

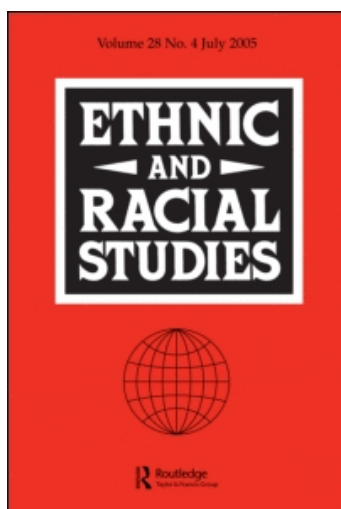
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Racialized modernity: An analytics of white mythologies

Barnor Hesse

Abstract

This article is located in parentheses between two quotations from Derrida's reflections on *white mythologies*, defined here as the 'rhetoric of modernity'. It re-conceptualizes race by interrogating its elision in contemporary social and political thought where discussions of modernity routinely ignore colonial and racial formations. It discusses a commentary by Jurgen Habermas on Hegel's discourse of modernity, which is used heuristically to illustrate the systematic elisions of race in contemporary theoretical discussions of modernity. Reading various juxtapositions between the two, it argues Habermas's erasure of distinctly colonial/racial themes in Hegel's concept of modernity, can be used to develop an analytics of racialized modernity, against white mythologies, which understands race beyond corporeality as signifying colonial distinctions between assemblages of 'Europeanness' and 'non-European-ness'. Building on developments in race/modernity studies it argues for the importance of conceptualizing race without any residual reliance on a biological referent to guarantee the object of critique.

Keywords: Modernity; racialization; Europe; Habermas; Hegel; coloniality.

Metaphysics – the white mythology which reassembles and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology, his own *logos*, that is, the *mythos* of his idiom, for the universal form of that he must still wish to call Reason. (Jacques Derrida)¹

Introduction

Modernity is racial. *Whiteness, Christian, the West, Europeanness* comprise a series of racial tropes intimately connected with organicist and universalist metaphors so frequently assumed in various canonical

accounts of modernity. However, from Kant, Hegel and Marx to Weber, Foucault and Habermas, hegemonic conceptions of modernity (e.g. 'rationality', 'liberalism', 'capitalism', 'secularism', 'rule of law') have been retold in precisely these racial terms without those terms becoming part of a critique of race in contemporary thought. Consequently in engaging modern social and political theory we need to question the constitutive racial tropes of its canonical traditions. Particularly where such tropes underline the intellectual inheritances of modern discourses, enunciating a sustained racial coherence ('Whiteness', 'Christian', 'the West', 'Europeanness') routinely elided by much of contemporary thought (cf. Kolb 1986; Pippin 1991; Vattimo 1991). It is to be welcomed that in recent years, two distinctive trajectories of *racelmodernity* studies have begun to address the orbit of these elisions. The first uncovers the much-neglected relation between *modern philosophy and the discourse of race*. It interrogates the indebtedness of eighteenth and nineteenth-century modern thought to ideas of liberty, rationality and superiority shaped by the cultivation of *Europeanness*, while postulating an invented 'non-Europeanness' as its antithesis (see Mudimbe 1989; Goldberg 1993; Outlaw 1996; Eze 1997; Bernasconi 2001; Ward and Lott 2002; Bernasconi and Cook 2003; Valls 2005). These approaches analyse the logic of race in the ideas of modern western philosophers; particularly how Enlightenment derived thought framed inegalitarian theories of race as part of modern scientific and humanistic discourse. Of course, the implication here is that conventional disciplinary scholarship has yet to address the significance of these insights. The second area of scholarship discusses *historical modernity and the structure of racism*. These studies argue for understanding the significance of the social, economic, political and cultural formation of the modern world since the sixteenth century within the colonial *and liberal* system in which race was gestated and elaborated. They provide historical analytical accounts of racism structuring modernity. These studies include the 'occidental rationality and racial terror' of plantation slavery in the Americas (Gilroy 1993), the 'racial contract' historically underwriting impeccable liberal polities (Mills 1997), the institution of the 'racial state' as the modern state (Goldberg 2002), and the 'creation of the modern world system as a racial project' (Winant 2001). It is acknowledged here too that such analyses are generally obscured in theories of modernity in the dominant western traditions of the social sciences and humanities. Overall, the importance of these two strands of race/modernity studies lies in their various interrogations of what contemporary social and political thought has regularly obscured. They pose the question of race/modernity in ways that radically problematize conventional western conceptualizations. At the same time they offer challenging and

insightful explanations of the racial discourses, institutions and formations usually exorcised by 'white mythologies' (Derrida 1982), that is, the 'rhetoric of modernity' (Mignolo 2005). However, as crucial as these studies are in making the case that the formation of race is central to or constituted by modernity, obliging a rethinking of its intrinsic configurations; such rethinking has so far not been generally extended to the concept of race itself.

