existence and life. Unlike North Africa, it is one of those regions which we have described as constituting a focus, as destined to become the centre of a great and independent culture. It does have an association with the Mediterranean, an association which was at first interrupted but then intensively cultivated at a later date.

Africa proper is the characteristic part of the whole continent as such. We have chosen to examine this continent first, because it can well be taken as antecedent to our main enquiry. It has no historical interest of its own, for we find its inhabitants living in barbarism and savagery in a land which has not furnished them with any integral ingredient of culture. From the earliest historical times, Africa has remained cut off from all contacts with the rest of the world; it is the land of gold, for ever pressing in upon itself, and the land of childhood, removed from the light of self-conscious history and wrapped in the dark mantle of night. Its isolation is not just a result of its tropical nature, but an essential consequence of its geographical character. It is still unexplored, and has no connections whatsoever with Europe. For occupation of its coasts has not led the Europeans to penetrate its interior. Its shape is that of a triangle: to the west lies the Atlantic coast, which forms a deep indentation in the Gulf of Guinea, to the east lies the coast of the Indian Ocean from the Cape of Good Hope to Cape Guardafui, and to the north, the desert and the Niger. The northern part is in the process of acquiring a new character through contact with the Europeans. The main characteristic of Africa proper is that it appears to be predominantly an upland region, and in particular, that it has a very narrow coastal strip, habitable only in a few isolated spots. The next region towards the interior, in almost every case, is a belt of swampland; it lies at the foot of a circle of high mountains which are broken only at rare intervals by rivers, and even these do not afford a means of access to the interior: for the gaps they form are never far from the tops of the mountain ranges, creating only a few narrow openings which are often blocked by impassable waterfalls and raging cross-currents. The north of Africa proper also appears to be cut off by a belt of mountains – the Mountains of

the Moon to the south of the Niger. The coastal strip of Africa has been occupied for centuries by Europeans; but they did not succeed in reaching the interior until approximately fifteen years ago. At the Cape of Good Hope, the missionaries have recently crossed the mountains into the interior. Europeans have settled on the coastal strip in several places: on the east coast in Mozambique, and on the west coast in the Congo and Loango regions, on the Senegal, which flows through sandy deserts and mountains, and on the Gambia; but throughout the three to three-and-a-half centuries that they have known the coastal strip and occupied parts of it, they have only crossed the mountains at a few isolated places and for brief periods of time, and have nowhere gained a permanent footing beyond them. The coastal strip is sandy in parts and inhospitable, but further inland it is nevertheless fertile. Beyond it, however, lies the belt of swampland, full of the most luxuriant vegetation; it is also the home of all manner of rapacious animals, and its atmosphere is pestilential and almost poisonous to breathe. This, as in Ceylon, has made it virtually impossible to reach the interior. The English and Portuguese have often sent sufficient troops for such expeditions; but most of them have died in the swamps, and the rest have invariably been overcome by the natives. Since so many rivers run through the mountains, one might well imagine that these would allow access by ship to the interior. The Congo (which is thought to be a branch of the Niger) and the Orange River have indeed proved navigable for short stretches, but then they are interrupted by frequent and impassable waterfalls. Given these natural conditions, the Europeans have gained little knowledge of the African interior; but from time to time, upland tribes have descended from the mountains, and displayed such barbarous ferocity that it proved impossible to establish any contact with them. Such outbreaks occur from time to time, and they are among the oldest traditions of the African continent. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in particular, it is reported that the most assorted hosts of natives, terrible hordes, descended at several widely separated points upon the peaceful inhabitants of the slopes and the nations of the coasts, driving them down to the edge of the sea. A similar attempt was made at the Cape of Good Hope, but the assault was repulsed before it had passed the mountains. Several nations on

the west coast appear to be remnants of such incursions; they have eventually been subjugated by later invaders, and reduced to the most wretched condition. Negro hordes have poured down across Abyssinia, and on the other side of the continent too. When their fury has abated, and when they have lived for a time on the slopes or in the coastal region and become pacified, they prove mild and industrious, although they seemed completely intractable at the time of their initial onslaught. It is uncertain whether these upheavals are occasioned by internal unrest, and what the nature of this unrest may have been. What we do know of these hordes is the contrast in their behaviour before and after their incursions: during their wars and forays, they behaved with the most unthinking inhumanity and revolting barbarity, yet subsequently, when their rage had died down and peace was restored, they behaved with mildness towards the Europeans when they became acquainted with them. This was the case with the Fula and Mandingo peoples who inhabit the mountain terraces of Senegal and Gambia.

In this main portion of Africa, history is in fact out of the question. Life there consists of a succession of contingent happenings and surprises. No aim or state exists whose development could be followed; and there is no subjectivity, but merely a series of subjects who destroy one another. In the past, little attention has been paid to this peculiar mode of self-consciousness which the spirit exhibits in Africa. Numerous reports have come in from the most diverse regions, but most people regard them as incredible; they provide us rather with a collection of fearful details than with a determinate image or principle such as we shall now attempt to extract from them. The literature on a subject of this kind is somewhat indefinite in scope, and anyone who wishes to go into it in detail must avail himself of such information as is available in the useful works of reference. The best general account of Africa is that provided in Ritter's geography.

We shall now attempt to define the universal spirit and form of the African character in the light of the particular traits which such accounts enumerate. This character, however, is difficult to comprehend, because it is so totally different from our own culture, and so remote and alien in relation to our own mode of consciousness. We must forget all the categories which are fun-

damental to our own spiritual life, i.e. the forms under which we normally subsume the data which confront us; the difficulty here is that our customary preconceptions will still inevitably intrude in all our deliberations.

