Anglophone Discourses on Race in the 19th Century: British and African Perspectives

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In 1650, when both the Atlantic and Transatlantic Slave Trade were well underway for two hundred years, there already was an established tradition which tied together the status of a slave and black skin colour (Davidson 1994: 43, 57ff.). The dehumanisation experienced by slaves under colonial slavery was extraordinary as they were perceived and treated like chattel. They were considered inferior and ignoble beings. Their only value was in their manpower – in their role as, according to the biblical verse, "hewers of wood and drawers of water." (Josuah 9:23) Without any reference to its biblical origin or to the curse on Noah's grandson Canaan, son of Ham, described at some length in Genesis 9:18-27, the quoted phrase reappeared time and again in the colonial and travel literature of the 19th century as a means to legitimate the exploitation of Africans. Its continuous use contributed greatly to habituate the European public to ignore the Africans` humanity – indeed, reifying them by capitalising on them (Hallett 1976, Boahen 1987). The concept of "race" developed in the second half of the 17th century. With it, the pretence of having found a secular – non-religious – explanation for human differences in time and space was established (Hund 2006).

Together reification and racism were at work in producing a stereotyped image of Euro-African relations that, at the same time, allowed for both degrading the African ('heathen' and 'black') and upgrading the European ('Christian' and 'white'). Modern slavery was largely intensified after 1650 when the so-called "plantation complex" got systematized (Curtin 1998) and the demand for African slaves in the Americas and the Caribbean increased respectively. Henceforth both the exploitative rationality and inhuman cruelty of colonial slavery became harder to ignore (Cooper 2001: 27ff.) Since the 18th century, enlightened philosophers frequently discussed the issue of slavery and the slave trade. Toward the end of that century a transnational pressure movement intent to end the slave trade came into

existence (Sonderegger 2008b). This kind of anti-slavery resistance was previously unknown in human history and its offshoots are still active today (Miers 2003).

In the late 18th century concerted efforts of men and women of European, African and diasporic origin, arguing and protesting against slavery, grew in influence and eventually became politically effective. The transatlantic slave trade came to be considered illegitimate – ironically, at a time when it reached its quantitative peak. It was declared illegal by the British parliament in 1807 and other European countries had to follow the example of the then leading world power. Alongside the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, the emancipation of the slaves in imperial spheres and in the newly founded United States of America was a second important agenda of the anti-slavery movement. However, the fight against colonial slavery took many more years. It was not attained in the British colonies before the late 1830s. With regard to the French territories the year 1848 marks the emancipation. In the United States of America the overall emancipation of Blacks was only achieved in course of a bloody civil war (1861-65), while in Cuba and Brazil slavery continued until the late 1880s (Miller 2001, Sonderegger 2008b).

After the British and French emancipation acts of the 1830s and 40s, the concern and strategies of abolitionists – who since 1839 were organised in the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and similar institutions, for instance, the Aborigines Protection Society – were emphatically directed towards African affairs. Thomas Fowell Buxton's *The African Slave Trade* (1839) set this train of thought in motion, and the Niger Expedition of 1841 carried out "with the sanction of Her Majesty's Government" (Schön/Crowther 1842: title page) was a clear signal of the influence abolitionists now had on British imperial policy. More than ever before, conditions in Africa attracted the attention of abolitionists and policy makers. Their views on African realities, however, were extremely blurred and biased. This, of course, was due to Eurocentric attitudes on their side taking for granted the superiority of Christian religion and civilisation as well as their right and duty to intervene in the name of human progress and improvement (Barth/Osterhammel 2005, Wallerstein 2006, Sonderegger 2008a: 257-434, 2008b: 100-102). Substantial bases for interventionism came into existence in the wake of the naval blockade on the West African coast installed in 1808 in order to control slave ships and free those on board.

Sierra Leone, made a crown colony the same year, henceforth was settled by a continuous stream of so-called "recaptives" as well as by some "repatriates" from overseas. In combination with the settlement of Liberia, founded by the American Colonization Society around the year 1820, Sierra Leone was the main bridgehead for the influx of European ideas during the first half of the 19th century (Fyfe 1993). Alongside, there were still the old fortified posts on the Gambia and the Gold Coast which functioned as bases of European operations. In the 1840s there was even a missionary station and a settlement of remigrants from Sierra Leone in the city of Abeokuta, in the Nigerian hinterland, and Lagos was becoming more important after its permanent annexation in 1861 (Curtin 1964, July 1968, Geiss 1969).

Both anti-slavery and missionary efforts which since the late 18th century had shaped British policy and public opinion to a high degree came under severe attack in the second half of the 19th century. This attack was launched in the language of "race". Although to some it seemed already clear that abolitionist strategies for Africa to end slavery by means of 'legitimate trade' were a failure and that missionary work in Africa – given the high mortality rates – was a too risky task, missionary endeavours continued and "industrial missions run by skilled agents of African descent" (Fyfe 1993: 335) in order to develop natural resources and legitimate trade were still considered a promising strategy by those organised in the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, the Aborigines Protection Society and the newly founded African Aid Society (1860). Here, the actual debate on 'race' which had been discussed in terms of monogenesis versus polygenesis since the 18th century, set in. Now the Janus face of both a vigorously renewed racial science and the Darwinian challenge took on a new and quite contemporary meaning. The 1860s were a period "[...] of immense ferment, in which politicians, churchmen, scientists and novelists did battle over the meaning of new conceptions of race, natural selection and evolution. These battles were far from merely intellectual exercises: they were also struggles for authority." (Driver 2001: 96)

The resulting authority was going to be colonial in character and its main justification was racism. The following section looks at the continuities which link the changes in perspectives of the 1860s to the image of Africans as it was developed from the late 18th century onwards. Two sections are dedicated to the scientifically inspired developments of racial thought in the 1860s. The first deals with the Anthropological Society of London, in

particular with its president James Hunt and its vice-president Richard Burton. The second discusses the new evolutionary concept, Darwinism, as it was put forward by Thomas Henry Huxley. The final section takes a look at the different understandings of "race" advocated by three contemporary African writers: Africanus Horton, Alexander Crummell and Edward Wilmot Blyden.

