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# Rescuing Hegel from Eurocentrism: Oriental Reconstructions of Hegel's Orient

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## Abstract

Hegel's Eurocentrism has become something of an elephant in the room, too obvious to merit discussion. The secondary literature on Hegel often concedes that many of Hegel's comments about the Orient are misguided and uninformed, and then declares that such remarks are of no consequence to his philosophy. However, recently, some scholars have contended that Hegel's view of freedom is fundamentally connected to his negative vision of the Orient and Africa. For example, Alison Stone asserts that Hegel's idea of freedom is premised on his Eurocentrism and colonialism. Drawing on Peter Sahota's essay on Hegel and Hinduism, she argues that Hegel's idea of freedom as liberation from nature tends to exclude non-Western conceptions of freedom. If Stone's contention is true, there would be no way to, as she puts it, save Hegel from himself. I argue that we can move some way towards rescuing Hegel by noting how scholars from modern Asia incorporated some of Hegel's ideas to struggle against Eurocentrism. This essay will read Hegel's comments on the Orient in light of his larger philosophy and then examine how Japanese scholars, specifically Okakura Tenshin (1863–1913) construct what could be called a Hegel-inspired defense of the concept of Asia or the Orient. I claim that if one understands the excesses of Western life to be linked to a vision of freedom based merely on self-interest and pleasure, when scholars and activists from Asia question Western culture, they actually follow Hegel's insights. Okakura, who studied Hegel in college, rethought Asia as overcoming the abstract individualist freedom of the West and replacing it a more holistic, and partially, Hegelian form of freedom.

Hegel's Eurocentrism has become something of an elephant in the room, too obvious to merit discussion.<sup>1</sup> The secondary literature on Hegel usually concedes that many of Hegel's comments about the non-West are misguided and uninformed, and then declares that such remarks are of no consequence to his philosophy. Recently however, some scholars have contended that Hegel's view of freedom is fundamentally connected to his negative vision of the Orient and Africa. For



example, Alison Stone asserts that Hegel's idea of freedom is premised on his Eurocentrism and colonialism (Stone 2020: 247–70). Drawing on Peter Sahota's essay on Hegel and Hinduism, she argues that Hegel's idea of freedom as liberation from nature tends to exclude non-Western conceptions of freedom (Sahota 2016: 305–17). If Stone's contention is true, it would be difficult to, as she puts it, save Hegel from himself. I argue that we can move some way towards rescuing Hegel by noting how scholars from modern Asia employed some of Hegel's ideas in their struggles against Eurocentrism. This essay will read Hegel's comments on the Orient considering his larger philosophy and then examine how the Japanese scholar, Okakura Tenshin (1863–1913) constructs what could be called a Hegel-inspired defence of the concept of Asia or the Orient.

Hegel contends that the Orient is submerged in ethical substantiality and therefore does not make room for subjectivity. The Eurocentrism involved here concerns the idea that non-Western nations cannot develop their own idea of freedom and must therefore give up their culture to become free. Stephen Houlgate's remarks in his *An Introduction to Hegel* articulate this point when he discusses Third World countries' struggle to adopt 'Western freedoms' and avoid the 'excesses of Western life'. He further explains: 'In Hegel's hard-headed [...] view, such Third World countries face an extremely difficult road ahead because no civilisation can become more self-aware and more free and also expect to retain all of its old values and practices' (Houlgate 2005: 16).

Before analysing the content of this passage, we should examine some of the terms found in it. Houlgate refrains from using the concepts 'Orient' or 'Asia' and refers instead to the 'Third World'. Hegel and Houlgate respectively employ categories such as 'the Orient' and 'the Third World' without scrutinizing them critically. Such categories, to use Hegel's own terminology, are either well-known (*bekannt*) and not really known (*erkannt*). In other words, they are used unreflexively, without sufficient thinking. According to Hegel's idea of presuppositionless thinking, we must critically examine categories before using them. Consequently, we must enquire about whether and how we should accept a world divided into continents. Relatedly, we should be aware of the implications of concepts such as 'West' and 'Western freedoms'.

In the above citation, Houlgate makes an important point. For Hegel, development has universal consequences: 'no civilisation can become more self-aware and still manage to retain all of its old values'. By asserting that this clinging to old values is the reason for the difficult road the Third World must follow to become civilised, such a statement suggests that Third World countries generally are trying to both retain all their old values and practices while becoming modern or free. However, by the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Asian intellectuals did not intend to hang on to their old values; rather they reinterpreted these values to respond to the crises they faced when they confronted the West. Properly

understanding Asia, therefore, requires examining how this geographical and theoretical category, which predates that of the Third World, emerges in the consciousness of Asian intellectuals in the process of the responding to the social upheavals arising from the internal and external contradictions confronting the West.

In what follows, I rethink the concepts of Orient/Asia and the West by examining both Hegel's own remarks on the subject and a Japanese treatment of Asia as a political category. I argue that if one understands the excesses of Western life to be linked to a vision of freedom based merely on self-interest and pleasure, when scholars and activists from Asia question the West, they actually follow Hegel's insights. Moreover, we can also describe the problems they faced in Hegelian terms. If we look at this problem historically, by the time that Asian intellectuals were violently confronted with the Western world, they saw a West dominated by an abstract conception of freedom that challenged them with a double task: they had criticize both their own traditional values and the abstract idea of Western freedom. Many Asian intellectuals exemplify this double task, but this essay focuses on the Japanese art critic Okakura Tenshin, who studied Hegel in college, and who rethought Asia as overcoming the abstract individualist freedom of the West and challenging the Western idea of freedom in a more holistic, and partially Hegelian, form.<sup>2</sup> In Okakura's view, freedom in the West had gone so far in the direction of the subject that it needed to be brought back to the realm of substance.<sup>3</sup> Relevant to this is the Addition to paragraph 151 to the *Encyclopaedia Logic (EL: §151A)*,<sup>4</sup> in which Hegel mentions the Orient in a discussion of Spinoza. He notes that 'It is true that this Oriental intuition of the unity of substance forms the foundation of all genuine further development; but we cannot stop with that; what it still lacks is the Occidental principle of individuality [...]' (*EL: §151A : 226*). Like Hegel, intellectuals from Japan consistently tried to unite substance and subject.

The *auseinandersetzung* between Hegel and Asian or Japanese thought is not, however, one-sided. Although Okakura's work shows how Hegel can point beyond a Eurocentric reading of the orient, Hegel also shows the limits of this enterprise as it emerged historically and suggests what would be necessary to re-fashion a Hegelian version of pan-Asianist thought. Okakura underscores problems of modernity as it emerged globally and attempts to put forward a new form of freedom that united substantial community and subjectivity. However, his attempt to analyse subject and substance remains abstract and indeterminate and at times he slips into merely inverting the Hegelian paradigm, with substance eclipsing subject. As Hegel shows in his discussion of Antigone in the *Phenomenology (PhS: 256–77)*, this could undermine ethicality or substance itself, and this eclipse of the subject partially explains how pan-Asianism could so easily be appropriated by Japanese fascists in the 1930s and 1940s. In the conclusion of this essay, I will touch on

Takeuchi Yoshimi (1910–1977) a figure who attempted to revive pan-Asianism in postwar Japan by revisiting the problem of subjectivity.