It must be said in general that, in the interior of Africa, the consciousness of the inhabitants has not yet reached an awareness of any substantial and objective existence. Under the heading of substantial objectivity, we must include God, the eternal, justice, nature, and all natural things. When the spirit enters into relations with substantial things such as these, it knows that it is dependent upon them; but it realises at the same time that it is a value in itself in so far as it is capable of such relationships. But the Africans have not yet attained this recognition of the universal; their nature is as yet compressed within itself; and what we call religion, the state, that which exists in and for itself and possesses absolute validity – all this is not yet present to them. The circumstantial reports of the missionaries fully bear this out, and Mohammedanism seems to be the only thing which has brought the Negroes at all nearer to culture. The Mohammedans also know better than the Europeans how to penetrate the interior of the country.

The characteristic feature of the Negroes is that their consciousness has not yet reached an awareness of any substantial objectivity – for example, of God or the law – in which the will of man could participate and in which he could become aware of his own being. The African, in his undifferentiated and concentrated unity, has not yet succeeded in making this distinction between himself as an individual and his essential universality, so that he knows nothing of an absolute being which is other and higher than his own self. Thus, man as we find him in Africa has not progressed beyond his immediate existence. As soon as man emerges as a human being, he stands in opposition to nature, and it is this alone which makes him a human being. But if he has merely made a distinction between himself and nature, he is still at the first stage of his development: he is dominated by passion, and is nothing more than a savage. All our observations of African man show him as living in a state of savagery and barbarism, and he remains in this state to the present day. The Negro is an example of animal man in all his savagery and lawlessness, and if we wish to understand him at all, we must put

aside all our European attitudes. We must not think of a spiritual God or of moral laws; to comprehend him correctly, we must abstract from all reverence and morality, and from everything which we call feeling. All this is foreign to man in his immediate existence, and nothing consonant with humanity is to be found in his character. For this very reason, we cannot properly feel ourselves into his nature, no more than into that of a dog, or of a Greek as he kneels before the statue of Zeus. Only by means of thought can we achieve this understanding of his nature; for we can only feel that which is akin to our own feelings.

Thus, in Africa as a whole, we encounter what has been called the *state of innocence*, in which man supposedly lives in unity with God and nature. For in this state, man is as yet unconscious of himself. The spirit should not remain permanently in such a state, however, but must abandon this primitive condition. This primitive state of nature is in fact a state of animality. Paradise was that zoological garden in which man lived in an animal condition of innocence – but this is not his true destiny. Man is not truly a human being until he knows what goodness is, has experienced opposition, and become divided within himself. For he can only know what is good if he also has knowledge of evil. For this reason, the state of paradise is not a perfect one. That early state of perfection of which the myths of all nations speak means simply that the abstract destiny of man is already potentially present; but whether it also existed in reality is quite another matter. Its potential presence has been confused with its real existence. For the concept of the spirit is only potentially present, and it has wrongly been assumed that it already existed in reality. It is still only potentially present for us; but the purpose of the spirit is to ensure that it is also realised in practice. In real existence, this represents the final stage in history, although in terms of mere potentiality, it is equivalent to the first stage. We hear much about the higher intelligence of mankind in the earlier stages of history, of which – as Schlegel has claimed – the wisdom of the Indians in astronomy etc. allegedly still shows vestiges. But as far as this Indian wisdom is concerned, we have already pointed out that such traditions have proved extremely unreliable, and that the numbers they specify are empty fabrications.

As we now proceed to review the principal moments within the African spirit, we shall have occasion to examine in detail certain particular features which illuminate its nature more fully; but our main concern must be with the general conception. Thus, if we turn first of all to the *religion* of the Africans, our own conception of religion tells us that it requires that man should recognise a supreme being which exists in and for itself as a completely objective and absolute being or higher power; this supreme being determines the course of everything, and, in contrast to it, man appears as a weaker and humbler creature. It can be conceived of either as a spirit, or as a natural power which governs the course of nature (although this is not its true form). Alternatively, the fantastic attitude has prevailed whereby men have worshipped the moon, the sun, and the rivers; they have animated these natural forms in their own imagination, at the same time treating them as completely independent agents. Religion begins with the awareness that there is something higher than man. But this kind of religion is unknown to the Negroes. The character of the Africans shows the antithesis between man and nature in its earliest form. In this condition, man sees himself and nature as opposed to one another, but with himself in the commanding position; this is the basic situation in Africa, as Herodotus was the first to testify. We can sum up the principle of African religion in his declaration that all men in Africa are sorcerers. That is, as a spiritual being, the African arrogates to himself a power over nature, and this is the meaning of his sorcery. Even today, the reports of the missionaries carry the same implication. Sorcery does not entail the idea of a God or of a moral faith, but implies that man is the highest power and that he alone occupies a position of authority over the power of nature. There is therefore no question of a spiritual adoration of God, nor of a realm of justice. God thunders, but he is not recognised as God. For the human spirit, God must be more than a thunderer, but this is not the case among the Negroes. The Africans see nature as opposed to them; they are dependent upon it, and its powers fill them with fear. The river may swallow them up, and the earthquake may destroy their abodes. The success of the harvest and of the fruits on the trees is dependent upon the weather. At times they have too much rain, and at

others too little; they need the storm, the rainy season, and the end of the rains, for neither the rains nor the dry season must last for too long. But although these natural forces, as well as sun, moon, trees, and animals, are recognised as powers in their own right, they are not seen as having an eternal law or providence behind them, or as forming part of a universal and permanent natural order. The African sees them ruling over him, but he also sees them as powers over which man can in some way gain mastery in turn. Man, then, is master of these natural forces. This has nothing whatsoever to do with veneration of God or the recognition of a universal spirit as opposed to the spirit of the individual. Man knows only himself and his opposition to nature, and this is the sole rational element which the African peoples recognise. They acknowledge the power of nature, and attempt to raise themselves above it. They therefore also believe that man never dies from natural causes, and that it is not nature but the will of an enemy which has killed him by means of sorcery; they then resort to sorcery in turn, as they would against all natural agencies.