While race/modernity studies have been extremely valuable in shifting the analytical frame from the ethnographic to the historiographic, conceptually they tend to incorporate a residual empiricist reliance on the reduction of race in analysis to visible, corporeal difference. What I am suggesting is that the critical concept of race though assuming the discrediting of the *biological idea of race* nevertheless retains this formulation, surreptitiously as part of the critical purchase on race as the object of its critique. If the explanatory test of these studies is to rethink the concept of race as modernity without relying on the biological referent, then as with ethnographic/policy oriented race/ethnic studies in general, they have not met this test. Howard Winant (2001) exemplifies the problem I have identified where he writes:

Here is what I mean by "race": *a concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies*. Although the concept of race appeals to biologically based human characteristics (so-called phenotypes), selection of these particular human features for the purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process. There is no biological basis for distinguishing human groups along the lines of "race" (...). (Winant 2001: 317, n.1; emphasis retained).

In answer to the question what is race, responses taking their cue from this approach usually invoke some visual form of corporeality, while insisting on an analytical disassociation between the category race and the corporeal schema. Conceptualizing this distinction, despite genuflections to social construction or recodings as cultural difference, tends to encourage a reading of race through some exclusive attachment or attribution to the body as a discrete entity. In other words, colour coded physiognomies or embodied ethnicities generally become privileged for the critique of race as a contested signifier. Such an approach makes sense only if our understanding of the concept of race and its critique dates from the emphases given by late nineteenth century and early twentieth century developments in racial eugenics and scientific racism. That is if we accept the conceptions drawn from and associated with that conjuncture, (i.e. Nazi racial science and racial genocide during the Second World/European war), as being

representative of the modernity of race (Hesse 2004). Such an approach fails to theorize the *European* colonial historicity of modernity from the sixteenth century onwards, or the *European* scientization of the Enlightenment discourse of race during the eighteenth century. These formations of race overlapped in structural taxonomies (e.g. subjugated 'Indians', enslaved 'Negroes' in the Americas (Wolf 1980; Stoler 2002)) and anthropological classifications (Eze 1997; Zammuto 2002). Their codifications of race emanated directly and variously from demarcations drawn at length in the protracted constitution of *Europeanness* and *non-Europeanness* both in and between the metropole and the colony (cf. Hall 2002).

In my view what race/modernity studies have so far neglected, conceptually if not historically, is the formative signifier of *Europeanness*, as a defining logic of race in the process of *colonially* constituting itself and its designations of *non-Europeanness*, materially, discursively and extra-corporeally. Since in both modern philosophical discourse and structural-historical modernity, the classifications and taxonomies of race though apparently framed as physical entities, are profoundly implicated in relationality. These normalized race relations were actually constituted through the colonial designations of *Europeanness* and *non-Europeanness*, in various assemblages of social, economic, ecological, historical and corporeal life. On this account the biologisation of the colonially constituted 'European'/'non-European' distinction and its territorialization on to diverse human bodies is but one historical symptom and political formation of race through modernity. It is precisely this way of understanding the historical and discursive racialization of what Walter Dignolo (2000, 2005) describes as the 'modern/colonial world system', that dominant genres of social and political thought have routinely disavowed.

In order to develop this argument I want to return to the question of race and its elision in contemporary modern thought. For heuristic reasons I discuss aspects of these elisions in a commentary on modernity and Hegel by the contemporary philosopher and social theorist, Jürgen Habermas. In *the Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* Habermas (1987) was concerned to restore and renew the progressive integrity, meaning and discourse of modernity against the usual suspects – its postmodern apostates and poststructuralist detractors. During the course of his analyses, Hegel's discourse is established as the most significant precedent for the reinterpretation of modernity. What concerns me here is how that precept of revision might be redeployed. In relation to Habermas's exposition of Hegel's understanding of modernity as an 'epochal concept', I argue that race emerged in the constitution of that epochal logic. Approaching the

question of race/modernity deconstructively, my reading of Hegel through Habermas, and Habermas through Hegel, develops an analytics I describe as *racialized modernity*.²

Instituting 'European'

The question of race is not self-evidently apparent in Habermas's discussion of Hegel's formulation of modernity. It can, however, be theorized in the juxtapositions between these thinkers to reveal more than is usually associated with discussions of modernity as well as discussions of race itself. Such an approach requires that initially we follow the logic of the signifier 'Europe'. One of the main reasons Habermas gives Hegel prominence is that Hegel identified the 'basic conceptual horizon within which the self-understanding of *European modernity* (was) formed' (Habermas 1987) (my emphasis).³ For Hegel modernity was epochal because it was established by its intrinsic relation to rationality. Attributing the appellation 'European modernity' to Hegel enables Habermas to contextualize this formulation as marking the 'threshold of modernity', which he attaches historically to Europe at the beginning of the sixteenth century, exemplified by the (European) 'Renaissance', the (European) 'Reformation' and the (European) 'overseas discoveries' (i.e. the Americas). The symbolic excess of Europeanness combined in these references to the beginnings of modernity, raises a theoretical question unaddressed by Habermas, namely, what signifies 'Europe' in this textual/historical context? Certainly by 1500 the term 'Europe' was hardly in general use and the geographical terrain with which inhabitants would have associated themselves was a more spiritual and theological construction than a secular and cultural one. Christian identity (i.e. Christendom) fulfilled the function of providing what is now known as 'Europe' with a territoriality. This should alert us to how the history of Europe is inscribed in the ways various representations have had to negotiate different imaginaries in which 'Europe is both a region and an idea' (Bartlett 1993). Although the idea of Europe is quintessentially modern, its boundaries and meaning have never had the coherence and clarity, proponents of its geography, history or culture desire it to have (Davies 1996). Europe has always been a 'highly unstable term' without natural discursive boundaries (Pagden 2002). Yet throughout its history, at least two 'non-European' *constitutive outsides* (i.e. excluded dialogical contrasts) have sustained the meaning of 'Europe'. The first describes it as unrelated to Asia (which is taken to define the *entrée* to *the East*) and as a continent apart from the continent on which it is located. Since the ancient Greeks the idea of the East, had been associated with the Persians, subsequently it began to refer to Islamicate peoples (e.g. Moors, Saracens and Turks)