## I. Hegel's concept of the Orient

Scholars often chastise Hegel for his teleological view of history and Asia. Prasenjit Duara shows how Hegel's philosophy of history encapsulates the notion of history as linear and legitimates the modern Western nation-state (Duara 1995). Criticism in this vein treats Hegel as a foil, a perspective that needs to be overcome. Some might also attempt to excuse Hegel because his knowledge of Asia was weak. Regardless of how one qualifies the above judgement, using Hegel as a foil goes against Hegel's own warnings about simply disregarding that which we find inadequate before we move onto something else.

Spirit is not this power which, as the positive, avoids looking at the negative, as is the case when we say of something that it is nothing, or that it is false, and then, being done with it, go off on our own way on to something else. No, spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face and lingering with it. This lingering is the magical power that converts it into being (*PbS*: 26).

Merely disregarding Hegel's remarks about Asia and moving onto something else will blind us to what his own engagement with Asia could tell us about imagining Asia in the modern world.

In a book collecting Hegel's works on India, editors Rimina Mohapatra and Aakash Singh Rathore (Rathore and Mohapatra 2017) note that Hegel was unusually interested in the Orient and in India in particular. In fact, Hegel highlights similarities between his own work and concepts such as substantiality, and concepts in Indian and 'Oriental' philosophy. I have already noted in the Introduction to this essay how Hegel praises the Oriental intuition of substance as the beginning of philosophizing. At the same time, he criticized Oriental philosophy for its lack of negativity. This critique appears not only in his remarks on Indian philosophy, but also in his treatment of Spinoza and of Jewish philosophy. The problem, in Hegel's view, is that these philosophies grasp the absolute without mediation, thus degenerating into a night in which all cows are black. Consequently, while the Orient might merely be at the beginning of history, it continually returns, at least as a problematic possibility—the eclipse of subjectivity. Below, we will see how Hegel's views about Asian substantiality opens spaces for a critique of Eurocentrism.

Hegel's negative reading of Asia, or the Orient, began with a potentially liberating gesture: he recognized Asia's autonomy—and its difference from the West. Following Voltaire and others, Hegel breaks from religious histories that began with the Israelites. But Hegel goes further and criticizes texts by Friedrich Schlegel and G. F. Creuzer that connect Oriental and Christian histories (Adams 2020: 2). Susan Marchand explains that Schlegel, Creuzer and other German Orientalists showed that the roots of Christian culture lay in the East (Marchand 2009: 58–66). These authors romantically seek to revive Christian culture through returning to its Eastern—especially, Indian—roots. Hegel rethinks China and the Orient to combat this romanticism and eventually aimed to devalue Asia. However, his response creates a perspective from which to view Asian histories as independent from those of Europe.

By distinguishing Asia and Europe, Hegel opens the possibility of different histories. However, to complete his own partially romantic project,<sup>5</sup> he must link Asia and Europe conceptually through a universal theory. Whether they explicitly refer to him or not, many critics and advocates of Asia in the early twentieth century had recourse to some version of Hegel's theory. Those who supported Western style modernization, from the Japanese liberal Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) to contemporary Chinese intellectuals critical of Chinese communism, do not always mention Hegel but still reproduce a similar evolutionary narrative. This is because Hegel grasped something fundamental about the modern world, something to which both sides of the Asia debate had to respond. Moreover, despite Hegel's overall negative evaluation of Asia, his narrative of Asia does have positive elements that later become a part of visions of pan-Asianism put forth by Asian thinkers. Indeed, pan-Asianists throughout the twentieth century attempted to synthesize what Hegel would call substantiality, or ethical life on the one hand and individuality on the other. The latter would, of course, be labelled as Western, while the former was associated with the East or Asia.

Hegel discusses the Orient<sup>6</sup> in several works, but I will focus on the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* because this work deals with the themes of substantiality and negativity, which we will see illuminate the work of various pan-Asianists. Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* starts with the Oriental world and posits a linear evolutionary path that Fukuzawa later describes and modifies. However, according to the *Philosophy of History*, what do the countries in the Oriental world lack and what do they have? Hegel asserts that they lack subjectivity and freedom, but that they have a type of ethical life, which will be further developed by the West. 'The Oriental world has as its closest principle, the substantiality of ethical life (*Substantialität des Sittlichen*). We have the first example of the subjugation of an arbitrary will, which is merged in this substantiality' (*PW*: 128/142).

Although Hegel considers the Oriental world primitive from an evolutionary perspective, we immediately see something necessary in Oriental society, the ‘substantiality of ethical life’. Ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) is of course a key concept in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, where he outlines the criteria for what he believes is a just society. One can see Hegel’s point in his discussion of the family and its values.<sup>7</sup> The Orient begins with *Sittlichkeit*, but ethics does not allow a place for individuality. *Sittlichkeit* refers to the ethical constraints on individual or abstract freedom, which are eventually institutionalized in the modern world and make way for a more robust idea of freedom that encompasses communal obligations. In particular, the modern world, at least potentially, brings together the substantiality associated with ethical life, which we find in the Oriental world and also in the Greek world, with individuality or subjectivity.<sup>8</sup>

According to Hegel, although the Oriental world has the substantiality of ethical life, it lacks subjectivity.

Since Spirit has not yet attained interiority (*Innerlichkeit*), it wears the appearance of spirituality still involved in the conditions of Nature. Since the external and the internal, Law and Moral Sense (*Einsicht*), are not yet distinguished—still form an undivided unity—so also do Religion and the State. The Constitution generally is a Theocracy, and the Kingdom of God is to the same extent also a secular Kingdom as the secular Kingdom is also divine (*PH*: 129/142–43).<sup>9</sup>

Hegel connects theocracy in Asia not to the negation of interiority but to the absence of interiority. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel describes the negation of interiority at a different level. Indeed, in the *Philosophy of History*, we see the same trajectory from substantiality to the negation of substantiality through interiority and then finally a formulation that reconciles these two moments, which allows for the expression of freedom within community. In other words, negation is already there in substantiality, but it is forgotten. Hegel explains: ‘(S)ince substance has been defined as the truth of the particular things that are sublated and extinguished in it, absolute negativity has effectively already been posited as its determination, and absolute negativity is itself the source of freedom’ (*GW* 15: 10–11, cited from Bowman 2013: 56–57). Against Spinoza, Hegel contends that negativity is already present in the concept of substance, but when this negativity has itself been negated, we have the image of a pure substance, which is opposed to concrete individuals. If this understanding takes substance to be fundamentally opposed to finite individuals, it conceives substance one-sidedly and relegates individuality to a non-being.

In the Oriental phase, because awareness of negativity and interiority is lacking, no autonomy exists with respect to what Hegel calls moral sense or insight.

Because Orientals do not distinguish between individual insight or subjectivity and objective substance, they do not have religion in the modern sense, as a realm separate from politics. In Hegel's view, the Orient has a theocracy, where religion and the state form an undivided unity. The subject is already and always interpolated in such a way that negativity is precluded.