Changes in Perspectives and Continuities in the Image of Africans

David Livingstone, usually described as the most unselfish of European travellers in Africa, was, at the same time, probably the one who was the most driven by humanitarian zeal. As his American publisher put it in 1860, "Dr. Livingstone is a very pleasing writer, a man of true Christian benevolence, a man of extensive scientific information, and an indefatigable laborer in the cause of discovery and civilization." (Anonymous 1860: v) On his travels through the continent, he always had been in search of a pristine, idyllic, paradisiac Africa. Nevertheless, he was convinced of the superiority of European civilization, in particular, the superiority of Christianity:

> "We come among them", Livingstone told his colleagues, "as members of a superior race and servants of a Government that desires to elevate the more degraded portions of the human family." (Livingstone, quoted in Driver 2001: 86)

To the English – and the international – press Livingstone`s writings as well as his personal public presence served as a striking example to argue for the need of Christianizing and civilizing the "dark" continent – which was portrayed darker and darker "[…] as Victorian explorers, missionaries and scientists flooded it with light." (Brantlinger, quoted in Driver 2001: 83) The topos of the civilising mission now became the ideology of popular masses. Soon to follow were the calls for colonization (Cooper 2001: 33f.), seemingly suitable means for putting Christianity and civilization into practice.

Although Livingstone himself was not yet an imperialist, many of his admirers were – and the succeeding generation of travellers, amongst them the notorious Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904), made the colonization project the centre of the discourse of the civilizing mission (Driver 2001: 82f., 117ff.). In Livingstone`s world view – which is taken to be typical of the spirit of the age, the *Zeitgeist* of the second half of the 19th century – the

image of the poor, naïve, and childish African negro was clearly set against a new enemy. This enemy was the sinister Muslim Arab who allegedly held poor Black victims in bondage. Abolitionist and racist discourse joined comfortably. During an interrogation in the House of Commons in 1865, for instance, David Livingstone was asked,

> "Do you agree with Captain [Richard] Burton with regard to the superior vigour of the Mahomedan tribes as compared with the Pagan tribes?" And he answered, "-No, certainly not. I find that both in vigour and morality the native African is very much superior. I do not refer to the coast tribes. We find a number of tribes near the coast who have been contaminated by the slave trade, and are very much inferior in every respect to the pure African." (Livingstone, quoted in Minutes of Evidence 1865: 229)

Here Livingstone made a distinction between "pure", "moral" and "vital" Africans in the interior and "contaminated", "immoral", "inferior" Africans on the coast. In this regard, Livingstone repeated a long held conviction of abolitionism – namely, the destroying effects of the transatlantic slave trade on the coastal people of West Africa (Curtin 1964, Sonderegger 2008: 247ff.). Since long, this well-minded conviction invited a passive view regarding the Africans` capacities for making a living on their own. In Benjamin-Sigismond Frossard`s words, published in 1789, it was the external influence of the slave trade that brought all kinds of vices to Africa, "intemperance, miserliness, cruelness, treachery, despotism", and it was "we" – the Europeans – who "armed the [African] ruler against his subjects, who armed neighbour against neighbour, friend against friend" (Frossard 1789: I, 227). Africans appeared in this picture only as victims, incapable of improving their situation by their own strength and will, always being at the mercy of European action. This European action had been ill-natured for long, but now – so the abolitionist argument ran – the time had come to act in a benevolent way.

However, Livingstone`s interpretation went further than this classic argument because he drew a picture of a pristinely perfect and pure Africa which still could be discovered in reality. However, the stereotyping process did not end with this confrontation of a "pure" versus a "contaminated" type of Africans. In the same quote, Livingstone proclaimed the superiority of such a "pure African" over Muslims who are, equally stereotypical, declared to be less "vigorous" and less "moral". Some

fifty years before, abolitionists had held that European slave holders and slave traders were responsible for the degraded nature of Africans. After passing abolition laws, the slave trade went on. Therefore, new actors had to be found who could be made responsible for this immoral trade in human beings. "Africans" were no fitting category of agency – probably because their representation as passive and poor victims of slavery had already become familiar and conventional.

One way of dealing with this situation was to look at the traditionally well-established enemy of Christian Europe which was present in parts of Africa as well: the Muslim religion and its followers. Muslim slave traders were now installed as the active elements which were held responsible for the ongoing trade in slaves and the continued existence of the slave trade long after European nations had declared both of them illegal. The issue of the oriental slave trade increased in popularity during the second half of the 19th century (Cooper 2001: 33f.). The accusation of "Arabs" satisfied both the adversaries of Islam and those who believed with Livingstone in a pristine Africa inhabited by "noble savages".

On the other hand, there were European sympathizers with Islamic religion and civilization like Richard Francis Burton (Kennedy 2005). He as well as other orientalists was an advocate of the civilizing impact of Islam in Africa. This led them to hold a quite critical view on the Christian abolitionist agenda which they ridiculed as philantropic naivety and superstitious ignorance of what they thought of as patent fact: an absolute racial divide separating Europeans from Africans.

> It is not a little instructive to see the effect of Africa upon the exceptional philanthropist – as a rule, he so loves all men, himself included, that he avoids the land as a pestilence. When visiting the "Dark Continent," he finds those living amongst negroes all convinced of the African`s absolute inferiority; he resists the evil influence as long as his nature permits, and he lapses usually into the extreme contrary to that with which he commenced. He begins by treating his blacks as men and brethren, he ends, perhaps, with cruelty to them; whilst he has secured their contempt by degrading himself to their level in attempting to raise them to his own. (Burton 1893/1864: Vol.2, 123)

Similar to the slave traders of the 1790ies who had argued for the civilizing nature of the transatlantic slave trade, men like Burton gave a miserable picture of Africans. Africans, they declared, were slaves by nature and their natural state is one of total slavery: "The negro is, for the most part, a born

servile – not a servant. […] The so-called civilization of the negro is from without; he cannot find it within" (Burton 1893/1864: Vol.2, 132f.).