who came to represent the ultimate in cultural Otherness for early modern Europe (Springborg 1992). The second invests 'Europe' with ideas of high civilization, progress, esteem, superiority, compared to its modern 'non-European other' within a global, colonial horizon conceived in the Americas and incubated during successive centuries of expansive imperial rule (Mignolo 2000).

These ideas of Europe circulate at the edges of Habermas's commentary, adumbrated by that symbolic excess which conveys Europeanness as a split institution of representation; split between an emergent, self-legislating 'Europe', as a historical, cultural inception ('renaissance', 'reformation') and an invented, regulated 'non-Europe' (e.g. 'discovery', 'new world'), as an administered geography. This is why unlike the 'European' credentials of the 'Renaissance' and the 'Reformation', the *European* significance of the 'New World/Americas' lies in the colonial invention and expansion of 'non-Europe' as otherness, thereby enabling the simultaneous creation of its contrast with the temporal and spatial uniqueness of a *fabricated* 'Europe' (cf. Hall 1995; Pagden 2002). Viewed in this way, the epochal association of modernity with newness also involves colonial and racial considerations Habermas's commentary erases. The 'chronotope'⁴ 'Europe' disseminates a modernity mediated by a diacritical structure with an 'Other' (e.g. Antiquity, Primitivism). Habermas restricts 'European Modernity' to contrasts with the 'new world' previously envisaged in the eschatological tradition of the Christian West in thrall to the 'still-to-come age of the world of the future, which was to dawn on the last day' (Habermas 1987). But also implied here is a contrast with the New World of the Americas that Habermas's obscures. It was new not merely because it was perceived as having been temporally superseded, but also its projected spatial, ecological, cultural and corporeal differences were construed as incommensurable (Pagden 1994). This historically resulting 'denial of co-evalness' (Fabian 2002) can be read as part of the incorporative colonial repertoire underwriting modernity's 'universal frames of reference', founded on 'distancing and separation'. Hence the conquered, repressed or estranged other is deemed to occupy the same space, but 'assigned to a different time' (Fabian 2002: 26). Because spatially and temporally modernity cannot be understood outside of a contrast with the 'pre-modern' and 'non-West', where 'historical predicate is translated into a geo-political one and vice-versa' (Sakai 1989: 87), these elisions presage a *disavowal of coloniality*. The chronotopes of Habermas's modernity discourse represent a delimited secular and Christian 'Europe' and an obscured colonized 'non-Europe' as its rhetorical ground. This 'rhetoric of modernity' (Mignolo 2005) readily

overlooks how discursively and materially, the ‘overseas discovery’ represents not simply the cultural difference of ‘European’ and ‘non-European’, *but its constitutive colonial difference, simultaneously and subsequently translated as race.*

Conceptually ‘non-Europe’

If we accept that only in ‘the course of the eighteenth century did the epochal threshold around 1500 become conceptualized’ as modernity’s ‘beginning’ (Habermas 1987), then it is worth asking how this beginning may also underwrite colonial conceptions of ‘non-Europe’ as its point of departure. For Habermas Hegel’s understanding of newness as a beginning involved a ‘historical-philosophical perspective’ in which the idea of a world history becomes thinkable due to the ‘present as a transition that is consumed in the consciousness of a speeding up and in the expectations of the differentness of the future’ (Habermas 1987). He further argues that Hegel introduces to this perspective an explicit recognition of the time-consciousness dimension of modernity, a conceptualization of it philosophically and the theorization of modernity as a philosophical problem. Modernity inaugurated the recognition that there was a spiritual movement in history, oriented to new forms because it had broken with the past world of existence and was constantly revealing itself in ever-increasing newness (Habermas 1987). As Habermas highlights Hegel refers to this as the ‘edifice of the new world’ (Hegel quoted in Habermas (1987, p. 6). Now if we take this architectural and intellectual metaphor for ‘Europe’, as a beginning, as I have already argued it can only be expressed in contrast to the Christendom of ‘ante-Europe’ and the Americas of ‘non-Europe’, conveying both the foundational ramparts of Enlightenment and Coloniality. Although Habermas’s commentary does not recognize the split representation of this metaphor in signifying ‘Europe’/‘non-Europe’, it carries over into the distinctions between universalism and particularity that canonically characterize modernity against its others. Let us take the following as a representative example:

Within the horizon of the modern age, the *present* enjoys a *prominent* position as contemporary history. Even Hegel understands “*our age*” as the most recent period. He dates the beginning of the present from the break that the *Enlightenment* and the *French revolution* signified for the more thoughtful contemporaries of the 18th century and the start of the 19th century. Within this “glorious sunrise” we come, as the old Hegel still thought, “to the last stage in History, *our world, our time*”. A present that understands itself from the horizon of the modern age as the actuality of the most

recent period has to recapitulate the break brought about with the past as a *continuous renewal* (Habermas 1987: 6–7; emphasis retained).