The Orient is static because of this lack of interiority or negativity, with the result that substantiality does not progress or become aware of itself. In the Greek world we see signs of subjectivity and this characteristic becomes clearer in the Christian world. Hegel explains this point clearly when he discusses the Crusades, which he takes to be a turning point in history:

Christendom found the empty Sepulchre, but not the union of the Secular and the Eternal; and so it lost the Holy Land. It was practically undeceived; and the result which it brought back with it was of a negative kind: viz., that the definite embodiment which it was seeking, was to be looked for in Subjective Consciousness alone, and in no external object; that the definite form in question, presenting the union of the Secular with the Eternal, is the Spiritual self-cognizant independence of the individual. Thus the world attains the conviction that man must look within himself for that definite embodiment of being which is of a divine nature: subjectivity thereby receives absolute authorization, and claims to determine for itself the relation [of all that exists] to the Divine. This then was the absolute result of the Crusades, and from them we may date the commencement of self-reliance and spontaneous activity. The West bade an eternal farewell to the East at the Holy Sepulchre, and gained a comprehension of its own principle of subjective infinite Freedom. (*PHI*: 412/472)

Hegel links the power of the negative to both interiority and subjectivity. Unlike in the East, in Christianity and the West there is a transcendence of immediate objectivity and a focus on 'the spiritual self-cognizant independence of the individual'. In Christianity, the Holy Land is gone and all that is solid melts away. At this point, subjectivity returns to itself. Consciousness becomes reflexive, and subjectivity is absolute. To find the divine one must look within rather than outward. Through this process, the West becomes conscious of itself as free and leaves the East. This geographical transition begins with a turn inward.

This is, however, just the beginning of a long journey and this infinite self will become entangled in numerous antinomies. Hegel seeks to reconcile the secular with the eternal and also the subjective with the objective.<sup>10</sup> For our purposes, more important than his reconciliation is his description of the contradictions,

which animate discussions of pan-Asianism and also pervade our present day. How one grasps these contradictions is crucial, and unlike reason, the understanding (*Verstand*) fixes contradictory concepts and cannot overcome them.

He describes these contradictions at length in his *Lectures on Fine Art*:

Now this opposition does not arise for consciousness in the restricted sphere of moral action alone; it emerges in a thorough-going cleavage and opposition between what is absolute and what is external reality and existence. Taken quite abstractly, it is the opposition of universal and particular, when each is fixed over against the other on its own account in the same way; more concretely, it appears in nature as the opposition of the abstract law to the abundance of individual phenomena, each explicitly with its own character; in the spirit it appears as the contrast between the sensuous and the spiritual in man, as the battle of spirit against flesh, of duty for duty's sake, of the cold command against particular interest, warmth of heart, sensuous inclinations and impulses, against the individual disposition in general; as the harsh opposition between inner freedom and the necessity of external nature, further as the contradiction between the dead inherently empty concept, and the full concreteness of life, between theory or subjective thinking, and objective existence and experience. These are oppositions which have not been invented at all by the subtlety of reflection or the pedantry of philosophy; in numerous forms they have always preoccupied and troubled the human consciousness, even if it is modern culture that has first worked them out most sharply and driven them up to the peak of harshest contradiction. Spiritual culture (*geistige Bildung*), the modern understanding, produces this opposition in man which makes him into an amphibian (*zur Amphibie macht*), because he now has to live in two worlds which contradict one another. (A: 53–54)

Hegel's use of the term 'amphibian' is suggestive because he discusses contrasts, such as those between concrete and abstract, along with the infinite and the finite. However, the literal meaning of 'amphibian', a creature living on both land and water, is also relevant. In his *Philosophy of World History*, Hegel explains that land involves people 'in an infinite multitude of dependencies, but the sea carries [them] out beyond these limited circles of thought and action' (PW: 90). In that text, he associates the sea with subjectivity and the infinite, but also with plunder and commerce. Land, contrarily, is linked to dependency and finitude.



Okakura drew on this opposition in arguing for an Asian alternative. However, in the above cited passage from his *Lectures on Fine Art*, Hegel appears to argue that oppositions such as the finite and the infinite as constituting the human condition, and consequently we are all amphibious. Indeed, some of these contradictions may have existed since the beginning of history. After all, Plato had already made a distinction between the universal forms and individual entities. However, Hegel points out that such contradictions, such as that between abstract laws and individual phenomena or between inner freedom and external nature, become more intense and pervasive in people's experience during the modern period. In the modern world, we do not just distinguish between universal and particular; we live as both particular and universal.

Hegel contends the contradictions mentioned above became heightened because of modern changes in education and culture (*die neuere Bildung*). Karl Marx and György Lukács extended Hegel's insights by showing how such contradictions are also mediated by capitalism and the state. According to Lukács, in capitalist society, people must live in two worlds, an interior world of desires and experience and an exterior world where the course of events could frustrate the élan of the interior. He grounded this split in relation to the experience of workers in the factory, who have desires, but face a world of machines and markets that are completely unpredictable (Lukács 1971: 90). Freedom is presupposed by the market and to some extent the factory, but in a capitalist world, it turns into its opposite. To sustain a worker's freedom, s/he must sell his or her labour power and come under both the organised yoke of the capitalist in the factory and the capricious workings of the market. In other words, what Marx calls the despotism of the factory and the anarchy of the market together serve to undermine the freedom presupposed by the capitalist system (Marx 1990: 477).

The capitalist market and factory constitute what the French philosopher and social theorist Jacques Bidet identifies as the two structures of modernity—market and organisation (Bidet 2010: 52)—which work together to produce estrangement. Organisation includes what Louis Althusser called the 'ideological state apparatuses', for example, schools and families (Althusser 1971: 127–89). At this point we are brought back to the problem of education, or *Bildung*. Terry Pinkard explains that 'Modern individuals were educated, as it were, to hold fast to the set of dispositions and habits that came in tandem with the new world of nuclear families rather than clans, of economic production now fully severed in principle from the economy of the household, and of the practical unavoidability of constitutionally ordered political arrangements to cope with this' (Pinkard 2017: 176).

The institutions that Pinkard mentions already contain some of the contradictions to which Hegel alludes. People experience an affective intensity in the nuclear family that they constantly find lacking in the market. This is precisely

because economic production has been severed from the household, which still reproduces labour power. Consequently, the affective intensity of the family now appears negated by the cold calculating logic of the capitalist market<sup>11</sup>. Finally, constitutionally ordered political arrangements, which in Hegel's view aimed to reconcile the above contradiction, have not been able to do so. Rather, political structures often appear alien to people whose lives are largely dependent on their roles in a capitalist market or civil society. In late nineteenth-century China and Japan, the institutions that Pinkard mentions were in the process of emerging, especially with respect to the modern state and the capitalist market.

A fundamental aspect of pan-Asianism was an attempt to save Asia from the alienation seen in Western societies by drawing on Asian traditions. Pan-Asianists attempted to overcome the fragmentation and alienation of civil society by returning to Asian traditions. However, we must understand pan-Asianism in light of its nemesis, namely early versions of modernization theory. In the late nineteenth century, many Asian intellectuals engaged in a Hegelian-like critique of the Orient. Put simply, many prewar thinkers' evaluations of Asia depended on whether they emphasised the substantiality of community or the negativity of freedom. If Hegel's philosophy implied the negation of Asia, then scholars such as Fukuzawa Yukichi turned this into an Asian self-negation. Fukuzawa outlined a world in which Asia did not completely embrace freedom but needed to do so if it was to avoid being colonised. Returning to Houlgate's comments on the Third World, far from wanting to hold fast to old values, such scholars believed that Asian nations needed to get rid of most traditional values to survive in a world of imperialist competition. Just as Hegel narrated a moment when the West left the East as it turned inward, after the Meiji Restoration, Fukuzawa encouraged Japan to act autonomously and leave Asia. Okakura's pan-Asianism likewise has to be understood as a response to Fukuzawa's relatively pro-Western narrative.<sup>12</sup> Both sides of this debate grasp one side of Hegel's philosophy of substance and subject. Okakura Tenshin attempts to hold up Asian substance against Fukuzawa's subject, which he believes reproduces the abstract individuality of the West.