In this perspective, both transferring Africans from Africa to the plantations of the New World and selling them into oriental Muslim lands were legitimate enterprises – serving, in the end, the improvement of the bad African character by way of the civilizing contact with a progressed type of humankind. In the same vein, Burton argued for the exploitation of African manpower by "born rulers" of European ancestry propagating the colonial take-over which some decades later became real (Burton/Cameron 1883). In this representation of Africa, distorted and insulting as it is, Africans at least received a certain character of agency. At least, they were to blame for the state in which Europeans found them.

Burton`s racist view of African inferiority and of the alleged slavish nature of Black men paralleled the slave trader`s view explicitly stated in 1789 by Robert Norris.

> In those [parts of Negroland] which have been visited by Europeans, the government is found to vary from the most absolute tyranny in some, to somewhat less despotic and oppressive in others. The bulk of the people are slaves to a few freemen; and in some states there is not an individual free but the prince. […] The general state of the Negro, in Africa, is that of slavery and oppression, in every sense of the word. (Norris 1789: 157)

In defence to the abolitionist attacks on the trade in humans, Norris had even claimed that the plantation slavery of the Americas and the Caribbean operated as a godly means for improving the African lot, because the middle passage would save

> […] many innocent lives […] that would otherwise be sacrificed to the superstitious rites and ceremonies of the country; many prisoners of war exempted from torture, and death: and the punishment of many crimes commuted from death in Africa to life in America; and [… as they are] slaves in their own country, [they] only […] exchange a black master for a white one. (Norris 1789: 172f.)

Norris` notion that "[t]he general state of the Negro, in Africa, is that of slavery and oppression" operated as a striking contrast to the self-image of Europe he proposed. To him Europe was

> any civilized part of the world, where liberty is prized above all other enjoyments. But the idea of slavery is different in an African. Had the Negro the love of rational

> freedom existing in his breast, it is next to impossible that he could act as thus. He knows nothing of this inestimable blessing, having never enjoyed it! The country which gave him birth, the soil from which he sprung, produce no such blossom; […] (Norris 1789: 159)

According to the slave trader, Africans not only lived in permanent slavery but even lacked any notion of liberty. In similar vein, 75 years later Burton held that there was what he called "the arrested physical development of the negro" which

> […] assigns a physical cause for the inferiority of the negro, whose psychical and mental powers become stationary at an age when, in nobler races, the perceptive and reflective principles begin to claim ascendancy. (Burton 1893/1864: Vol.2, 119)

In summary, two quite different views on Africa were virulent in course of the long 19th century. The first view, represented by the first generation of abolitionists in the 1780ies like Frossard as well as by the missionaries of the 1850ies and 60ies in the wake of Livingstone, holds a noble savage image of Africa. In course of time, according to that view, such pristine and natural African state became infected by the malicious actions of Europeans, namely the slave trade and colonial slavery. With this contamination, a degenerating process was initiated which resulted in the bad state of contemporary Africa. So the story telling ran. This view clearly considered Africans to be passive, only responsive to external influence and force. Africans were considered essentially good-natured people, but reactive and basically non-historical objects of historical change. They were simply seen as victims, and Europeans had to take care of them. Beside the undoubted benevolent intention of those who held such a view, it is flawed and not suited to understand the complex patterns of interaction between European as well as African actors in the context of the slave trade and slavery. It is a moralising discourse which, as its base, tries to legitimize a humanitarian intervention. It is not seriously interested in the study of real situations and circumstances in other parts of the world, but in universalizing one`s own solutions to problems which have – at least in the imagination of a self-indulgent European self-image – already been solved theoretically and which now should be put into practice. This point of view is Eurocentric and the portrayal of Africans, essentialising and naturalising as it is, might rightfully be labelled racist.

The second view, represented by pro-slavery apologists like the slave trader Robert Norris and, some seventy years later, by anti-abolitionist writers like Richard Burton, offered a quite different view on Africans. Here, Africans appeared as historical agents, as "architects of their own fortune". The fortune of Africa, however, as well as Africans in general was completely disdained. Africans were declared naturally inferior to the light-skinned Europeans who held Africans in bondage and, shortly after, set out to argue for the conquest of African territories. The concession that Africans were indeed actors on the historical scene was, in other words, ambivalent – for it simply served as a means to argue for the natural inferiority of the African. The state of contemporary Africa was, as they saw it, indeed made by Africans themselves, but they considered it generally miserable and a failure in development. Given this representation, it was the Africans who were to blame.

This frankly racist view demanded a sharper look on what was actually happening in African societies, for its interest were much more material and their mindset much more realistic than that of most abolitionists. Richard Burton`s thirst for gold and hunger for power are legendary and they are recurrent themes in his publications (Kennedy 2005). Therefore, travellers with imperial ambitions took pains to find out how Africans in Africa actually lived their lives. Their aim was to dominate, and knowledge in this respect was indeed powerful. The problem with this view, therefore, is less the empirical descriptions which are to be found in the monographs of writers like Burton, but the systemic frame of reference in which they interpreted their data. This anti-abolitionist frame was severely flawed by racism.

As already mentioned, racism was not limited to anti-abolitionist and pro-slavery writers. A certain kind of racism did find its way into abolitionist discourse as well. It was not restricted to champions of pro-slavery. One record for this is the statement of former missionary William Fox. He wrote in 1851

> […] that, dark and degraded as Africa is by nature, and by a deep-rooted superstition, it has been rendered more dark and gloomy, more miserable and wretched, by coming in contact with Europeans, who originated the Slave-Trade, that fruitful parent of almost every other evil. (Fox 1851: 156)

Besides the already familiar abolitionist interpretation – of the slave trade caused by European activities and itself the cause of the sad state of Africa – Fox introduced a new element. As cause for the supposed African "darkness" and "degradation" he mentioned the non-Christian character of African religions – "superstition" – but a "natural" factor as well. This "dark and degraded Africa by nature" could be imagined in two different ways, either in terms of "race" or in terms of "climate". The second way had been for long the more common one among anti-slavery writers. Almost thirty years earlier than Fox, in 1823, the abolitionist John Adams had declared that

> The climate of Africa is […] unfavourable to any rapid progress being made in the civilization of its inhabitants. […] this climate […] is unfavourable to either bodily or mental exertion; and the nature of their civil and religious institutions is such, as to place them in a state of extreme degradation, for Africa is a country chiefly inhabited by tyrants and slaves. (Adams 1823: 210)

Apart from pointing to the fact that abolitionists in the 1820ies had obviously accepted the former pro-slavery argument of slavery as the general condition of men in Africa, this quotation shows that abolitionists placed Africans in a quasi natural setting to explain what they saw as their backwardness, their degradation.