Not everyone possesses this magical power; on the contrary, the Africans believe that it is concentrated in certain individuals. These individuals issue commands to the elements, and it is this activity which they call sorcery. Many devote themselves exclusively to regulating, predicting, and producing such effects for the benefit of mankind or of their peoples. The kings have ministers and priests – and sometimes a fully organised hierarchy of officials – whose task is to practise sorcery, to command the powers of nature, and to determine the weather. When their commands have proved persistently ineffectual, they are given a sound thrashing. Every place possesses such sorcerers, who conduct special ceremonies with all kinds of movements, dances, din, and clamour; and amidst this deafening noise they make their dispositions. If thunderstorms – and these are truly formidable – should break when the army is in the field, the sorcerers must perform their duty by threatening and commanding the clouds to be still. In the same way, they have to make rain in times of drought. They do not invoke God in their ceremonies; they do not turn to any higher power, for they believe that they can accomplish their aims by their own efforts. To prepare themselves for their task, they work themselves into a state of frenzy;

by means of singing, convulsive dancing, and intoxicating roots or potions, they reach a state of extreme delirium in which they proceed to issue their commands. If they do not succeed after prolonged efforts, they decree that some of the onlookers – who are their own dearest relations – should be slaughtered, and these are then devoured by their fellows. In short, man considers himself the highest commanding authority. The priest will often spend several days in this frenzied condition, slaughtering human beings, drinking their blood, and giving it to the onlookers to drink. In practice, therefore, only some individuals have power over nature, and these only when they are beside themselves in a state of dreadful enthusiasm. All this applies to the African nations at large, although there are some modifications in individual cases. The missionary Cavazzi,² for example, enumerates many such instances among the Negroes. Among the Jagas or Jakas, there were priests known as Chitomen who had the reputation of being able to protect men against animals and water by means of amulets and the like.

The second feature of their religion is that they give this power of theirs a visible form, projecting it out of their own consciousness and making images of it. The first object they encounter which they imagine has power over them – whether it be an animal, a tree, a stone, or a wooden image – is given the status of a genius. Each individual will fetch himself some such object from the priest. It is a *fetish*, a word to which the Portuguese first gave currency, and which is derived from *feitico* or magic. Here, in the fetish, the arbitrary will of the individual does seem to be faced with an independent entity, but since the object in question is nothing more than the will of the individual projected into a visible form, this will in fact remains master of the image it has adopted. What they regard as their ruling power is therefore not an objective entity with an independent existence distinct from their own. The fetish remains in their power, and they reject it when it does not do their will. They then adopt something else as their higher authority and imagine that it exercises power over them, but keep it in their own power for this very reason. If

² Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi, *Istoria descrizione dei tre regni Congo, Matamba, Angola*, Bologna, 1687 (quotations here are from the edition published in Milan in 1690).

something unpleasant occurs which the fetish has failed to avert, the oracles which they have consulted are deemed to be false and become discredited. If the rain does not come or the crops do badly, they bind and beat the fetish or destroy and discard it, and at once create another to take its place. In other words, their god remains in their power, to be acknowledged and rejected at will, so that they do not progress beyond a condition of arbitrariness. A fetish of this kind has no independent existence as an object of religion, and even less as a work of art. It is merely an artifact which expresses the arbitrary will of its creator, and which always remains in his hands. In short, this religion does not involve any relationship of dependence. And it is the same with the spirits of the dead, to whom they attribute a mediating function like that of the sorcerers. These spirits are also men, but what does suggest the presence of a higher authority here is that they are men who have cast off their immediate existence. This is the source of the Africans' *cult of the dead*, in which their deceased ancestors and forefathers are regarded as a power capable of acting against the living. They resort to these spirits in the same way as to fetishes, offering them sacrifices and conjuring them up; but where this proves unsuccessful, they punish the departed ancestor himself, casting his bones away and desecrating his remains. On the other hand, they believe that the dead avenge themselves if their needs are not satisfied, and misfortunes in particular are ascribed to their agency. We have already referred to the Negroes' conviction that it is not nature or natural agencies which cause human sickness, and that men do not die by natural means; they believe that all this is the work of some sorcerer or enemy, or the vengeance of one of the dead. This is simply the superstition of witchcraft, whose terrible rule once prevailed in Europe too. The natives combat such sorcery by other more powerful magic. It sometimes happens that the keeper of the fetish is disinclined to make it perform its task; he is accordingly beaten and forced to work his magic. One of the main kinds of magic practised by the Chitomen consists in propitiating the dead or exacting their services by the most fearful abominations. At the command of the dead, reincarnated in the priests, human sacrifices etc. are offered. Thus, the object of their religion always remains subject to their own arbitrary will. The power of the dead over the living is indeed recognised, but held

in no great respect; for the Negroes issue commands to their dead and cast spells upon them. In this way, the substance always remains in the power of the subject. Such is the religion of the Africans, and it does not extend beyond these limits.

It does admittedly presuppose that man is superior to nature, but only in an arbitrary sense. For it is only his contingent will which stands above the natural world, and he regards this as no more than a means. He does not do it the honour of treating it in accordance with its own nature, but simply commands it to do his will. This nevertheless embodies a more correct principle than does nature-worship, which is often considered an act of piety; for people frequently maintain that natural phenomena are works of God, thereby implying that the works of man, i.e. the works of reason, are not likewise divine. The Negroes' consciousness of nature is not a consciousness of its objective existence; still less is it a consciousness of God as a spirit, as something higher in and for itself than nature. Nor do they possess that understanding which uses nature as a means – by sailing on the sea, for example, and generally exercising control over nature. The Negroes' power over nature is only an imaginary power, an illusory authority.