## II. Okakura and Asia

Okakura Tenshin was born in 1862, and so, his early years were spent amid the tumult of the Meiji Restoration. His father was a former samurai, who was ordered to become a merchant by a feudal lord. We could say that his father and female guardian represent two opposite sides of the Meiji Restoration, which in turn corresponded to Hegel's amphibious description of modernity.<sup>13</sup> As a result of the transformations of the Meiji era, his father was ordered by a feudal lord to manage

a silk trading house in Yokohama. In this he was representative of the nationwide shift from samurai culture to the market. Abandoning samurai identity, which promoted expelling the barbarian, meant moving to a market-oriented ideology that presupposed individual subjectivity. Samurai identity at the end of the Tokugawa period and beginning of the Meiji period was complex. The ideology of the early Meiji Restoration was marked by the slogan ‘revere the emperor and expel the barbarian (*sonnō jōi*)’. Initially, it was difficult to separate the two parts of statement, but eventually revering the emperor was reconciled with the presence of foreigners in Japan. The reason why samurai began to revere the emperor was precisely because they believed that the Tokugawa government (*bakufu*) did not resist the West and signed a series of unequal treaties in the 1850s. Against this, the emperor appeared to resist, which suggests that expel the barbarian initially mediated reverence for the emperor.

Okakura’s father appears to go against this trend and anticipates a path that Tokutomi Sohō, the Meiji journalist and historian, outlined namely the movement away from a military society to a commercial society based on production—a path towards reconciling ‘revere the emperor’ with a new international system. Tokutomi contended that this was a global trend and if Japan did not follow this, it would be colonised (Pierson 1974: 209). Tokutomi’s position is clearly nationalist, but it is different from the conservative stance that advocated preserving samurai traditions. At this point, revering the emperor had to be separated from expelling the barbarian. After all, promoting commerce implies dealing with barbarians while avoiding being colonised by them. Okakura was affected by the above reconciliation in his early life, as he received a Western education and grew up speaking English.

However, he would eventually become critical of both the West and unbridled capitalism. As we glean from Hegel’s discussion of civil society in *Philosophy of Right*, the development of the market could lead to the fragmenting of the substantiality of community. In the Japanese context, this would imply undermining the nation, which is based on the emperor. In Okakura’s home, another figure represented what Hegel called substantiality. When Okakura was very young, his father hired a female guardian, Tsune, a middle-aged woman. It was Tsune who raised Okakura in his early years. Tsune was from a family loyal to the emperor and consequently critical of enlightenment and commercial culture. (Notehelfer 1990: 314) Her family stressed the importance of samurai culture and partly because of this influence, Okakura appeared to favour the project of expelling the barbarian (*jōi*), which he was also taught in school. Thus, already in his early education, we see the opposition of subject and substance, which Okakura would try to synthesize in his concept of Asia. Substance in Hegel’s philosophy is often connected to community as in his discussion of Antigone in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it is ambiguous with respect to gender.<sup>14</sup> It could either be connected to the ideas of

citizenship and the state as in human law or to the family in the case of divine law, where upholding the latter is the task of women. Both these are ethical relations and the project of pan-Asianism not only connects subject and substance but also these two types of substance, the more abstract national community, and the immediate ethical substance of the family. In Hegel's discussion of Greek life in the *Phenomenology*, he notes that the 'family stands over and against the universal spirit' (*PhS*: 258). We could perhaps transpose this situation into a global context, where Japan and Asia confront an alienated world spirit and aim to transform it. Okakura explicitly connected the project of effectuating such a complex transformation and synthesis to Hegel and German idealism, once he read philosophy in Tokyo University with professors such as Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908). Fenollosa himself contrasted Japanese with Western art, claiming that the former was spiritual while the latter was materialistic. Okakura constantly attempted to overcome such oppositions.<sup>15</sup>

We see this opposition in the opening lines of Okakura's *Ideals of the East*, one of Okakura's well-known texts, published in 1901. He declared:

Asia is one. The Himalayas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilisations, the Chinese with its communism of Confucius, and the Indian with its individualism of the Vedas. But not even the snowy barriers can interrupt for one moment the broad expanse of love for the Ultimate and Universal, which is the common thought-inheritance of every Asiatic race, enabling them to produce all the great religions of the world, and distinguishing them from those maritime peoples of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, who love to dwell on the Particular, and to search out the means, not the end of life. (*IE*: 1)

In Okakura's analysis, Asia moves from unity to opposition to a deeper unity, but does not proceed as a dialectical development. From the beginning, we are presented with the opposition between substantiality and individuality. Indeed, the Vedas had long been associated with the interiority of contemplation, while Confucianism emphasised community. But this difference, Okakura declared, is superficial. It is within Asia that Okakura found the distinction between negativity-subjectivity and substantial community. This passage shows that in his thinking Asia was not only about geography or physical boundaries. Even the snowy barriers of the Himalayas could not stop a fundamental movement, the unity of Asia and the harmonising of oppositions. For Okakura, Asia was not a geographical region, but a place of love for the universal. This love manifests itself in a variety of ways, producing each of the great religions. Here again the issue of amphibiousness arises. Maritime peoples are engaged in trade and conquest,

and are thus concerned with the particular and with means rather than ends. From a Hegelian perspective, Okakura's West is characterized by a *Verstand* type-mentality that is unable to think beyond means ends relationships. The significance of Asia lies in its ties to the land, which give it its ability to resist and even overcome maritime culture.

Okakura's juxtaposition of Asia as continental and the West as maritime is linked to Japan's experience with the Black Ships and colonialism. The ocean represents imperialism whereas the people of Asia were sedentary. However, his vision was also connected to his political involvement in India. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Okakura was involved with a group of Bengali radical intellectuals who opposed the established elite and supported violent mass movements. In his notes during this period, he explained that the British had enslaved the Indians, and then continued the theme of the separation of the maritime regions from Asia by underscoring the problem of imperialism, which he connected to philosophical differences and then later to capitalism.

The glory of Europe is the humiliation of Asia. The march of history is a record of the steps that lead the West into an inevitable antagonism to ourselves. From their very outset, the restless maritime instincts of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, born of chase and war, of piracy and pillage, stood in strong contrast to the continental contentment of agricultural Asia (*AE*: 136; Nakajima 2014: 213).

Okakura describes how Asia was drawn into a zero-sum game. Europe could not become glorious without invading Asia. To explain this, he further elaborates on the distinction between the maritime and the continental. The maritime is connected to a history of pillage and imperialism and this in turn is linked to a particular conception of freedom, namely the idea of individuals pursuing an infinite increase of goods.<sup>16</sup> Maritime imperialists use this concept of freedom to justify their exploits. Hegel's view of the Orient as lacking negativity/subjectivity could be mobilized to justify such imperialism because it relegated continental Asia, with its 'fertile plains' (*PH*: 119) to no more than a passive agricultural society. But this does not last. The consciousness of maritime imperialism gave rise to a subjectivity of resistance. This resistance required a synthesis of land and ocean, forcing people to redefine terms such as 'freedom' so that they were no longer monopolized by the West.