Here, the emphasis on "climate" operated as a seemingly convincing factor for explanation. Both "climate" and "race", at least from an outlandish observer`s point of view, could be used in the sense of "external" forces which were held to be responsible for the contrast in power and technological advancement between Europe and Africa. Although not openly racist, such a view still allowed for neglecting any historical relevance and agency on behalf of African people. "By nature" they were considered inferior – and, to change this natural state, to transform "nature" into "culture", to civilize and cultivate the Negroes, they depended on white support. Some abolitionists went so far, indeed, to dehumanize Africans in ways that make it impossible to distinguish their image of Africans from the frankly racist one. For instance, Thomas J. Hutchinson (1820-1885) who became honorary secretary of the Church Missionary Society in the early 1870s (Grau 2008: 74), wrote in 1861:

> To attempt civilizing such a race before they are humanized, appears to me beginning at the wrong end. [...] I fear ages must elapse before any educational principle in its simplest form can produce an amendment on temperaments such as they possess. (Hutchinson 1861: 340)

In the 1860s the evils of the 'African slave trade' as well as the 'Oriental slave trade' in North, West and East Africa became racialized catchwords and trademarks which helped abolitionists to attain popular mass support. At the same time, anti-slavery activists got more infected by racism than ever before which led them to justify colonial ambitions probably much more effective than pro-colonial advocators could ever have done. It was not by chance that the notorious 'scramble for Africa' at the end of the 19th century was legitimised by referring to the necessity of ending slavery and the slave trade within Africa (Boahen 1987, Wirz 2000, Miers 2003, Sonderegger 2008b). Beginning in the 1860s racial discourse became part of everyday life framing the perception of others and oneself in racialized terms. Anthropological societies served as effective mediators in a now extensive process of racialization.

Racial Debates of the 1860s

The 'Anthropologicals' on Race and Slavery: J. Hunt and R. F. Burton

James Hunt (1833-1869), a speech therapist by profession, joined the Ethnological Society of London (ESL) in 1854 because of his interest in the difference of 'races' (Brock 2004). That learned society had developed in 1843 as a separate body from the Aborigines Protection Society, "an essentially philanthropic organisation." (Stocking 1971: 386) In contrast, the new body intended to concentrate essentially on descriptive, not on humanitarian concerns. However, missionary and anti-slavery issues were kept on the agenda as most members took for granted the original unity of mankind and some sentiment of Christian brotherhood. This was not in line with Hunt's views. Being energetic but quite unpopular within the Ethnological Society, he founded the Anthropological Society of London (ASL) in 1863 – "endeavouring to found a new science [...] a science of Man or Mankind." (Hunt 1864a: 2) In practice, however, Hunt's understanding of anthropology was quite narrow – limited to physical anthropology – and consequently he "[...] promoted the society as a vehicle for a new kind of

racial science [...]. Hunt rejected the monogenetic account of human evolution associated with the older Ethnological Society, and was far more pessimistic about the prospects for the improvement of 'savage races'." (Driver 2001: 96f.)

With regard to the different specialities of research Hunt declared as the society's objective, "[...] it is our object and desire to see them all united under one great science." (Hunt 1864a: 6) Obviously, his ambitions were scientifically imperialistic, and his imperialism was directed against an older British tradition of research as evident in the work of James Cowles Prichard (1836-47) and the Ethnological Society of London. Prichardian ethnology was comparative in perspective. It relied on ethnography, physical anthropology as well as linguistics. Unlike the naïve positivism of the later 'anthropologicals' it was well aware of the complexities of human life and the relevance of cultural differences, and accordingly its methods did hardly resemble the naturalistic reductionism so typical for both 'Huntian' and post-Darwinian anthropology.

With regard to the question of human origin, Hunt's sympathy was with polygenism, notwithstanding his numerous remarks of being disinterested in such speculations. His far-reaching 'scientific' ambitions clearly went hand in hand with specific political opinions, claiming the centrality of "race" for any understanding of human life and history. For instance, he rhetorically asked himself,

> [...] do I exaggerate when I say that the fate of nations depends on a true appreciation of the science of anthropology? Are not the causes which have overthrown the greatest of nations to be resolved by the laws regulating the intermixture of the races of man? Does not the success of our colonisation depend on the deductions of our science? Is not the composition of harmonious nations entirely a question of race? Is not the wicked war now going on in America caused by an ignorance of our science? (Hunt 1864a: 16)

Evidently Hunt believed in the existence of 'races' as well as in the importance of 'race'. What mattered most to him was therefore not so much whether human beings were of one or of many origins but simply the claim of profound racial differences setting European men apart and above other humans. Black Africans were the subject he most elaborately dealt with in this regard.

Hunt voiced his ideas *On the Physical and Mental Characters of the Negro* for the first time in public at the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Newcastle in 1863. According to James Hunt, it "[...] was received with such loud hisses that you would have thought the room had nearly been filled with a quantity of Eve's tempters instead of her amiable descendants." (Hunt 1863c: v) According to a biographer, his speech "[...] was met with hisses and catcalls." (Brock 2004) According to the minutes of this event printed in The Anthropological Review, however, the reactions seem to have been very matter-of-fact (Anonymous 1863: 387ff.). The same paper presented to the ASL in November 1863 was approved of by William Winwood Reade (1838-1875) – the "young dilettante traveller" (Fyfe 1993: 334) – and zoologist-anthropologist Charles Carter Blake (1840-1887) but critically rejected by a Reverend Dingle and Thomas Bendyshe (1827-1886), the last one doing so on Darwinian grounds (Anonymous 1864: xviiiff.).