As for the relationship between men themselves, it follows, firstly that man is posited as the highest instance, and secondly, that he has no respect for himself or for others; for such a respect would touch on a higher or absolute value peculiar to man. Only when he attains a consciousness of a higher being does man become capable of true reverence. For if the arbitrary will is the absolute, and the only solid and objective reality recognised by man, the spirit cannot have reached the stage of knowing anything universal. For this reason, the Africans know nothing of what we call the immortality of the soul. They do recognise what we call ghosts, but this is not the same thing as immortality; for immortality implies that man is a spiritual being in and for himself, and that his nature is unchanging and eternal. The Negroes have, therefore, a complete *contempt* for man, and it is this above all which determines their attitude towards justice and morality. Their belief in the worthlessness of man goes to almost incredible lengths; their political order can be regarded as tyranny, but this is considered perfectly legitimate and is not felt to constitute an injustice. Along with this goes the belief that it is

quite normal and permissible to eat human flesh. This is certainly the case among the Ashanti, and among the tribes further south on the River Congo and on the eastern side of Africa. Cannibalism at once strikes us as utterly barbarous and revolting and we instinctively reject it. But we cannot speak of instinct in the case of human beings, for such reactions have a spiritual quality about them. All men who have progressed even to a limited extent in consciousness have respect for human beings as such. In an abstract sense, we may well say that flesh is flesh, and that what we eat is simply a matter of taste; but our powers of representation [*Vorstellung*] tell us that this is human flesh, identical with that of our own bodies. The human body is of an animal nature, but it is essentially the body of a being capable of representation; in short, it has psychological associations. But this is not the case with the Negroes, and the eating of human flesh is quite compatible with the African principle; to the sensuous Negro, human flesh is purely an object of the senses, like all other flesh. It is not used primarily as food; but at festivals, for example, many hundreds of prisoners are tortured and beheaded, and their bodies are returned to those who took them prisoner so that they may distribute the parts. In some places, it is true, human flesh has even been seen on sale in the markets. At the death of a rich man, hundreds may well be slaughtered and devoured. Prisoners are murdered and slaughtered, and as a rule the victor consumes the heart of his slain enemy. And at magical ceremonies, it very often happens that the sorcerer murders the first person he encounters and divides his body among the crowd.

Since human beings are valued so cheaply, it is easily explained why slavery is the basic legal relationship in Africa. The only significant relationship between the Negroes and the Europeans has been – and still is – that of slavery. The Negroes see nothing improper about it, and the English, although they have done most to abolish slavery and the slave trade, are treated as enemies by the Negroes themselves. For one of the main ambitions of the kings is to sell their captured enemies or even their own subjects, and, to this extent at least, slavery has awakened more humanity among the Negroes. The Negroes are enslaved by the Europeans and sold to America. Nevertheless, their lot in their own country, where slavery is equally absolute, is almost

worse than this; for the basic principle of all slavery is that man is not yet conscious of his freedom, and consequently sinks to the level of a mere object or worthless article. In all the African kingdoms known to the Europeans, this slavery is endemic and accepted as natural. But the distinction between masters and slaves is a purely arbitrary one. The lesson we can draw from this condition of slavery among the Negroes – and the only aspect of it which concerns us here – is the same as that which we have already learnt in the realm of ideas: namely that the state of nature is itself a state of absolute and consistent injustice. Every intermediate stage between it and the reality of the rational state admittedly does retain certain elements and aspects of injustice, so that we encounter slavery even in the Greek and Roman states, and serfdom has survived until the most recent times. But when it occurs within an organised state, it is itself a stage in the progress away from purely fragmented sensuous existence, a phase in man's education, and an aspect of the process whereby he gradually attains a higher ethical existence and a corresponding degree of culture. Slavery is unjust in and for itself, for the essence of man is freedom; but he must first become mature before he can be free. Thus, it is more fitting and correct that slavery should be eliminated gradually than that it should be done away with all at once.

Slavery ought not to exist, as it is by definition unjust in and for itself. This "ought" expresses a subjective attitude, and as such, it has no historical justification. For it is not yet backed up by the substantial ethical life of a rational state. In rational states, slavery no longer exists; but before such states have come into being, the authentic Idea is present in some areas of life only as an unfulfilled obligation, in which case slavery is still necessary: for it is a moment in the transition towards a higher stage of development. We cannot yet expect that man will be regarded as essentially free simply because he is a human being. This was not the case among the Greeks and Romans either: the Athenian was free only as a citizen of Athens, and so on. It is now generally accepted that man, as a human being, is free; but where this is not the case, man has value only in one or other of his particular capacities: for example, partners in marriage, relatives, neighbours, and fellow citizens are of value to one another. Among the Negroes, however, even these values are scarcely present;

their moral sentiments are extremely weak, or, to be more precise, they are altogether deficient. The first ethical relationship of all, that of the family, is a matter of total indifference to the Negroes. Men sell their wives, parents sell their children, and children sell their parents whenever they have it in their power to do so. Since slavery is so prevalent, all those bonds of moral esteem which we cherish towards one another have disappeared, and it never occurs to the Negroes to expect of others what we are entitled to demand of our fellows. They devote no attention to their sick parents, apart from seeking occasional advice from the Chitomen. Philanthropic sentiments of love etc. entail a consciousness of the self which is no longer confined to the individual person. For when I love someone, I am conscious of myself in the other person; or, as Goethe puts it, my heart is open. Love, then, is an enlargement of the self. The polygamy of the Negroes often has the sole object of producing many children, so that they can all be sold as slaves; and they are quite oblivious to the injustice of this situation. Indeed, they carry this anomaly to unbounded lengths. The king of Dahomey, for example, has 3,333 wives; every rich man has numerous wives, and his many children provide him with a new source of revenue. Missionaries tell us how a Negro once came to church and announced to the Franciscans with fearful lamentations that he was now completely destitute, as he had already sold all his relatives, including his father and mother.