Here we have one of Habermas's many undeclared imbrications of 'Europe'/'non-Europe'. There are, if we choose to thematize them, distinctive colonial repertoires present though obscured somewhat by celebrated universalist abstractions. During this epochal period what is seen as being continuously renewed in modernity is the assumed prominence of things 'European', a prominence that privileges the identification of 'Europeanness' as the location where 'newness enters the world' (Bhabha 1994). We need only mention the western roll call of 'science', 'rationality', 'freedom', 'the nation-state' and 'industrialization' as self-evident symbols of modernity to recognize the familiar refrain of a certain organicist 'Europeanness'. The evocation of Hegel's thought via Habermas not only folds 'Europeanness' into the theme of uniqueness that inhabits many discussions of modernity; it elaborates 'Europeanness' in the espousal of universalist claims as if they were unquestionably universal. The references above to *prominence*, *position*, *horizon*, *break*, however, cannot conceal the split representation, since they specify 'European' spatial and temporal particularisms that *contaminate* the insistent universalism of the collective pronoun 'our' (e.g. *our* age, *our* world, *our* time). Is there not something of a colonial haunting here (cf. Derrida 1994; Young 2006; Stoler 2006), re-inscribing the displaced invocation of a repressed, regulated 'non-Europe' in the delineation of modernity? Of course, though Habermas appears not to see the colonial haunting of 'Europe' through its repressed designation of 'non-Europe' the same cannot be said for the subject of his commentary, Hegel's discourse on modernity.

Universalism, imperium

As we have seen for Habermas, the philosophical problem of understanding the nature of modernity identified by Hegel revolved around its acclaimed newness. If it was radically discontinuous with previous historical periods, then the criteria for conceptualizing it could not be drawn from models associated with earlier ages. It had to 'create its normativity out of itself' (Habermas 1987). This meant modernity needed to detach itself from accountability to 'norms lying outside of itself' (Habermas 1987) and be based on the logic evidenced in the processes and developments it had instituted. Hegel saw this as the key task for philosophy generally and his own specifically. By questioning the universalism and centrality of a 'European' presence that features unproblematically in Habermas's commentary, it becomes possible to show how the meaning of 'non-Europe' is both coterminous and

incongruous with the idea of a *racial normativity* created out of 'European modernity'.

According to Habermas Hegel's major conceptual contribution to understanding modernity as a discourse is the idea that it is 'marked universally by a structure of self-relation' which Hegel describes as 'subjectivity'. Hegel also sees this subjectivity as constituted by 'freedom' and 'reflection'. Habermas suggests there are at least four connotations associated with this philosophical conception of subjectivity. Firstly, *individualism*, which conveys the idea that there is an intrinsic value in the increasing particularization of singularity and there should be no limits to the value placed on individualism. Secondly, *the right to criticism* enshrines the principle that 'what anyone is to recognize shall reveal itself to him (sic) as something entitled to recognition'. Thirdly, *autonomy of action* indicates the assumption of responsibility for actions. Fourthly, *idealistic philosophy* suggests that in modernity the task of philosophy is to 'grasp the self-consciousness (or the self-knowing idea)'. So how might we contextualize this historically for 'Europe' and 'non-Europe'?

With regard to 'Europe' the 'key historical events establishing the principle of subjectivity are the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution' (Habermas 1987: 17). Of course, Habermas overlooks the extent to which Hegel's own European subjectivity was informed by a valorization of European imperium.⁵ Writing in his *Philosophy of Right* (1821), Hegel extolled the virtues and necessity of the colonialist project for the economic development of Europe (Serequeberhan 1994). Habermas also ignores the colonial allusions of Hegel's abstract discussion of slavery, ('the master/slave dialectic') in *the Phenomenology* (1807). Although conventional wisdom suggests Hegel was not reflecting on Atlantic slavery, there is compelling evidence of Hegel's preoccupation with, though disdain for the implications of the anti-slavery Haitian Revolution, 1791–1802, (Fischer 2004). Within this 'non-European' context it might be argued that key historical European colonial developments are also important in establishing Hegel's 'principle of subjectivity' and further that Habermas's description of the four Hegelian dimensions concerning the self-grounding of modernity and the positing of *subjectivity* can be read as identifying the 'European' subject with the ground of this *imperium*. Reading imperium in this way, written as a central motif in Hegel's account of modernity's world history, it can hardly be perceived as an innocent figure in his discourse on modernity.

Hegel's coloniality

Habermas's commentary suggests an understanding of modernity needs to place the philosophical in relation to a conception of the