In obvious reference to Thomas Henry Huxley's recently published *Man's Place in Nature* (1863), Hunt's anti-Darwinist pamphlet was published under the title *On the Negro's Place in Nature* the same year (Hunt 1863c). An American edition with slightly different heading followed in 1864 and was reprinted in 1866, then as "No.4" in a series significantly called "Anti-Abolition Tracts" (Hunt 1864b, 1866). The American editions of Hunt's statements on 'the Negro' had direct political implications, for it was only in course of the American Civil War which lasted from 1861 to 1865 that slavery in the American South was legally abolished. Even after the emancipation act there remained a group of fierce opponents unwilling to accept the liberation of former slaves. Hunt's remarks make it abundantly clear that he supported the Confederate States and the slaving system of the American South.

To him, the natural role of Africans was that of slaves, and the enslavement of Africans by Europeans was the means of their "domestication". Hunt approvingly quoted the notorious American racist Josiah C. Nott to this end,

> In Africa, owing to their natural improvidence, the Negroes are more frequently than not a half-starved, and therefore half-developed, race; but when they are regularly and adequately fed, they become healthier, better developed, and more humanised. Wild horses, cattle, asses, and other brutes are greatly improved in like

> manner by domestication; but neither climate nor food can transmute an ass into a horse, or a buffalo into an ox. (Josiah C. Nott, quoted in Hunt 1863c: 32f.)

That American and British pro-slavery activists used such zoological vocabulary seemed quite appropriate to them as they generally, like Hunt, rejected the African's ability to civilise himself or be civilised by others out of hand (Hunt 1863c: 27-31). Hunt (1863c: 51f.) even doubted the African's humanity, classifying the "Negro" nearer to the ape than to the European. In doing this he was not alone. Some travellers are quoted at length who described Africans in animalistic, ape-like terms (Hunt 1863c: 43-46).

According to Hunt there were deep-rooted physical, mental and moral differences dividing Europeans from Africans and making the latter much inferior to the former. Although Hunt declared "that I understand by Negro, the dark, woolly-headed African found in the neighbourhood of the Congo river", and "that my remarks will be confined to the typical woolly-headed Negro," (Hunt 1863c: 2) his use of literature and measurements – regardless of provenance – make it abundantly obvious that his apodictic remarks were targeted on all Africans and African Americans alike. "The skin and hair are," he wrote, "by no means the only characters which distinguish the Negro from the European, even physically; and the difference is greater, mentally and morally, than the demonstrated physical difference." (Hunt 1863c: 4)

Most of his paper, then, consists of a confused 'demonstration' of such claimed differences, trying to legitimise his views of a racial hierarchy. Regarding physical differences Hunt relied heavily on the measurements of Pruner Bey, i.e. Franz Ignaz Pruner (1808-1882), a German physician who made a career in Egypt and figured prominently in the *Société d'Anthropologie de Paris* in the 1860s (Hirsch 1888: 675f., Wormer 2001: 747f.). Less often Hunt also referred to the founder of the *Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, Paul Broca (1824-1880), and to Carl Vogt (1817-1895), a Swiss anatomist whose *Lectures on Man* were translated and published by Hunt in 1864. In fact, Hunt's translation of Franz Pruner's *Memoir sur les nègres* (1861), often inserted in form of extensive footnotes, constitutes perhaps half of Hunt's treatise. Other sources he used frequently were the writings of American anatomists and pro-slavery activists, like Samuel Morton (1799-1851) or Josiah C. Nott (1804-1873) (Gould 1981), as well as contemporary travel writings.

Most prominently in this respect figured Richard Francis Burton's *Wanderings in West Africa*, published anonymously in 1863. Burton officiated as Vice-president of the Anthropological Society, and it was to him that Hunt dedicated his treatise with the words,

> You are, as all Anthropologists know, one of the few men who are competent to give any decided opinion as to the value of my communication. We have had plenty of African travellers, but there is perhaps no other man living who, by previous education and study, is better able than yourself to paint the Negro and other African races as they exist, regardless of what we may consider should be their state. (Hunt 1863c: vif.)

The American editions omitted this dedication, probably because Burton was notorious in London circles but, at least at that time, of no peculiar interest to an American readership. In any case, Burton's belief in the natural inferiority of Africans was quite as much developed as Hunt's. "I believe in the inferior genesis of the negro," he apodictically wrote, "and in his incapability of improvement, individually and en masse." (Burton 1893/1864: Vol.2, 135/fn.1) That Burton's own descriptions of developments of individual Africans as well as social, cultural and political circumstances in Africa continually contradicted this statement did not hinder him to propose it and claim its truth. Adopting an immunisation strategy Burton, like racists of all times, proclaimed the existence of a hidden reality allegedly much more important than any visible signs of evidence. In the same vein Hunt, for instance, wrote

> There is a peculiarity in the Negro's voice by which he can always be distinguished. This peculiarity is so great that we can frequently discover traces of Negro blood when the eye is unable to detect it. No amount of education or time is likely ever to enable the Negro to speak the English language without this twang. Even his great faculty of imitation will not enable him to do this. (Hunt 1863c: 22f.)

One of the reasons for the contradictions so evident in both Burton and Hunt might be their self-styled positioning at the margins of accepted gentlemanly behaviour. "Hunt and the leading 'anthropologicals' violated the canons of behavior appropriate to a scientific society composed of respectable gentlemen. The inner clique of the Anthropological Society [...] called itself 'The Cannibal Club' [...]," (Stocking 1991: 252) and they behaved accordingly. Whereas their behaviour was attractive to some, others felt

embarrassed. In any case it raised their notoriety and supplied anthropological topics with publicity previously inconceivable. The membership of the LAS was raised from a few dozens to several hundreds in course of the 1860s (Stocking 1971: 379ff.).