The distinguishing feature of the Negroes' contempt for humanity is not so much their contempt for death as their lack of respect for life. They set as little value on life as they do on human beings as such, for life is only valuable in so far as there is a higher value in man. Their contempt for life does not mean that they are weary of it, or that some fortuitous irritation has overtaken them; on the contrary, life in general has no value for them. The Negroes often kill themselves if their honour is violated or if they have been punished by the king. If someone in this position fails to do so, he is regarded as a coward. They give no thought to the preservation of life, or to death itself. The great courage of the Negroes, reinforced by their enormous physical strength, must also be ascribed to this lack of respect for life; for they allow themselves to be shot down in thousands in their wars with the Europeans. In the war between the Ashanti and

the English, the natives persisted in running straight up to the mouths of the cannon, although they were invariably shot down fifty at a time. In fact, life is of no value unless it has a worthy object.

If we now turn to the elements of the political constitution, we must realise that the whole nature of Africa is such that there can be no such thing as a constitution. The government must necessarily be patriarchal in character. The main characteristic of this patriarchal phase is the arbitrary rule of the senses, the energy of the sensuous will; in this arbitrary state, ethical relationships of an essentially universal content – i.e., those which take no account of the consciousness in its individual aspects, but see its value as residing in its inner universality (whether in legal, religious, or ethical contexts) – are as yet completely undeveloped. Where this universal quality is weak or remote, the political union cannot be that of a state governed by free rational laws. For, as we have seen, even the family ethos is lacking in strength. In marriage and domestic life, polygamy predominates; as a result, the parents are indifferent towards each other and towards their children, and the children themselves are indifferent towards their parents and their fellows. Thus, the arbitrary will has no bond whatsoever to restrain it. Under these conditions, that larger union of individuals which we call the state cannot possibly come into being; for the state is based on rational universality, which is a law of freedom. Where the arbitrary will prevails, there can be no union except that created by external force; for the arbitrary will itself offers no incentive for men to unite, but merely allows them to follow their own individual inclinations. Consequently, the African regime is one of despotism; the external authority is itself arbitrary, for there is no rational and communal spirit of which the government could be the representative and executor. A ruler stands at the head, for sensuous barbarism can only be restrained by despotic power. This despotism does have an imposing quality, because it places restraints on the arbitrary will, which, for all its arrogance, has no intrinsic value. From the formal point of view, the arbitrariness of the autocrat deserves respect, for it is the basis of the whole political union; it therefore represents a higher principle than that of individual arbitrariness. Arbitrariness, whether sensuous or reflective in character, requires a unifying principle

which only an external authority can supply. If it has no power in its own right and is subject to a higher authority, it adopts a cringing demeanour; but when it itself comes to power, it behaves arrogantly towards the same authority before which it had previously humbled itself. Consequently, it can manifest itself in many different ways. And wherever we encounter despotism ruling in a particularly savage manner, we find that its arbitrary power is itself cancelled out by counteracting forces. In the Negro states, the king is always accompanied by the executioner, whose office is regarded as extremely important; he is used by the king to eliminate all suspect persons, just as the king himself may be killed by him if the nobles of the country demand it. For, since the subjects are men of equally savage temper, they impose restrictions on their master in turn. Elsewhere, the power of despots is mediated, and on the whole they have to yield to the arbitrary will of the mighty. The form which despotism then assumes is that, although a chieftain – whom we may call the king – is the supreme ruler, he has under him a group of grandees, chiefs, or captains, whom he must consult on all matters and whose consent he must obtain if he wishes in particular to declare war, conclude peace, or levy a tribute. This is the case among the Ashanti; the king is served by a multitude of subordinate princes, and even the English pay him a tribute which he shares with his various chiefs.

In this way, the African despot can acquire more or less authority, and dispose of this or that chief by means of force or stratagem as the occasion presents itself. Besides, the kings enjoy certain additional privileges. Among the Ashanti, the king inherits all the property left by his deceased subjects; in other places, all unmarried girls belong to the king, and anyone who seeks a wife must buy her from him. But if the Negroes are dissatisfied with their king, they depose and execute him. There is a little-known kingdom in the vicinity of Dahomey which has something approaching a history of its own – that ruled by the king of Eyio. It lies deep in the interior of Africa, which does not consist entirely of great arid deserts. In fact, all the expeditions which have succeeded in reaching the interior have discovered large empires, and the Portuguese of earlier times report that armies of around 200,000 men have done battle there. The king of Eyio also has several hundred thousand cavalrymen. Like the ruler of

the Ashanti, he is surrounded by grandees who are not wholly subject to his arbitrary power. If he does not rule justly, they send him a deputation which presents him with three parrot's eggs. The delegates then put forward certain proposals; they thank him for the efforts he has made to rule them justly, and then tell him that his exertions have probably over-taxed his energy and that he is doubtless in need of sleep and rest. The king thanks them for their understanding and advice, acknowledges their goodwill, and retires to his apartments; he does not lie down to sleep, however, but has himself strangled by his women. A king of the Ashanti who allowed himself to be detained in the kingdom of his father-in-law by the blandishments of his wife was similarly deposed twenty years ago. His lieutenants invited him to return for the annual festival; but when he did not arrive, they placed his brother on the throne instead.

Thus, even such despotism as this is not completely blind; the peoples of Africa are not just slaves, but assert their own will too. In East Africa, Bruce³ travelled through a state in which the prime minister was the executioner, although the only person he was permitted to decapitate was the king; thus, the sword really hangs above the despot's head day and night. On the other hand, the monarch has absolute power over the lives of his subjects. Where life has no value, it is recklessly squandered. The African nations engage in bloody battles which often last for a week on end and in which hundreds of thousands perish. The issue is usually decided by chance, and then the victors massacre everyone within their reach. Under many princes, the executioner is the prime minister. It is much the same in all the Negro states, which are very numerous. The office of head of state is usually inherited, but the successor rarely comes to power in a peaceful manner. The prince is held in very high esteem, but he must share his power with his generals. The Negroes also have courts of law and trials. In the north, where the Moors have propagated the Moslem faith, their customs have become less barbarous. And the Negroes with whom the English first had dealings were Mohammedans.