The West has often accused the East of a lack of Freedom. Truly we have not that crude notion of personal rights guarded by mutual assertion—that perpetual elbowing through the crowd—that consistent snarling over the bones, which seems to be

the glory of the Occident. Our conceptions of liberty are far higher than these. With us it lies in the power to complete the individual idea within itself. The true infinity is the circle and not the extended line. Every organism implies a subordination of parts to a whole. Real equality lies in the due fulfilment of the respective function. (*AE*: 131)

Okakura makes numerous important points here as he struggles to provide a new synthesis of subjectivity and community. First is the importance of cultural difference or, in Hegel's terms, different forms of spirit. The reason scholars of the West saw only a lack of freedom in Asia was that they failed to understand that Asia possesses a different type of freedom. Okakura later explains that in the West, freedom implies 'the projection of individual enjoyment' while in Asia, it consists of 'the harmony of an interrelated life' (*AE*: 136). The projection of individual enjoyment amounts to 'snarling over bones' and animality, which is connected to the glory of the West and the downfall of Asia. According to Okakura, this freedom eventually leads to imperialism, but he also contrasted this abstract and linear freedom to the more concrete experience of Asia. Western and maritime freedom represents a linear infinity because based on this idea, people strive for an infinite amount of goods and are never satisfied. He contrasted this linear infinity to the circle. By juxtaposing the circle and the line, Okakura turns the tables on a Hegelian distinction between good and bad infinity, represented respectively by the circle and the line.

In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel contends that 'bad infinity' implies an unending sequence and it is generated by a worldview that radically separates the infinite from the finite (*SL*: 113, 21.30). In the case of the bad infinite, the infinite is separated by an absolute chasm from all finite things on the other side. Such an infinity also has a no purpose. Okakura points above to an infinite drive to increase one's commodities, including resources to produce commodities, which results in plunder.<sup>17</sup>

However, in Hegel's view, an infinite that stands against the finite cannot really be infinite because it is limited by the finite. Consequently, the true infinite, what Hegel calls 'affirmative infinite', is found within the finite. Affirmative infinity is 'bent back upon itself, its image becomes a circle' (*SL*: 119, 21.136). Because it is not separate from the finite, this infinite could be characterized as a circular movement—the constant transformation of the finite as itself expressing the infinite. However, this transformation of the finite beyond itself is not blind but involves a purpose. Freedom involves the infinity of subjectivity, while aiming towards concrete goal of creating a harmonious whole, including both communities and nature, which are both mediated by an organic holism. The danger in Okakura's description of this holism lies in the subordination of parts to an abstract whole, which

resembles Hegel's account of mechanism rather than organic life.<sup>18</sup> Okakura attempts to avoid the problem of domination and finds Asia precisely within community, which implies a freedom different from the abstract freedom of the Enlightenment. In his essay 'The Awakening of the East' (published posthumously in 1939) Okakura explains:

The sweet tolerance of the East grants freely what the most aggressive demands fail to obtain in the West. In spite of its apparent restraint, Eastern life is more conducive to individuality than Western, whose uniformity and competition stamp mankind with the cheap monotony of machine made goods. Our poorest enjoys his pipe of leisure under the evening tree, where he discusses village politics. (*AE*: 151–52)<sup>19</sup>

Okakura describes the West as unable to overcome a major antinomy of modernity, namely the opposition between individuality and cheap monotony, while the East, or Asia, might provide a solution. Although the West emphasises individuality and the pursuit of desire, individuals become cogs in the machine, an expression Max Weber would use a couple of decades later. In 1921, Weber wrote, 'Rational calculation [...] reduces every worker to a cog in this bureaucratic machine and, seeing himself in this light, he will merely ask how to transform himself into a somewhat bigger cog' (Weber 1968: iv). Although Okakura does not explicitly connect becoming a cog to capitalism, he does link a modern society based on market exchange to the problem of life itself (Western life) being stamped with the cheap monotony of machine-made goods. He suggests that once a society becomes capitalist, no aspect of society is left untouched.

He continues this vaguely Marxist critique in other places in the same essay. As we have seen, he sees the maritime West following another path: 'Their pride was built of contempt for the helpless who were yoked to their waggons of luxuries' (*AE*: 136). Here, rather than an interconnected web of duties, we have wagons of luxuries, which suggests superfluous wealth. Okakura further specifies that the problem has to do with money. He points out that 'the modern spirit flies from God to gold' (*AE*: 137). Okakura speaks of a transition from religion to commerce. Here, gold stands for money, or the universal equivalent. Indeed, Okakura's point challenges Marx's often-cited line in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all patriarchal, feudal and idyllic relations. . . It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism in the icy waters of egoistical calculations. (Marx 1978: 475)

Here, Marx presents religion and the idyllic as artifacts of a past that has been swept away by capitalism. Okakura takes this point to a new level and echoes Marx's later point about money becoming like a god in capitalist society. In short, Okakura describes a world where capitalism has become a religion.<sup>20</sup> In an essay published about one year after the Japanese victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, Okakura takes this line of reasoning further and makes the connection to Marxism more explicit.

In spite of the vaunted freedom of the West, true individuality is destroyed in the competition for wealth, and happiness and contentment are sacrificed to an incessant craving for more. The West takes pride in its emancipation from mediaeval superstition, but what of that idolatrous worship of wealth that has taken its place? What sufferings and discontent lie hidden behind the gorgeous mask of the present? The voice of socialism is a wail over the agonies of Western economies—the tragedy of Capital and Labour. (*AE*: 215)

Several elements in this passage are reminiscent of Marx. First, Okakura highlights the problem of the incessant striving for wealth. Although he uses the term 'wealth', the context of his remarks suggests that he is actually discussing what Marx would call 'value' or 'abstract wealth'. He juxtaposes happiness and contentment which, as we have seen, he associated with Asia, to the craving for more. Consequently, he implies that a desire for abstract wealth is not merely about procuring items for use or personal satisfaction, but of simply getting more. While one can only have a certain amount of concrete wealth, abstract wealth in the form of money or credit can be endlessly accumulated.<sup>21</sup> This becomes the bad infinity of value, which stands separate from all concrete things. Because of this separation, the craving for more money is similarly independent of one's physical level of satisfaction. In Meiji Japan, society had already established the beginnings of a capitalist market, where money as a representative of abstract wealth, the God of commodities (Marx 1990: 229), became predominant.

But perhaps more importantly, the passage mentions labour, capital and socialism. By underscoring capital, Okakura supports his view that wealth was akin to exchange value or even capital. That is, capital seeks to increase money rather than produce goods for consumption. He then mentions labour, which is the key to Marx's critique and points to socialism as a cry against the injustices of capitalist society.

In short, Okakura couches his arguments for pan-Asianism in a narrative that overlaps with Marx insofar as he criticized capitalism for promoting a religion of money and recognised the significance of socialism. Echoing Marx, Okakura sees this as a global process.