Nevertheless, their choice of topics – "cannibalism, polygamy, phallic worship, circumcision and infibulation" (Driver 2001: 98) – as well as the style in which they talked and wrote about them was commonly regarded inappropriate, if not frivolous or even pornographic (Kennedy 2005: 168ff.).

> What distinguished the 'anthropologicals', therefore, was not simply a call to extend the dominion of science to man itself, but to do so on the basis of a particular style of racial and sexual politics. The anthropologicals were […] enthusiastic about embracing the idea of racial difference; […] They regarded the refusal of their critics to concede the innate character of the differences between races as not only unscientific but unmanly. In this context, the exclusion of women from their meetings was of critical importance. The new 'science of man' was, they argued, the preserve of men; open enquiry demanded closed rooms. (Driver 2001: 97f.)

Evidently then, Hunt, Burton and their colleagues felt threatened. Unsure in their manliness as well as in their class position, they found a means of reassurance in a revolting pose. Their 'revolution' against the 'ethnologicals' by founding a society of their own and setting the course for a new tone in ethnographic and anthropological discourse provided them with an institutional base. They fully embraced the idea of their own racial superiority and propagated it successfully, attracting a wide membership (Stocking 1971: 377). The feeling of racial superiority was mirrored in frequent misogynic, sexist remarks, as apparent, for instance, in Hunt writing, "There is no doubt that the Negro brain bears a great resemblance to a European female or child's brain, and thus approaches the ape far more than the European, while the Negress approaches the ape still nearer." (Hunt 1863c: 16f.)

To Hunt it was inconceivable that women's abilities might resemble those of men, given comparable opportunities. Equally unthinkable seemed the idea Africans could perform alike. With regard to the developments made by free Africans according to European standards both in America and on the West Coast of Africa, in Sierra Leone and Liberia (Curtin 1964, Fyfe 1993, Sonderegger 2008b), Hunt either ignored their existence or claimed that they have been advanced by the infusing of "European blood".

> In the Southern States of North America, in the West Indies and other places [...] it is simply the European blood in their veins which renders them fit for places of power, and they often use this power far more cruelly than either of the pure blooded races. It has been affirmed that occasionally there are seen Negroes of pure blood who possess European features: but I believe such not to be the fact [...]. (Hunt 1863c: 28f.)

Hunt even went so far as proposing a global prehistoric migration out of Europe strikingly similar to the notorious 'Hamitic hypothesis' of later years (Bilger/Kraler 2005: 8f., Sonderegger 2009: 70f.). Without giving any evidence supporting his claim, he wrote,

> We now know it to be a patent fact that there are races existing which have no history, and that the Negro is one of these races. [...] like all inferior races, there has been little or no migration from Africa since the earliest historical records. The European, for ever restless, has migrated to all parts of the world, and traces of him are to be found in every quarter of the globe. Everywhere we see the European as the conqueror and the dominant race, and no amount of education will ever alter the decrees of Nature's laws. (Hunt 1863c:: 29ff.)

Obviously, Hunt was no friend of educatory efforts. He dogmatically denied "[...] that the Negro only requires early education to be equal to the European" (Hunt 1863c: 27) and claimed instead, against every evidence available,

> With the Negro, as with some other races of man, it has been found that the children are precocious: but that no advance in education can be made after they arrive at the age of maturity, they still continue, mentally, children. [...] the reflective faculties hardly appear to be at all developed. (Hunt 1863c: 27)

This idea of an "arrested development" on the part of "savages" was a standing phrase of 19th century racial thinking. Although Hunt occasionally compared European females and, more often, children to Africans to emphasise their allegedly undeveloped character, he was quite intent on claiming an absolute, 'natural' dividing line between 'the' European and African. That is why Hunt rejected Darwinism which argued for an understanding of man as part of the animated world genetically linked to all living species. In fact, Hunt fiercely opposed this revolutionary line of thought and stuck to his fixed race theory.

Both Burton and Hunt opposed Christianity and frequently attacked missionary and anti-slavery proponents. Christopher Fyfe appropriately characterised Burton's *Wanderings in West Africa* as "[...] a gossiping travel-book, but invested with the prestige and authority its distinguished explorer-author commanded. Here, with cruel wit, he flayed Freetown [...], pouring scorn on missionaries and their pupils." (Fyfe 1993: 334) Except for the traveller's expertise, much the same could be said of Hunt, who granted the abolitionists that the transatlantic slave trade had been horrendous but still approved of colonial slavery, because, as he argued,

> [...] I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that slavery as understood by the ancients does not exist out of Africa,* [* 'No man maltreats his wild brother so much as the so-called civilised Negro,' Hunt quotes Richard Francis Burton in the footnote] and that the highest type of the Negro race is at present to be found in the Confederate States of America. Far superior in intelligence and physique to both his brethren in Africa and to his 'free' brethren in the Federal States [...]. [...] Scientific men, therefore, dare not close their eyes to the clear facts, as to the improvement in mind and body, as well as the general happiness, which is seen in those parts of the world in which the Negro is working in his natural subordination to the European. (Hunt 1863a: 54f.)

Of course, the facts about colonial slavery and the "plantation complex" were quite contrary to the idyllic sketch drafted by Hunt on the basis of some American advocates of slavery. One of his sources, J.H. van Evrie, wrote the introduction to Hunt's American edition (1864b:3f.), and probably Hunt's hagiographic obituary in the *New York Weekly Day-Book, Nov.6th, 1869* as well (Anonymous 1870: 97). The image of a 'despotic Africa', so current since the late 18th century (Sonderegger 2008a), could still serve Hunt as a comfortable means to claim the worthlessness of life in Africa, thereby legitimising his pro-slavery standpoint.