Their character being as it is, the Africans are extremely prone to fanaticism. The realm of the spirit is so poor among them, and

³ James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* (1768–73).

yet the spirit in itself is so intensive that any idea which is disseminated among them may drive them to respect nothing and destroy everything. We find them living a peaceful and good-natured existence over long periods of time. But, for all their good nature, they are also capable of transports of frenzy. They are conscious of so few things which deserve respect in and for themselves that whatever idea takes hold of them becomes their sole motive force, spurring them on to annihilate everything they encounter. They seize upon and realise every idea which is thrown into their minds with all the energy of their will, and destroy everything in the process. Such nations live peacefully over long periods, and then suddenly surge up into a complete state of frenzy. The destruction which results from this sudden ferment and upheaval has no real content or thought behind it, for it is rather a physical than a spiritual fanaticism. Thus, we often see such nations rushing down to the coast in a wild fury, killing everyone they meet, with no other motive than that of madness and rage; their bravery is solely a product of their fanaticism. In the Negro states, every decision takes on a quality of fanaticism, a fanaticism which surpasses all belief. An English traveller⁴ reports that, when the Ashanti have resolved to go to war, solemn ceremonies are first enacted; these include the washing of the bones of the king's mother with human blood. As a preliminary to war, the king decrees an attack on his own capital, as if to drive himself into a fury. When a punitive war was about to be launched against a nation which had refused to pay tribute, the king despatched a note to the English resident *Hutchinson* with the following message: "Christian, take heed and watch over your family. The messenger of death has drawn his sword and will smite the necks of many of the Ashanti; when the drum is sounded, it will be the signal of death for multitudes. Come to the king if you can, and fear not for yourself." The drum was sounded; the warriors of the king, armed with short swords, went out on their murderous mission, and a terrible bloodbath ensued: all who encountered the frenzied Negroes as they rushed through the streets were struck down. Nevertheless, no great numbers were murdered on this

occasion; for the people had learnt in advance of the attack and taken appropriate precautions. On such occasions, the king has all whom he regards as suspect killed, and the deed then takes on the character of a sacred act. And it is much the same at funerals, where everything bears the mark of frenzy and dementedness. The slaves of the deceased man are slaughtered, and it is decreed that their heads belong to the fetish and their bodies to the relatives, who duly devour them. When the king dies in Dahomey, a general tumult breaks loose in his palace, whose dimensions are enormous; all utensils are destroyed, and universal carnage begins. The wives of the king prepare for death (and, as already mentioned, there are 3,333 of them); they look upon their death as necessary, adorn themselves in preparation for it, and order their slaves to kill them. All the bonds of society are loosed in the town and throughout the kingdom; murder and theft break out everywhere, and private revenge is given free rein. On one such occasion, 500 women died in the palace in the space of six minutes. The officers of state proceed with all possible speed to appoint the successor to the throne, in order to put an end to the riot and slaughter.

The most fearful instance is that of a woman who ruled over the Jagas in the depths of the Congo.⁵ She was converted to Christianity, became apostate, and was converted once again. She lived an extremely dissolute life, and was constantly in conflict with her mother, whom she removed from the throne. She established a state of women, which made itself famous by its conquests, and renounced all love towards her mother and towards her son. She pounded the latter, who was still a young child, in a mortar before a public assembly, besmeared herself with his blood, and made sure that the blood of such pounded children was always in supply. Her laws were indeed terrible. She had all the men expelled or murdered, and all the women were compelled to kill their male offspring. Pregnant women had to leave the encampment and give birth in the scrub land. And at the head of this nation of women, she proceeded to wreak the most terrible havoc. Like furies, they destroyed everything in the neighbourhood, and lived on human flesh; and, since they did

4 T. E. Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, 2 vols. London, 1819.

5 Cavazzi, p. 149ff.

not cultivate the soil, they were compelled to support themselves by plundering. Subsequently, the women were permitted to use their prisoners of war as husbands, who duly became their slaves, and even to give them their freedom. This way of life continued for many years. That women go to war is one of the peculiarities of African existence. In Ashanti-Dahomey, there is a corps of women who go on expeditions with the king. And in Dahomey, one might imagine that Plato's republic had been partially realised, for the children do not belong to the family, but are brought up publicly and distributed among the villages soon after birth. The king has a large number of them around him; and anyone who wishes to marry must pay a few dollars at the royal palace, whereupon he is presented with a wife. Each must take the woman he is given, be she young or old. The wives of the king receive these candidates for marriage, and first give each of them a mother, whom they are required to maintain. They must then return for a second time before they are given a wife.

From all these various traits we have enumerated, it can be seen that intractability is the distinguishing feature of the Negro character. The condition in which they live is incapable of any development or culture, and their present existence is the same as it has always been. In face of the enormous energy of sensuous arbitrariness which dominates their lives, morality has no determinate influence upon them. Anyone who wishes to study the most terrible manifestations of human nature will find them in Africa. The earliest reports concerning this continent tell us precisely the same, and it has no history in the true sense of the word. We shall therefore leave Africa at this point, and it need not be mentioned again. For it is an unhistorical continent, with no movement or development of its own. And such events as have occurred in it, i.e. in its northern region, belong to the Asiatic and European worlds. Carthage, while it lasted, represented an important phase; but as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered as a stage in the movement of the human spirit from east to west, but it has no part in the spirit of Africa. What we understand as Africa proper is that unhistorical and undeveloped land which is still enmeshed in the natural spirit, and which had to be mentioned here before we cross the threshold of world history itself.

Asia

Having disposed of these preliminary matters, we now at last find ourselves on the real theatre of world history. Among the Negroes, the natural will of the individual is not yet negated; but it is only through its negation that a consciousness of being in and for itself can arise. This consciousness first emerges in the oriental world. We find here a power which exists in and for itself, and man only exists in and for himself in so far as he is related to this universal substance. It is this relationship to the substantial power which unites the individuals with one another. Thus, it is in Asia that the ethical world of political consciousness first arose. Asia is the continent of sunrise and of origins in general. Admittedly, every country is both east and west in relation to others, so that Asia is the western continent from the point of view of America; but just as Europe is the centre and end of the Old World – i.e. absolutely the west – so also is Asia absolutely the east. It is there that the light of the spirit, the consciousness of a universal, first emerged, and with it the process of world history.