historical. But whose conception of the historical should we choose in this instance, Habermas's or Hegel's? Is it the history of European liberalism and rationality or the history of European Imperium and raciality, or both? Answering these kinds of questions necessitates conceptual decisions about the exposition of modernity as a colonial discourse and a 'modern/colonial world system' (Mignolo 1997, 2000). Within that framework European coloniality can be read as symptomatic of modern hegemonic formations, processes, knowledges and identities (e.g. capitalism, secularism, civilization, rationality), which congealed from the social transformation of particular cultural differences into 'non-Europeanness' (e.g. 'histories', 'religions', 'bodies', 'cultures', 'territories') (Hesse and Sayyid 2006). It is between these modern regulatory vectors of structural administration within the colonies and discursive authorizations from the metropolises that the category of race becomes instituted and naturalized around the boundaries between colour coded European sameness and non-European otherness. If we allow ourselves to be attentive to that relation it can be read ironically as the condition of possibility for Habermas's account of Hegel's Subject, particularly the connotative chain of signification Habermas attributes to him (see above). As I argue below, each connotation of Hegel's Subject identified by Habermas, once embedded in the history and culture of European coloniality, *signifies racially*, revealing a colonial haunting of 'Europe' by 'non-Europe'. Cast against the spatial imperium of the Western enterprise, *individualism* signifies both the 'European' demarcation of itself as a continent and its expansionism; *the right to criticism* conveys the justification of the anthropological 'European' gaze; *the autonomy of action* expresses the westphalian colonial mandate of 'European' nation-states; and *idealist philosophy* inscribes the global legislative role of 'European' culture.

In shifting from reading Hegel through Habermas towards reading Habermas through Hegel, we can begin to see the entanglement and intertwinement of liberal-colonial idioms. Each of which are expressible in the apparently universal terms Hegel uses to formulate the phases and objectives of the Subject in 'world history'. For Hegel 'those nations on which the world spirit has conferred its true principle' occupy the phase where the principle of 'subjectivity develops into an *empire* of the real spirit' (Hegel 1975; my emphasis). This he also elaborates as the '*empire* of self-knowing subjectivity (which marks the rise of the real spirit)' (Hegel 1975; my emphasis). As there are many similar metaphorical allusions to imperium throughout his treatise on world history, how should we assess any failures in Habermas's commentary to connect these allusions to the actual history and geography of 'European' empires and the colonization of the Americas? That imperium understood in this way is central to the meaning of the

Subject should become more apparent if we recognize the universal subject as principally a 'European' Subject. It is because of such an imbrication that Hegel's conception of *world history* is contextually racial as well as intrinsically rational in its trajectory:

the Spirit must create for itself a nature and world to conform with its own nature, so that the subject may discover its own concept of the spirit in this second nature, in this reality which the concept of the spirit has produced; and in the objective reality, it becomes conscious of its subjective freedom and rationality. Such is the progress of the Idea in general; and this must be our ultimate point of view in history. The more detailed process where the Idea is realized is history proper (Hegel 1975:)

We would do well to re-read this extract more discerningly. It seems to be haunted by the *Spirit* of (Colonial) 'Europe'/'America' and the *Idea* in general of the (Imperial) West, both bearing uncanny anticipations of, if not resemblances to, discourses invoking the *civilizing mission*, *white man's burden*, *manifest destiny* and the *triumph of the West*. Now of course what is remarkable about these later imperial variations on a 'European'/'American' theme are the concerted ways in which they proselytized the practice of 'race' as a series of corporeally governed distinctions between 'Europeanness' and 'non-Europeanness'. Usually less noticed is how 'race' even in these late nineteenth century distinctions was deployed in excess of the corporeal, having multiple references of association (e.g. territory, climate, history, culture, history, religion), suggesting that the body was less the ubiquitous metaphor of 'race' than its privileged metonym. Certainly, by the earlier time of Kant's late eighteenth century reflections on the Enlightenment, a variety of treatises in German, French and Dutch physical anthropology had established the core categories of racial ascription across this divergent range of criteria (Zammito 2002). Even though the number and nomenclature of the racial categories were descriptively inconsistent, it has become conventional to accept as part of our conceptual heritage (whether contested on scientific/ moral grounds or not) the self-contained corporeal categories of 'race', broadly colour coded as white, black, yellow and/or brown. Repressed in this heritage, however, though remaining part of the conceptual inheritance are the historically constitutive moments of *undecidability* in modernity's discourse of 'race'.

Race's undecidability⁶

Despite the colloquially self-evident, perceptual and descriptive quality of race, its modern conceptual history is fissured by an

epistemology of European coloniality, which confronted by the unfixed, protean, changeable nature of race, forgets race is its own invention, establishes discursive and political rules to determine its meaning, while continuing to search for the intrinsic logic of its identification. It is this which underwrites the following four constitutive moments of racial undecidability in the modern meaning of race. Firstly, whatever the conceptual differences between a Blumenbach, a de Buffon or a Kant their formulations of 'race' categories, identified 'white'/'Europeans' as the supreme singular 'race' in the tabulated hierarchy, the rest of which could be ranked within a 'non-white'/'non-European' subordinate plural section (see Eze 1997). What establishes this distinction as the epistemological condition of possibility for the categorical idea if not imperative of 'race', is the Enlightenment's *white/European/male* 'visual regime' (Crooks 2000); and it is this designating factor which escapes the philosophical scrutiny of modernity discourses and yet constitutes the hierarchy that tabulates the racial categories. Secondly, whatever the variation accorded to the depictions of the different 'races', the colour coded bodies were variously, indexed to representative dispositions, climates, cultures, histories, social mores, and so on. Not only did 'race' signify in these terms a 'Europeanness' and 'non-'Europeanness' that was in excess of the body, it was also the index pointing to all the ways the cardinal racial distinction was embodied *as differential essence* and given institutional and representative form. Ranked through a colonially attributed series of embodiments 'race' was marked as equivalence through labour, distinction, history, destiny, location, corporeality, religion, art, disposition, *ad infinitum*. Thirdly, because Enlightenment anthropologists and philosophers did not generally question the colonial enterprise of 'Europe'/'America', accepting as a natural order, white governance, 'race' was understood proprietarily, as a form of *possessive communitarianism*, rather than relationally, as a European articulation of colonial differentiation. The imbrication of 'race' and the colonial was obscured in the confluences of 'race' with the anthropological and the scientific. Fourthly, by the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries white political and intellectual elites across Europe and North America were increasingly developing a hegemonic colonial understanding of the 'European'/'non-European' difference. Almost exclusively defined in biological and ecological terms, they posited and rationalized a natural antagonism, with the so-called lower 'non-European' races. The latter being conceived as bound for extinction through increasing conflict with the higher European races, and therefore legitimate objects of extirpation (Bratlinger 2003; Mann 2005). Overall race could mean many things in modernity's symbolization of 'Europeanness' and 'non-European-ness'. Conceptually it continually required formulation, legislation,