The advance of Europe in Asia means not merely the imposition of social ideals which the East holds to be crude if not barbarous, but also the subversion of all existing law and authority. The Western ships which brought their civilization also brought conquests, protectorates, ex-territorial jurisdiction, spheres of influence, and what not of debasement, till the name of the Oriental has become a synonym for the degenerate, and the word 'native' an epithet for slaves (*AJ*: 215–16).

Okakura is aware of the myriad problems associated with capitalism as a global process. It was, he argues, the commercialism of capitalism that made it such that 'the very life of the West depends on finding markets for her goods' (*AJ*: 217). Okakura follows Hegel's theory of imperialism, which was then picked up by J. A. Hobson and V. I. Lenin. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argued that capitalist markets tend to overproduce and because of this the capitalists are propelled beyond their boundaries to sell their commodities. He writes:

Civil society is driven to establish colonies. The increase of population alone has this effect; but a particular factor is the emergence of a mass of people who cannot gain satisfaction for their needs by their work when production exceeds the needs of consumers. (*PR*: §248A)

Behind this theory of imperialism lies an understanding of the historically specific market expansion associated with modern capitalism, or what Hegel calls civil society. While markets have existed periodically throughout history, capitalism represents a particular logic that combines markets with a specific form of organisation and generalised commodity production. Okakura gestures toward this point when he asks: 'What chance has individualized Eastern trade against the sweeping batteries of organized commerce?' (*AJ*: 217). By stressing cooperation or organisation, Okakura's comment again overlaps with Marx's description in *Capital* of the trajectory of capital (Marx 1990: 439–55); that is, capitalism eventually involves organised factories and labour to increase efficiency. Hegel again anticipates this point in the *Philosophy of Right* when he uncovers a logic of mechanization in civil society that could lead to labour becoming increasingly superfluous. He explains that 'the abstraction of production makes work increasingly mechanical, so that the human being is eventually able to step aside and let the machine take his place' (*PR*: §198, 233).

Okakura highlights how the above process affects international relations: 'Cheapness and competition, like the mitrailleuse under whose cover they advance, now sweep away the crafts. The economic life of the Orient founded on land and labour and deprived of a protective tariff through high-handed diplomatic action,

succumbs to the army of machine and capital' (*AJ*: 217). The cheapening of commodities is a result of the dynamic of capitalist production that spread across the globe. However, Okakura warned against thinking of this process as simple. Capital does not just offer cheaper commodities to Asian nations. In fact, given global inequalities, quicker production in one part of the world does not necessarily mean that goods will be cheaper when converted to Asian currencies. Perhaps more importantly, there may not be sufficient demand for such goods or the societies in the East might try to stop foreign goods from entering their domestic markets, which might not be capitalist. It is at this point the mitrailleuse, a volley gun, enters to force capital onto Asian nations. This begins a process that neither the Occident nor the Orient can control and undermines the fabric of life in Asia. Earlier forms of labour and trade are replaced by a labour that merely serves capital. In pre-capitalist societies, labour is not merely in the service of capital, but is connected to the land and ritualistic practices.

Okakura mobilizes precapitalist elements against capitalism, the defining feature of the West. Competition stamps mankind with the cheap monotony of machine-made goods and therefore Eastern life is more conducive to individuality. He speaks of a monotony that is cheap. Monotony implies a repetition of the same tone again and again, a bad infinity, which can never amount to art or music. This is the cultural complement to the seriality that dominates life in capitalism, a world pervaded by quantitative differences. By using the term 'cheap', Okakura attempts to show that we are dealing with something that is merely quantitative. Okakura juxtaposes the cheap monotony of West with the harmony of Asia.

Okakura contrasts the harmony of the Asian village with the 'naked self-interest' of capitalism. The village appears premodern, but it enjoys participatory politics, or at least its members have the freedom to discuss politics. Thus he writes, 'Our poorest enjoys his pipe of leisure under the evening tree, where he discusses village politics'. In short, following the logic mentioned above, Okakura also invokes Asia as a new universality. Continuing a theme from *Ideals of the East*, Okakura connects Asian harmony to communism: 'Eastern society is wondrously beautiful in its harmony of interrelated duties. The land furnished occupations and the ideals of the Commonwealth, where each component formed and welded the integral whole. The Oriental sovereign, a projection of the parental idea, and the centralising force in the total scheme, was not more or less important than the various factors of communism' (*AE*: 150).

In Japan and elsewhere in East Asia there were socialist movements such as the Christian socialism of Katayama Sen, and in such cases, communism represented a possible future rather than a past. Okakura embraces this ideal, but at the same time links communism with Confucian-like ideals, such as harmony and interrelatedness. Once again, he turns Hegel on his head. What Hegel considered to be Oriental despotism was, in Okakura's eyes, an Eastern type of freedom

and harmony. In other words, while Okakura, like Hegel, was interested in synthesizing freedom and community, he barely mentions the institutions that Hegel singled out nor his evaluation of civilisations around the world.

Moreover, Okakura's method also diverges from that of Hegel. Hegel vehemently denied that some type of religious or aesthetic feeling could synthesize freedom and community and he affirmed the role of reason (*Vernunft*). In Okakura's response, it is at once art and the idea of Asia that emerge as fulcrums of resistance. This is why the subtitle of *Ideals of the East* is 'the Spirit of Japanese Art', which suggests that it is in art that ideals lie. Given Okakura's background and his role in promoting the study of art history in Japanese universities, his focus on art is not surprising. However, we get a sense of his motivation for connecting art with the essence of Asia in the following discussion of Japanese art.

Any history of Japanese art ideals is, then, almost an impossibility. . . Definition is limitation. The beauty of a cloud or a flower lies in its unconscious unfolding of itself, and the silent eloquence of the masterpieces of each epoch must tell their story better than any epitome of necessary half-truths. (*IE*: 4)

Unlike the discursive and conceptual modes of philosophy that Hegel recommends, Okakura extols the silent eloquence of art. The actual movement of the material must be grasped in a way that cannot be represented. Thus Okakura follows the anti-Hegelian trend of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We might learn something about Okakura's point of view by considering Friedrich Schelling's homage to art: 'Philosophy to be sure reaches the highest level, but it brings only, as it were, a fragment of man to this point. Art brings the whole man, as he is, to that point, namely to a knowledge of the highest of all, and in this rests the eternal difference and the miracle of art' (Schelling 1984: 130). Like Okakura, Schelling associates thinking with fragmentation. It is because of this fragmentation that Okakura speaks of half-truths. From this perspective, Okakura continues in a romantic mode. Art has a power that goes beyond mere intellect and involves a harmony that eludes thought, but this harmony can nonetheless be important for a politics of Asian unity.

Toward the end of his essay 'The Awakening of the East', Okakura underscores how breaking free from Western hegemony is the precondition for understanding Asian unity. 'The spell of white prestige must be completely broken that we may learn our own possibilities and resources' (*AE*: 162). Okakura's task was precisely to break this spell, which required both a rejection of false ideologies of universalism and also a recognition of mediation by the West, especially in language and technology.

Our sad experience in international complications has warned us that the ties of blood between them are always thicker than that milk of humanity and justice which might draw them to us.