We must first of all outline the geographical nature and formation of Asia. In terms of world history, the natural conditions, in Africa are on the whole negative; but in Asia, they are positive. This also explains why the Asians have so great an appreciation of nature. Just as nature is the basis of history itself, so also must it be the basis of our study of history. The natural world and the spiritual world together form the living totality of *history*. The physical constitution of Asia presents absolute antitheses and the essential relationship between these antitheses. Its various geographical principles are in themselves fully developed and perfected forms. The two types of locality in question, the uplands and the valley plains, are in Asia the theatre of completely contrasting ways of life; but their relationship is essentially one of interaction, and they are not isolated in the same way as Egypt, for example. On the contrary, this very relationship between the two completely opposite dispositions is a characteristic feature of Asia.

We must first of all eliminate Siberia, the northern slope of Asia. For it lies outside the scope of our enquiry. The whole character of Siberia rules it out as a setting for historical culture

and prevents it from attaining a distinct form in the world-historical process. It does have certain advantages, in that it contains great rivers which flow down from the Altai Mountains to the northern ocean; but these advantages are nullified by the effects of climate. The rest of Asia, like Africa, contains in the first place a massive upland region, surrounded by a ring of mountains which include the highest peaks in the world. This ring of mountains forms a continuous range, with steep escarpments on its outward edges. The uplands of Asia are bounded to the south and south-east by the Mustag or Imaus Mountains, with the Himalayas running parallel to them further south. Towards the east, the basin of the Amur is bounded by a mountain chain which runs from south to north. Most of this region belongs to the Manchus, who are also the rulers of China; their original way of life, which even the Emperor of China adopts in the summer season, is nomadic. To the north lie the Altai and Dzungarian Mountains; the latter are linked in the north-west with the Mussart and in the west with the Belurtag, which are in turn linked with the Mustag by way of the Hindu Kush. This high chain of mountains is pierced by great rivers which subsequently form broad valley plains of immense fertility and luxuriant growth, each the centre of its own peculiar culture. They are alluvial plains, which cannot properly be described as valleys; they are quite different in structure from the river territories of Europe, which have more true valleys with endless branches on either side. Such plains include that of China, formed by the Huang-Ho and Yangtze-Kiang (the Yellow and Blue Rivers), which flow from west to east; next, there is that of India, formed by the Ganges; the Indus, which also supports a culture in the north (in the Punjab region), is of less importance, for the region it flows through to the south consists largely of sandy plains; and then there are the countries of the Tigris and Euphrates, which rise in Armenia and flow down to the west of the Persian mountains. Similar river valleys occur to the east and west of the Caspian Sea; those to the east are formed by the Oxus and Yaxartes (Gihon and Sihon), which flow into the Aral Sea. The first of these, the Gihon, formerly flowed into the Caspian sea, but subsequently changed its course. The vast region between the Belurtag and the Caspian Sea is a broad plain with the foothills of the neighbouring mountains, and is of particular

importance for world history. To the west, the Cyrus and Araxes (Kura and Araks) form a narrower but equally fertile plain. The central Asian highlands, in which Arabia (as the higher part of the plains) may be included, resemble both the plains and the highlands in character. Here, the opposite principles receive their freest expression; they are the home of light and darkness, of outward splendour and the abstraction of pure contemplation – in short, of what we call orientalism. This is particularly true of Persia.

The plains and uplands form a complete contrast to one another; the third type of country is a combination of these two principles, such as is found in the Near East. This includes Arabia, the land of deserts and high plateaux, the empire of unrestricted freedom from which the most extreme fanaticism has sprung; it also includes Syria and Asia Minor, which are connected with the sea and form a link with Europe. Their culture is drawn towards Europe, with which they are constantly in contact.

After these remarks on the geographical peculiarities of Asia, something must be said about the effects these have had on the character of its peoples and history. The most important feature is the relationship between the uplands and the river plains. Or, to be more precise, it is not so much the upland plateau itself which is of great world-historical importance, as the mountain ravines which lie at the conjunction of the mountains and the plains. The relationship between the nations who live in such areas with the kind of culture which is found on the river plains calls for particular emphasis in Asian history. Among the mountain nations, the basic principle is that of stock-rearing, whereas the principle of the river plains is that of agriculture and the development of trade. The third principle, which is peculiar to the Near East, is that of foreign commerce and navigation. These principles have been presented here in abstract terms, but they also enter into essential relations with one another; they thereby appear in various distinct determinations, and form the common principles which underlie the way of life and historical character of the nations in question.

For example, the stock-rearing of the mountain peoples leads to three different kinds of existence. On the one hand, we see the peaceful life of the nomads running its uniform cycle with few

needs to be satisfied. On the other hand, unrest may give rise to a life of plundering, which is also found among the nomadic peoples. And thirdly, they may actually embark on a career of conquest. Such nations, without developing a historical status of their own, do have a powerful impulse towards internal change; and even if they do not yet possess a historical content, they nevertheless contain the beginnings of history. In their immediate activity – the rearing of horses, camels, and sheep (and to a lesser extent cattle) – they pursue their own wandering and unstable life; this can either remain in its usual peaceful course, or give way to a life of plundering, or lead to a situation in which great masses congregate together and swoop down upon the river plains. Such nomadic hordes never attain any degree of internal development; they become civilised only when they have lost their original character through living on the river plains, where they first appeared in the role of conquerors. But incursions of this kind provide enormous historical impulses, creating havoc and transforming the external configuration of the world.