administration, depending on the colonial impetus and trajectory of the 'Europeanist' white visual regime. Remarkably, something like this racial undecidability appears to be inherited, developed and elaborated in Hegel's discourse of modernity. Can Hegel be read therefore as defining an understanding of 'race' as colonial trajectory, configuration and visual regime expressible as the concept of *racialization*?

Hegel's racialization

So what might be the conceptual tropes of race in Hegel's historicist discourse of modernity? Here for ease of exposition I want to turn to another contemporary Hegel commentator, who though also unconcerned with questions of 'race' can assist in our understanding of how the modernity of Hegel's universalism is embodied as racialization and is achieved conceptually through an imperial 'politics of inclusiveness' (Connolly 1988). According to William Connolly, Hegel's philosophy of world history provides for a 'politics rooted in an ontology that identifies Being with a God realizing its essence gradually through the historical process' (Connolly, op. cit). In so far as this requires a 'process of worldly completion', it makes room conceptually for a notion of 'humanity which expresses these principles more completely as it perfects its own consciousness' (Connolly, op. cit). Now because Hegel identifies the highest principle of the spirit's recognition of itself in an increasing consciousness of freedom with the 'Christian, Western European world' (i.e. its embodiment) (Hegel 1975: 129), his discourse of modernity needs to incorporate references to and distinctions from the rest of the world, at least conceptually. We can develop this reading of Hegel through Connolly (despite his own elisions of race) by identifying three specific logics of embodying the 'European'/'non-European' which can be conceptualized as racialization.

We need to return to Hegel's universalist pretensions which necessarily generates a 'politics of inclusivity' and 'engenders the assimilation of otherness' (Connolly, op. cit). Because Hegel's concerns lie with eliminating or domesticating forms of 'otherness' (which lie outside modernity's stipulations of reason and criteria of humanity), he emphasizes the 'highest and most inclusive form of humanity' which can then be 'assimilated to higher forms of knowledge, reason and normality' (Connolly, op. cit). In reading Hegel through Connolly in this way, we can accentuate for thought the relation between rationality and imperium which ascribes authority and domination to the idea of 'Europe', with a corresponding invention of a 'non-Europe' imbued with inferiority. Although it connotes the classic racial symbolism of Western imperialism, in detailing forms of distinction beyond corporeality it signifies a series of different embodiments, taking the form of *cultural racialization*. In other words Hegel's

projection and marking of 'Europeanness' as civilized/superior/progressive and 'non-Europeanness' as its antithesis, comprises representations of embodied assemblages (i.e. 'races'), consisting of various elements, objects, designs, practices, bodies, discourses and so on. Cultural racialization therefore describes the ways in which colonial meanings and significations of 'European'/'non-European' social existence (e.g. embodied in languages, territories, histories, religions, and corporealities) are marked and assigned to these different assemblages.

What can be characterized as *epistemological racialization* arises where 'the politics of inclusivity and the ontology of comprehensive intelligibility are bound together' (Connolly 1988). Connolly suggests, for Hegel this means not only the possibility but also the actuality of complete knowledge being acquired through reason that can apprehend the Spirit's revelation of itself in the world historical process. Hegel locates this capacity exclusively with 'Europe', where 'Europeanness' is the basis of ethnography and 'non-Europeanness' is *ipso facto* the condition for being *ethnographed* (Cesaire 1955). Consequently, the colonial underpins but is excluded from accounts of the historical, generating a form of *epistemological racialization*. By this, I mean the codified organization of knowledges (e.g. deliberations, expertise, histories, representations, and explanations) based on the adjudication and valorization of Europeanness and the debasement and appropriation of non-Europeanness, but without explanatory reference to the impact of coloniality. Overall the logics of cultural and epistemological racialization particularly define Hegel's account of world history, most notably the developmental stages of the Spirit's geographical manifestation as subjectivity in modernity, famously encapsulated in the observation that 'world history travels from east to west, for 'Europe' is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning' (Hegel 1975: 128). What is also striking about this world historical schema is that although both the Native Americans and Africans lie outside its remit of evolutionary rationality, they are required to succumb to its regulatory force.