Hunt was a master of contradictions, claiming scientific authority on the basis of alleged evidence but ignoring all evidence available that contradicted his opinions. The final sentence of his pamphlet makes this abundantly clear. There he wrote, "it is only by observation and experiment that we can determine the exact place in nature which the Negro race *should* hold, and," he continued making even more evident his apodictic method, "that it is both absurd and chimerical to attempt to put him in any other." (Hunt 1863c: 60, my emphasis) To Hunt the "negro's place in nature" was evidently there where he wanted him to stay indefinitely: in, as he put it, "his natural subordination to the European." (Hunt 1863c: 55)

Evolutionary Thought and Men's Place in Nature: T.H. Huxley

During the 1860s James Hunt and some other prominent members of the Anthropological Society were in continuous critical engagement with the older organisation from which they had separated in 1863: the Ethnological Society of London which comprised leading figures of the emergent evolutionary school of thought. Both the anthropologicals' concern with a strongly racialized science claiming irreconcilable differences between human societies and the offending way in which they put forward their radical opinions set them miles apart from those anthropological writers who were rising to much more enduring prominence in the course of the very same decade. By means of its theory of descent, the Darwinian revolution prepared the ground for considering 'the other' in the perspective of socio-cultural evolution.

Combined with the Malthusian principle of selection – still notoriously known in Herbert Spencer's phrase as the 'survival of the fittest' – Darwinism allowed for the reconciliation of two contradictory ideas: the belief in a single humanity as well as in elementary racial divides. Since then the universalistic inclusion of all the people of the world into a single frame of reference (one humanity, monogenesis) was accompanied by a disruptive belief in gradual, but deep-rooted, racial differences between various peoples which might be overcome in time. True then, their understanding of racial identity was less fixed than that of the 'anthropologicals' who declared Africans to be mere animals, but the evolutionists still opined it would take aeons to civilise those whom they too considered inferior types of men.

Thomas Henry Huxley, notorious for his reputation as 'Darwin's bulldog', was the central figure in the academic reorientation taking shape in the 1860s and early 70s in both his roles as engaged academic entrepreneur and prolific writer. It was mainly on his initiative that the ESL and ASL merged in 1871 to build a unified institution dedicated to anthropology now understood as the study of mankind in all its aspects: the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (AIGBI). This 'reunification' process was facilitated by James Hunt's sudden death in late 1869. Richard Burton and other 'anthropologicals' split from the AIGBI and founded the short-lived London Anthropological Society (LAS, 1873-1875). However, they soon rejoined the AIGBI after the failure of the LAS. At that time some of the racial thinking pioneered by the ASL had been successfully introduced

into the AIGBI and, therefore, no special forum was needed anymore (Stocking 1971: 382-387, 1991: 248-262).

Following the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, Huxley was the first who interpreted human and primate forms of life in the light of the Darwinian theory of evolutionary descent which supposed a transmutation of species by way of natural selection. His *Man's Place in Nature* (1863) was widely recognised and, although not well received by everyone, proved to be very influential. Therein, Huxley evidently distinguished "Man" from "Ape" as two separate orders. To argue this point Huxley asked his readers to put themselves in the place of an alien. They should consider themselves "scientific Saturnians" on a trip to earth (Huxley 2001/1863: 71).

> There would remain then, but one order for comparison, that of the Apes [...], and the question for discussion would narrow itself to this – is Man so different from any of these Apes that he must form an order by himself? Or does he differ less from them than they differ from one another, and hence must take his place in the same order with them?
> [...] and if we found that these [characteristics] were of less structural value, than those which distinguish certain members of the Ape order from others universally admitted to be of the same order, we should undoubtedly place the newly discovered tellurian genus with them. (Huxley 2001/1863: 72)

Regarding descent, however, it seemed evident to Darwinians that, despite "Man" being defined as a "family apart", he is genetically related to the "Man-like apes." (Huxley 2001: 106) "Without question, the mode of origin and the early stages of the development of man are identical with those of the animals immediately below him in the scale: – without a doubt, in these respects, he is far nearer the Apes, than the Apes are to the Dog." (Huxley 2001: 67) Based on serious anatomical studies Huxley spoke of 'Man' in his entirety, not distinguishing between what in the terms of the days were designated 'races'. He even reacted in strong words to Hunt's allegations regarding the 'negro' as a distinct species, calling this point of view a "scandalous absurdity" and "nonsense" (Professor Huxley, on *The Structure and Classification of the Mammalia*, lectures delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons; quoted in Taylor 1864: 12).

Huxley narrowed most of his work to physical anthropology but occasionally he emphasised "the great gulf which intervenes between the lowest man and the highest ape in intellectual power." (Huxley 2001: 103)

From such phrasings it becomes evident that Huxley still distinguished between men, and he did so according to the conventions of his time. As his contemporary and founder of eugenics, Francis Galton, put their credo, "The natural ability […] is such as a modern European possesses in a much greater average share than men of the lower races." (Galton 2001/1869: 27) The proclaimed naturalness notwithstanding, he saw that ability under continuous threat because

> Much more alien to the genius of an enlightened civilisation than the nomadic habit, is the impulsive and uncontrolled nature of the savage. […] the human race were utter savages in the beginning; and […], after myriads of years of barbarism, man has but very recently found his way into the paths of morality and civilisation. (Galton 2001/1869: 403f.)

Huxley`s "lowest man", also referred to as 'archaic man', 'primitive man' or 'savage man' by him and other writers, bore a striking resemblance to the stereotypic image of the African prevalent in Victorian discourses (Pallua 2006: 81-91, Kuper 1988, Stocking 1991). Africans were generally considered inferior beings. To Huxley, Darwin and the socio-cultural evolutionists as well as missionaries and abolitionists this was an 'unhappy state' resulting from unfavourable environmental causation. To their opponents – racists and pro-slavery advocates like Hunt and Burton – this was simply the 'state of nature', the just and inescapable expression of an inborn inferiority. Both groups, however, accepted the alleged inferiority as a given "natural" fact.