Their very language, in which I am able to appeal to you, signifies the unification of the East. It reaches from the Kuriles to Cape Comorin, from the sea-ribbed coast of Cambodia to the rippled verdure of Crete, carrying the cry of a common resurrection. (*AE*: 159–60)

Okakura rejects the false universalism of the West, which covers up the relations of blood or racism that fuels it. In other words, false universality can be a pretence for imperialism, which hides its own racism, reflected in ties of blood. Against this abstract universality of the West, which masks concrete power relations and the promise of the traditions of Asia mentioned above, Okakura calls for a unity that both implies nationalism and goes beyond it. Theorists of nationalism have pointed out the importance of communication—which requires language—for nationalism. The language of the West, which goes beyond indigenous languages such as Cambodian and Japanese, helps Asians unite. The English language came to Asia through imperialism, but it helps Asia become conscious of itself. Using this language, Okakura attempts to show how Western domination needed to be transformed. Hegel's work already provides a description of this domination to some extent, but it does not emerge as an injustice. Rather, such imperialism is at times legitimated through an evolutionary narrative. But even in this narrative of legitimation, we see signs of a counter-narrative. Echoing a theme we have already seen in this essay, in the *Philosophy of Right*, in the midst of his analysis of imperialism, Hegel places land and water in opposition.

Just as the earth, the firm and solid ground, is a precondition of the principle of family life, so is the sea the natural element for industry, whose relations with the external industry, whose relations with the external world it enlivens [...] But in order to appreciate what an educational asset is present in the link with the sea, one should compare the relationship to the sea of those nations in which creativity has flourished with those which have shunned and which, like the Egyptians and Indians, have stagnated internally and sunk into the most appalling and miserable superstition; one should likewise note how all great and enterprising nations push their way to the sea (*PR*: §247, 268).

Hegel clearly favours the sea, which is connected to industry, but just like substantiality, he sees the importance of the earth. The above passage appears to legitimize colonialism, characterizing it as enterprising and a great endeavour against those who have stagnated. However, at the same time he contends that the 'liberations of colonies itself proves to be of greatest advantage to the mother state' (*PR*: §248, 269). Hegel does not devote much space to liberation from the standpoint of

the colonised, but it is not surprising that those who resist colonialism draw on substantiality and the earth. Okakura's concept of substantiality and land connects to his vision of nationalism, which involves a non-progressive notion of time. He speaks of a resurrection that begins with a battle cry that returns to haunt linear narratives of history throughout the twentieth century.

When discussing the intersection of nationalism and Asianism, Okakura highlighted Japan's history of unbroken sovereignty to explain why Japan should lead Asia.

It has been, however, the great privilege of Japan to realize this unity in complexity with special clearness. The Indo-Tartaric blood of this race was itself a heritage which qualified it to imbibe from the two sources, and so mirror the whole of Asiatic consciousness.<sup>22</sup> The unique blessing of unbroken sovereignty, the proud self-reliance of an unconquered race, and the insular isolation which protected ancestral ideas and instincts at the cost of expansion, made Japan the real repository of the trust of Asiatic thought and culture. (*IE*: 2)

In Okakura's telling, the unbroken line of sovereignty attested to Japan's ability to consistently resist imperialist aggression, while other Asian nations did not fare as well. This again shows how pan-Asianism should not be understood as a movement to directly transcend the nation, but as a counternarrative of the nation looking toward another world. Okakura responds to a world of global capitalist imperialism, describing an anti-imperialist nationalism that might lead to jingoism but would not necessarily do so. The goal of such nationalism is to protect the cultures of Asia. As we have seen, Okakura believed that Japan was a carrier of Asian culture and this validated its role as leader, as seen in his statement that Japan was a 'museum of Asiatic Civilisation': 'Japan is a museum of Asiatic Civilisation; and yet more than a museum, because the singular genius of the race leads it to dwell on all phases of the ideals of the past, in that spirit of living Advaitism which welcomes the new without losing the old' (*IE*: 3).

But Japan was more than a museum because it both kept the past and moved toward the future. It preserved its traditions, while becoming modern and absorbing Western technologies. In Okakura's description, Japan accomplished the dual tasks of the nation-state by being both old and new. This is what he called 'living Advaitism', because like the Advaita Vedanta, Japan could stress an unchanging substance, and then like Hegel, it could envision this substance in motion in history. Japan shows how Asia could simultaneously change and remain the same.

Okakura expected a period of struggle against the West, but also a later messianic moment, a turn toward the future. Toward the end of 'The Awakening of the

East', Okakura writes of how the peoples of Asia could follow Japan in becoming independent:

Why should not the four hundred millions of China and the three hundred millions of India be armed to stay the further transgression of the predatory West? Why should not the Mohammedan empires be moved to their glorious Jihad? [...]

And a mighty Asiatic peace shall come to clothe humanity with universal harmony. And Europe shall receive the blessing of Asia given with a freer if firmer hand. (*AE*: 164–65)

The hope for pan-Asianism, then, lies not in war, but in a mission for peace. Borrowing from Vijay Prasad's description of the 1950s and 60s, we could say that, for Okakura, armed anti-colonialism was connected to hopes for a peaceful world beyond capitalism and imperialism (Prasad: 2007). In the twentieth century, this legacy was controversial, but the problems amidst which such emerged during Hegel's time continue into the present.

### III. Conclusion: Hegel and the limits of Okakura's pan-Asianism

This essay has focused on how Okakura's writings point to a way to formulate a Hegelian vision of pan-Asianism. A key element of this project concerned a critique of mechanization and abstract subjectivity from the standpoint of substance. Okakura's work suggests, against Stone and others, that oppositional modern Asian conceptions of freedom could be conceived as completing the Hegelian project, rather than eluding it. However, Okakura's formulation of a new concept of Asian freedom that was not abstract tended to be indeterminate and lacked institutional specificity. Hegel, by contrast, attempted to provide some of this specificity in the *Philosophy of Right*, which was less frequently read by Asian intellectuals in the early twentieth century. This is not the place to outline how Okakura could have drawn on Hegel to further formulate a concrete form of freedom, but we can conclude by pointing out the serious historical consequences of failing to make an Asian alternative determinate, since such failure often risks reproducing scenarios that Hegel criticizes. Hegel contends that the Orient provides no space for subjectivity and, like Spinoza's metaphysics, did not allow for negation and the finite particular. In our discussion we have seen Okakura describe Asian freedom as an organism, where 'Every organism implies a subordination of parts to a whole'. As a result, during the 1930s and 40s, intellectuals and officials could mobilize such statements to create a system where subjectivity was eclipsed. This characterized much Japanese pan-Asianist thought during World War II, when anti-imperialism and pan-Asianism became government ideologies.

Although Hegel's thought is sometimes criticized for being totalizing, he was clearly a critic of abstract totality. However, bringing him in dialogue with pan-Asianists allows us to highlight that Hegel was equally critical of abstract subjectivity and he constantly sought after the conditions under which subject and substance could be realised. Critical intellectuals in post-war Japan such as Takeuchi Yoshimi attempted to make subjectivity a more integral part of anti-imperialism and pan-Asianism, but they only gestured towards articulating principles for realising a world that entails both subject and substance. The confrontation between Hegel and pan-Asianists show how such a project is both necessary and yet unfinished.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> This article draws on the first chapter of my recent book, *Pan-Asianism and the Legacy of the Chinese Revolution* (Murthy: 2023).