Consequently, it is in relation to the radically incommensurable corporeal 'non-European' subject that a *governmental racialization* emerges. It is characterized by the social routinization and institutionalization of regulatory, administrative power (e.g. laws, rules, policies, discipline, precepts) exercised by Europeanized ('white') assemblages over non-Europeanized ('non-white') assemblages as if this was a normal, inviolable or natural social arrangement of races. It is governmental because it is concerned with regulatory and administrative rationales: assessing, determining, and controlling criteria of admission to 'European' conceptions of humanity, while shoring up colonially perceived deficiencies in 'non-European' others symbolized

by their so-called but impositionally attributed racial difference. Hegel develops this idea where he deems Native Americans and Africans to be located outside world history, because they are represented as culturally and morally refractory to the development of the Spirit as subjectivity. However, they are retained within Hegel's politics of inclusivity in a subservient capacity commensurate with the cultural deficiencies he attributes to them. Hegel considers Native Americans to be 'culturally inferior nations' that have been 'gradually eroded through contact with more advanced nations which have gone through a more intensive cultural development'. While as far as Africa is concerned, for Hegel it 'has no historical interest of its own, for we find its inhabitants living in barbarism and savagery in a land that has not furnished them with any integral ingredient of culture' (Hegel 1975: 174). Given that Hegel does not make room for these quintessentially modern 'non-European' others within world history, it is significant that he provides space for them within the horizon of political rule, cultural authority and generally European custodianship. This governmental dimension of racialization is the predicate of what can be understood as the modernity/coloniality of racism (Gilroy 1993; Mills 1997; Goldberg 2002; Winant 2001). It is the condition of possibility for the 'modern/colonial world system' (Mignolo 2000), including international relations, race-relations and social formations generally where the articulation of 'race' is structured in dominance (Hall 1996). Racism on this reading is the institutional practice, representation and theory of governmental racialization.

Habermas's erasures

Given what I have argued about the concept of modernity's racializations, what significance can we now attribute to its erasure in Habermas's commentary on Hegel? Because 'Europe's' emergence as a meaningful entity is both constitutively racialized and implicated in the idea of modernity as an epoch, yet remains unrecognized for Habermas, the European colonial relation can only be located in its haunting, as a *blind spot* of the 'overseas discovery' (Habermas 1987) which ineluctably is the locus of *visual invention*. As John McCumber usefully suggests a 'blind spot is something we cannot see; and yet it is something which affects what we do see, the shape and scope of our visual field. Hence, it is something to which we should not willfully blind ourselves' (McCumber 1993: 239). Within the Habermasian commentary the idea of 'discovery' mutates into a 'blind spot', that recurs unassumingly, in two ways writing over and underwriting nearly four centuries of modernity. Firstly, unseen by Habermas the history of European colonial 'discovery' (invention) of the Americas radically compressed the diversity of indigenous American cultures into the

reductive, violently repressed categories of 'savages' and 'Indians' (Todorov 1984; Rabasa 1993). Secondly, once sustained this 'blind spot' also conceals the plantation enslavement of ethnically different Africans violated under the imposed nomenclature of 'blacks' and 'Negroes', and mutates into the routinized 'discovery' (invention) of a 'superior' 'European' imaginary over and above colonially subordinated 'non-Christian'/'non-European' othernesses (Robinson 1983). In this unconceptualized history 'Columbus's arrival in America in 1492 and Vasco da Gama's "discovery" of the seaway to India in 1498 were epoch-making events, inaugurating a period of Western "discovery" and colonial acquisition' (Yasuaki 1993; my emphasis). Through the 'discoveries' accruing from expansive Imperium (e.g. in the Americas, Asia, the Pacific and Africa), the universality/racality of modernity was invented structurally and discursively, and procured monotheistically from 'European' Christianity, 'European' History, 'European' Culture, 'European' Government, 'European' Capitalism and most symbolically, 'European' Whiteness. It is perhaps these constitutive colonial elements of distinctive impurity, inscribed as haunting, disinherited 'origins' in the trajectory of 'European modernity' that Enlightenment derived discourses (e.g. from Hegel to Habermas) lose sight of 'in order to fix a speculative gaze on origin as pure regnant, as rule and dominion by Reason' (Schurmann 1987).

Conclusion

Because concepts and categories are inherited in traditions of thought, what becomes particularly consecrated as the heritage of thought, *the recognized or legitimated lineage of thinking*, exerts a powerful conventional presence on conceptual formations. I have been concerned to question how we have commonly understood the western conceptual heritage of 'race' and 'modernity' that has been passed down or even canonized as the traditional empirical basis for both its contemporary endorsement and repudiation. Is it possible, just as the rationalistic centredness of the modernity discourse on 'Europe' displaced its implication in coloniality, that the anthropological conflation of 'race' with physiognomy (despite the importance of that contestation) has obscured a deeper problem of its *onto-colonial formulation*? This would suggest that the historical effect of colonial taxonomies (e.g. the classifications of peoples, territories, cultures) was to bring into being a distinctively modern colonial, social reality, an *onto-coloniality*. While 'ontology' generally refers to the status and nature of those entities whose being is always already there, by contrast 'historical ontology' is concerned with 'objects or their effects which do not exist in any recognizable form until they are the objects of scientific study' (Hacking 2002). What I am calling the 'onto-colonial'

describes the modernity of social realities historically brought into racialized being by colonial regimes of demarcations, designations and deployments, that is to say as the effects of onto-colonial taxonomies. We should note that colonial regimes were also 'taxonomic states' in which race was constituted through the 'cultural competences' that went into the administration, defining and interpreting of 'racial membership' with regard to citizenship, morality, juridical institutions, domestic arrangements and relations of intimacy (Stoler 2002). Hence, race, indexed, enabled and prohibited thereby inventing and enacting the onto-colonial being of 'European' and 'non-European' distinctions/demarcations across varied colonial and metropolitan settings.