The second principle, that of the river plains with their agricultural existence, is the most interesting one for our present purposes. Agriculture, by its very nature, requires that the nomadic existence should come to an end. It necessarily entails a settled way of life, and demands foresight and provision for the future. Reflection on a universal object is thereby awakened, for the family must be provided for in a universal manner; and this in itself involves the principle of property and of private industry. China, India, and Babylon have become great civilised countries in this way. But they have remained enclosed within themselves and have not developed their links with the maritime principle – at least not after their own peculiar principle had come to fruition; and if they do subsequently take to the sea, it plays no real part in their culture and civilisation. Thus, the only connection they could have with later developments in history was through being visited and explored by other nations. But it is the intermediate principle which properly characterises Asia; the antithesis of day and night – or in geographical terms, that of river plains and a ring of mountains – is the determining factor in Asian history. The ring of mountains round the upland region, the uplands themselves, and the river plains, determine the physical

and spiritual character of Asia. But these are not themselves the concrete elements of history, for the poles of the antithesis are absolutely related to one another: the settled existence of those who inhabit the fertile plains is the goal to which the unstable, restless, and nomadic inhabitants of the mountains and upland regions constantly aspire. Regions which are naturally distinct from one another become essentially related in the course of history.

In the *Near East*, both of these elements are united: it is the country of varied forms, and its main peculiarity is its relationship with Europe. It has not retained its own productions, but has passed them on to Europe. It has given birth to principles which were not developed in their country of origin but were brought to fruition in Europe. It has witnessed the rise of all religious and political principles, but their development took place in Europe. This region is associated with the Mediterranean Sea. Arabia and Syria – and particularly the Syrian coast with Judaea, Tyre, and Sidon – have adopted the principle of commerce from its earliest beginnings, and developed it in the direction of Europe. In Asia Minor, Troas and Ionia, as well as Colchis on the Black Sea with Armenia beyond it, have been major points of contact between Asia and Europe. But the broad plain of the Volga is also noteworthy as the route along which the vast hordes of Asia poured across into Europe.

Europe

In Europe, we do not find the same physical differences which we encountered in Africa and even more pronouncedly in Asia. It lacks that solid nucleus of highlands which these continents possess, for the uplands of Europe occupy a subordinate position. The principle of the plains is likewise secondary; the south and west in particular display a greater assortment of valleys, surrounded by mountains and hills. The character of Europe is such that the differences in its physical structure do not form abrupt contrasts as they do in Asia; they are more closely intermingled, so that the antitheses of Asia disappear or are at least modified, and each natural division merges into the next. Even in the structure of Europe, however, three separate parts can be distinguished. But since there is no abrupt contrast between

uplands and river plains, we must employ another method of classification.

The first part is *Southern Europe*, i.e. the country south of the Pyrenees, the south of France and Italy (which are cut off by the Alps from the rest of France and from Switzerland and Germany), and the series of eastern countries towards the Balkan Peninsula, south of the Danube basin, including Greece. This region, which was long the theatre of world history, does not have a clearly defined nucleus of its own, but is orientated outwards, looking towards the Mediterranean. While the middle and north of Europe were still uncultivated, the world spirit had its residence here. The land to the north of the Alps must be subdivided into two further parts: the western part, which includes Germany, France, Denmark, and Scandinavia, is the *heart of Europe*, the world which was first opened up by Julius Caesar. Caesar's world-historical action in opening this new terrain was a deed of manhood, just as Alexander the Great's plan to impose an occidental character on the Near East was a deed of youth. But Alexander was less successful in his attempts to raise the east to the Greek way of life than Caesar was in his undertaking. Nevertheless, although Alexander's achievement was transient, it established a link between east and west from which the first great world-historical events of the west could subsequently arise. In its implications, his deed appeals strongly to the imagination on account of its greatness and splendour, but, in its results, it soon vanished away like a mere ideal.

The third region is the *north-east of Europe*. It contains the northern plains, which have a peculiar character of their own; they once belonged to the Slavonic nations, and form a link with Asia, particularly with Russia and Poland. These countries are late arrivals in the series of historical states, and they maintain a constant connection between Europe and Asia.

Since no one particular type of environment predominates in Europe as it does in the other continents, man too is more universal in character. Those particular ways of life which are tied to different physical contexts do not assume such distinct and peculiar forms as they do in Asia, on whose history they have had so great an effect; for the geographical differences within Europe are not sharply defined. Natural life is also the realm of contingency, however, and only in its universal at-

tributes does it exercise a determining influence commensurate with the principle of the spirit. The character of the Greek spirit, for example, grew out of the soil of Greece, a coastal territory which encourages individual autonomy. Similarly, the Roman Empire could not have arisen in the heart of the continent. Man can exist in all climates; but the climates are of a limited character, so that the power they exercise is the external counterpart to man's inner nature. Consequently, European man also appears naturally freer than the inhabitants of other continents, because no one natural principle is dominant in Europe. Those distinct ways of life which appear in Asia in a state of mutual conflict appear in Europe rather as separate social classes within the concrete state. The main distinction in geography is that between the interior and the coast. In Asia, the sea is without significance, and the Asiatic nations have in fact shut themselves off from it. In India, going to sea is positively forbidden by religion. In Europe, however, this maritime relationship is of vital importance, and it creates an enduring difference between the two continents. The European state is truly European only in so far as it has links with the sea. The sea provides that wholly peculiar outlet which Asiatic life lacks, the outlet which enables life to step beyond itself. It is this which has invested European political life with the principle of individual freedom.

In the same way that he considered slavery a necessary stage in the moral education of the African by the European (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*), Hegel, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Right* considered the imperial and colonial projects carried out by European nations outside of Europe as necessary and logical consequences of the capitalist modernization of European societies. As with slavery, Hegel morally justifies imperialism and colonialism on the grounds that while Europe is civilized, the non-European victims of colonialism are barbarians and, for Hegel, "the civilized nation is conscious that the rights of the barbarians are unequal to its own." The following excerpts are from paragraphs 243–9 of *Lectures on the Philosophy of Right*.