<sup>2</sup> In his introductory essay to a work by Okakura Tenshin, Michele Marra points out that Okakura used to language harmonious wholeness to construct a vision of the nation, which was connected to universality (Marra 1999: 65–78). I follow Marra's lead but focus more explicitly on possibilities within Hegel's philosophy and also make connections to Marxist social theory.

<sup>3</sup> We might see a parallel here with Robert Brandom's recent interpretation, which implies that Hegel posits a post-modern period in which abstract individuality is overcome and reconciled with community. Of course, Brandom also has an argument about reinterpretation along the lines of case law, which is not relevant here (Brandom 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Abbreviations used:

*A* = Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* Vol. 1 and 2, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

*AE* = Okakura Tenshin, 'The Awakening of the East', in *Okakura Tenshin Collected English Writings* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1984).

*AJ* = Okakura Tenshin, 'The Awakening of Japan', in *Okakura Tenshin Collected English Writings* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1984).

*EL* = Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences with Zusatzge*, ed. and trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).

- EW* = Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften, Werke* 8 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986).
- GW* = Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Rheinisch-Westphälischen Akademie der Wissenschaft (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968).
- GW* = Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Rheinisch-Westphälischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968).
- IE* = Okakura Tenshin, 'Ideals of the East', *Ideals of the East: With Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (London: John Murray, 1903).
- PH* = Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Ontario: Batoche Books, 2001). (Translation amended at points)
- PbS* = Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
- PR* = Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). (Translation amended at points)
- PW* = Hegel, *The Philosophy of World History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956).
- SL* = Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- VA* = Hegel, *Vorlesung über die Ästhetik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986).
- VPG* = Hegel, *Vorlesung über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986).
- WL* = Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Werke* 5 and 6 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Hegel is obviously not a simple romantic. However, part of his project is romantic in the sense that he sees an organic relationship between part and whole. Dalia Nassar describes romanticism as positing an 'ordering principle or archetype, which is manifest in the parts and their relations and in which each of the parts actively participates' (Nassar 2013: 3).

<sup>6</sup> The Orient is obviously a complex concept but Hegel is primarily referring to China, India and Persia when using the term.

<sup>7</sup> See Partha Chatterjee's response to Taylor (Chatterjee 1990: 119–32). Chatterjee contends that Hegel's concept of the family might appear as a standpoint of critique in colonial contexts. This is another way in which substance is mobilized against abstract individuality, which is associated with the West. A further discussion of this critique, however, should examine Hegel's reading of the family in Antigone. In Antigone as well, the family was precisely the standpoint of critique of the state. But in modernity, the family has different aims, one of which is to produce the modern individual. However, the family is still for Hegel a realm where the affective intensity of natural bonds prevail. I do things for family members not to pursue my own interest, but for the sake of the other. This is of course different from the sphere of civil society, where individuals pursue their interests.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Buchwalter stresses that Hegel's view of freedom actually overlaps with Asian visions because of his emphasis on social roles and obligations (Buchwalter 2010: 94). There is of course also a way in which modernity remains one-sided in Hegel's view as well. This is Brandom's view that I mentioned earlier and we see evidence for this in Hegel's discussion of Diderot and others.



<sup>9</sup> We should note that these texts were not written by Hegel himself and were lecture notes. Moreover, there is some discrepancy between various lectures on the same topic. For example, in *Manuscripts of the Lectures in 1822–1823*, Hegel contends that there was no theocracy in China. In his recent book, Terry Pinkard explains that ‘Because the Chinese supposedly have no higher set of principles than those contained in their own practices, and the law ultimately rests on a sovereign command unmediated by any other higher principles, Chinese political life is thus really, as Hegel calls it ‘political atheism’ (Pinkard 2017: 57). However, regardless of the difference in judgement with respect to religion, his key point is the same, namely that they lacked negativity (Pinkard 2017: 58).

<sup>10</sup> There is some debate as to whether Hegel believed that the Prussian state had achieved such a reconciliation. Terry Pinkard suggests a more open interpretation (Pinkard 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Some might argue that with Freud and others, there are ways in which the family itself is mediated by self-interest and desire at an unconscious level. However, the point here is that in modern capitalist society, there is an analytical separation between the family and civil society. Hegel captures the sense in which the world of the family is different from a sphere of self-interest and contracts.

<sup>12</sup> There could be some debate about whether Fukuzawa is ‘pro-Western’. But we should understand that these terms are relative. Fukuzawa himself separated ‘civilisation’ from the West and contended that it was just that by the late nineteenth century, Western nations embodied civilisation more than Asian nations. Fukuzawa’s comments on this are clear the text that I am discussing. ‘Hence present day Europe can only be called the highest level that human intelligence has been able to attain at this juncture of history. Since this is true, in all countries of the world, be they primitive or semi-developed, those who are to give thought to their country’s progress in civilisation must necessarily take European civilisation as the criterion in making arguments’ (Fukuzawa 2008: 20).

<sup>13</sup> The following outline of Okakura’s early life draws on Notehelfer 1990.

<sup>14</sup> Molly Farneth reads Hegel as de-naturalizing gender relations in this part of the *Phenomenology* (Farneth 2020: 13–34).

<sup>15</sup> Rustom Barucha points out that the text, ‘Awakening the East’, might have been co-written with Sister Nivedita (1867–1911), an Irish disciple of Swami Vivekananda. See Barucha (2006). The question of whether this text was written by Okakura or co-authored Nivedita will not concern us here because I am interested in the larger issue of how pan-Asian thought or anti-Eurocentric thought inverts Hegel. I continue to attribute these writings formally to Okakura because the text was posthumously published in his *Collected English Writings*.

<sup>16</sup> Okakura does not deal the problem of different empires in detail, but he appears to separate land-based empires of Asia, especially premodern empires, such as the Chinese empire from those of the modern West. Paradoxically, we might argue that Japan followed the path of the oceanic empires in the 1930s and 1940s.

<sup>17</sup> In Hegel’s logic, the concept of the infinite begins a transition from quality to quantity. Marx clearly picked up on the quantitative dimension. The quantitative, Marx asserts, is indifferent to quality. Hence both exchange value and money are indifferent to the qualitative dimension of

commodities (Marx 1990: 25–178). In Hegel's view there are both quantitative and qualitative versions of good and bad infinity, but this is an issue that goes beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>18</sup> Before Hegel, Kant brought out the connection between democratic organisation and organism in his *Critique of Judgment*. He writes: 'For each member in such a whole should indeed be not merely a means, but also a purpose; and while each member contributes to making the whole possible, the idea of that whole should in turn determine the member's position and function' (Kant 1987: 254, fn. 38).

<sup>19</sup> (*AE*: 151–52). The reference to the poor is of course unfortunate here, since it implies an inequality that might imply unfreedom. In any case, the overarching point is to bypass capitalist civil society and posit an alternative mediation of substance by subject.

<sup>20</sup> On this point, Okakura anticipates McCarragher (2019).

<sup>21</sup> Here we should perhaps distinguish between the logic of capital and the individual capitalist. The individual capitalist seeks to get procure material wealth for the flourishing of himself and his family, among other concrete purposes; however, he must create surplus value or the valorization of value to do this. In this role, he is not concerned about use-value, but only abstract wealth.

<sup>22</sup> Okakura's conception of race appears to involve both culture and biology. Some version of this vision continued through the Japanese empire in the 1930s and 40s.

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