If we accept this as a conceptual problem of contested inheritance (i.e. questioning the conventional conceptual heritage) it would mean ceasing to cast 'race' primarily in 'European' (and by extension 'American') Enlightenment terms of corporeal *self and other* categorizations. It would question the conceptual heritage that flows from how 'Europe' through 'the West' (conceived as the centre of modernity) came to see its self as *thinking* in terms of an exclusive series of anthropological and biological classifications of 'non-European' others even though these can be readily demonstrated as socially constructed rather than naturally given demarcations. Instead we would need to consider how in the hegemonic modernity discourse the manifold presence of 'Europeanness' is rendered on the basis of its onto-colonial elaboration of a 'non-Europe' that appears only incidentally and ephemerally colonized. *Thinking raciality otherwise*, that process and relation would be understood through its institution as racialization embodied in a series of *onto-colonial taxonomies* of land, climate, history, bodies, customs, language, all of which became sedimented metonymically, metaphorically, and normatively as *the assembled attributions of 'race'*.⁷

Here we have yet another analytical domain in which the western hegemonic modernity discourse in forgetting its own entangled and contested onto-colonial 'origins' can no longer be relied upon to furnish its privileged, provincial categories for the genealogy of 'race'. The idea of *racialized modernity* allows us to interpret modernity as a historical and discursive 'European'/'non-European' colonial process. It considers the ways in which an established yet indeterminate geographical Christian entity coalesced as 'Europe', becoming culturally, economically and politically marked *white* in relation to its designations and marking of a 'non-Europe'. From the sixteenth century onwards peoples (nations/tribes), identities (Christians/pagans), ecologies (landscapes/wildernesses), cultures (civilized/savage), histories (progressive/arrested), corporealities (superior/inferior) were embodied through Euro-Onto-Colonial structures and discourses as either 'white/European' or 'non-white/

non-European'. Perhaps such an analytics would also enable us to expound in political and postcolonial terms the *racial metaphysics of presence* tantalizingly alluded to though never fully elaborated by Derrida (1982) where he writes:

White mythology – metaphysics has erased within itself the fabulous scene that has produced it, the scene that nevertheless remains active and stirring, inscribed in white ink, an invisible design covered over in the palimpsest.⁸

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Notes

1. Derrida 1982, p. 213.
2. An analytics describes an approach to study, research, reading or writing. It is a mode of analysis, inspecting and questioning phenomena, (e.g. white mythologies) that is concerned with the examination of the specific conditions (e.g. European coloniality) under which particular phenomena (e.g. race/modernity) emerge, persist, change and are contested. In short an analytics is a way of analysing the how (the arising and deployment) and why (the rationale and logic) of particular phenomena (e.g. racialized modernity). cf. Dean 1999, pp. 20–27.
3. It should be noted that Habermas's commentary on Hegel draws upon a range of Hegel's writings, particularly though not exclusively, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, *The Philosophy of Right*, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. This is contained in the first two chapters of Habermas 1987. My own reading of Hegel is based on his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*.
4. A 'chronotope' describes terms or ideas that combine references to particular times and spaces in a discourse. In referring to 'time-space', it signifies the 'intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships', see Bakhtin 1991: 84.
5. We should note the root sense of 'imperium' is 'order' or 'command'. In its semantic history from Antiquity to the late 18th century and beyond, this Latin term acquired three distinct senses as: 'limited and independent or "perfect" rule, as a territory embracing more than one political community, and as the absolute sovereignty of a single individual'; see Pagden 1995, p.17.
6. It is within the context of the European logos as a foundation of the modernity discourse, driven by coloniality that 'undecidability' arises as the irrepressibility of unfixedness, uncertainty, incoherence, discrepancy in the meanings instituted in the 'European' /'non-European' demarcations that supply the categories of race. Contrary to the appearances given by the closed, reiterable, foundational logic of the tabulated racial categories, 'undecidability' is found in those spaces and instances where an innovative or legislative decision has been or needs to be taken to define what the 'European'/'non-European' distinctions can or should mean.
7. There continues to be much contemporary discussion of 'race' as a social construction, but beyond tautology (i.e. 'race is a social construction of race') and without essentialism (i.e. 'race refers to visible, physical, bodily attributes') it is not clear what gets socially

constructed as 'race'; or what gets biologized or ethnicized as 'race'. If as I have argued, 'race' invokes the historically instituted colonial relation 'European'/non-European', then *racialization* describes its sustained configuration in discrete markings of various assemblages of social entities (e.g. polities, corporealities, histories, knowledges, communities). Consequently, categories of 'race' whether historically based on the *one drop rule* in the United States (see Lopez 1996), or the Latin American systems of racial gradation along a continuum (see Appelbaum, Macpherson and Roseblatt 2003), all occur within the parameters set by the colonial polarization of people, places and things ascribed as 'European' and 'non-European' assemblages.

8. This second quotation from Derrida's discussion of the organizing and erasing power of metaphor in philosophy follows six lines after the quotation that begins this article. My article can therefore be read as written in a conceptual parenthesis between these two quotations. See Derrida 1982, p. 213.

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