Although most evolutionists "defend[ed] the idea of the unity of the human race" (Gaillard 2004: 8), their concept of a straight-lined evolutionary progress still allowed for distinctions between various human groups, put forward in a naturalising language and ranked hierarchically according to the steps made, or not made, on the ladder of progress. The "evolutionists sketched out a notion of linear human evolution, in which so called 'primitive' societies constituted a stage anterior to their own, modern society." (Gaillard 2004: 8) In an evolutionist perspective they seemed to represent our earliest ancestors, sort of "living fossils" damned to die out, at least in the long run. Concerning those fitting neither the 'primitive' nor the 'modern' image an in-between stage was quick at hand. In his influential *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilisation* (1865), Edward Burnett Tylor put the traditional triad of "savagery, barbarism and civilization" in a developmental sequence (Gaillard 2004: 15,

Stocking 1991). Mankind, it was now increasingly held, was progressing along these lines.

While Social Darwinists' views, centring around the metaphors of a universal 'struggle for existence' and the 'survival of the fittest', had immediate political implications, it seems that most socio-cultural evolutionists did not consider them in their actual works but simply accepted, without further thought, the progressive tendency of evolution as fact. In any case, when Darwin published his own work on human history, *The Descent of Man*, in 1871, a Darwinian view on life had already attained broad currency among the educated, and within anthropology a progressive understanding of evolutionism was the ruling paradigm directing research for many decades to come (Stocking 1991, 1995), freezing Africans on a developmental level allegedly far below European contemporaries.

African Perspectives on Race and Civilisation

Africanus Horton

In 1868 a book subtitled *A Vindication of the African Race* was published. Its author was a very distinguished man. Born to Igbo parents – originating in what is today South Eastern Nigeria – in the British crown colony of Sierra Leone, James Africanus Beale Horton spent five years (1855 – 1859) in England studying medicine. After his return to Africa Horton enlisted in the British army and served as a medical doctor. He worked at several posts along the western shores of the coast, from the Gambia to the Gold Coast, and even "visited Lagos" as he wrote in one of his medical treatises (Horton 1867: x). In short, he had first-hand knowledge of all the English territories of West Africa.

In 1880 he quitted military service and started doing business in mining concessions. Shortly before his untimely death in 1883 he launched the Commercial Bank of West Africa that "attempted to supply credit facilities to West African traders." (Adi/Sherwood 2003: 88) Africanus Horton was a man of both practical ambitions and intellectual gifts. Most of his European contemporaries, however, did appreciate neither the one nor the other. The only thing about Horton that was received with some interest on their side was his contribution to tropical medicine (Shepperson 1969: x). His political

writings were largely ignored or paternalistically absorbed (Ayandele 1979: 164ff., Fyfe 1992).

There was some reason in such ignorance, for part one of Horton's *West African Countries and Peoples* contains a scientifically informed critique of Victorian racism. Horton called it *The Negro's Place in Nature*, in direct reference to Hunt's racist pamphlet of 1863. There, Horton referred directly to the Anthropological Society of London designating it

> an association [...] to rake up old malice and encourage their agents abroad to search out the worst possible characteristics of the African, so to furnish material for venting their animus against him. [...] It would have been sufficient to treat this with the contempt it deserves, were it not that leading statesmen of the present day have shown themselves easily carried away by the malicious views of these negrophobists, to the great prejudice of that race. (Horton 1969/1868: v)

According to Horton, these 'anthropological negrophobists' were simply prejudiced and, from a scientific point of view, negligible. What made it necessary to deal with them was their influence on the thinking of those who were in the position to decide on British policies towards Africa. Horton explicitly mentioned politicians but he could have named missionaries as well, for even within the dominant body of missionary work in Sierra Leone – the Church Missionary Society – a more racialised tone had been emerging since the 1860s. Moreover, concerning his military promotion Horton's attainment was delayed on racial grounds (Fyfe 1992, Sonderegger 2002: 62ff., 2008c: 160ff.). In his critique Horton relied in part on classical abolitionist writers, quoting Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) and Wilson Armistead (~1819-1868), but more frequently he made use of his scientific expertise and first-hand knowledge. Therefore, much of his text is, on the one hand, dedicated to a discussion of the physical and anatomical features allegedly typically African whereas, on the other hand, he demystifies European travellers' accounts. Christopher Fyfe gives an accurate summary of Horton's refutation:

> With such empirical arguments Horton [...] only needed to quote a few passages from Carl Vogt's 'exuberant, ignorant eloquence' to reveal that Vogt knew nothing of Africa or of Africans. Burton, who did know Africa, he convicted of inconsistency and prejudice. The much-cited racial investigations of Pruner Bey, physician to the Khedive of Egypt, he showed to have been based on a few untypical physical

specimens. He concluded that before scientists began pontificating about Africans, they must learn more about them [...]. (Fyfe 1992: 70)

Much the same criticism he directed against James Hunt:

> [...] Horton convicted him of ignorance and prejudice. Hunt's ignorance was displayed by the second-hand, inaccurate evidence he used to make his case. His prejudice he displayed by his choice of authorities, including Burton, and his readiness 'to select the worst possible specimens, and make them typical of the whole African race,' but to display as the typical European 'the most perfect and model form'. (Fyfe 1992: 64, the quote by Africanus Horton stems from the *African Times*, April 23, 1866)

In contrast to Hunt and Burton, Horton considered African's capacity for civilisation to be simply a matter of fact. He alluded to the British settlements on the west coast of Africa as undeniable evidence. Unlike them, he appreciated the missionary support for Sierra Leone and held Christianity in high regard. Contrary to Burton, Horton denied "that the Mohammedan religion, in all cases where Western Africa is concerned, should supplant that of Christianity," (Horton 1969: vi) declaring instead that

> I, amongst a great many others, appreciate every European element that enters Western Africa, whether in the capacity of merchants or pioneers of civilization, or in that of missionaries; and whilst I hail their efforts, respect their talents, and revere the civilization they are capable of imparting, I will never permit any unjust abuse, any unfounded diatribe against the African race [...]. (Horton 1969: vii)

It is apparent, then, that Horton's concept of civilisation was modelled according to the European paradigm. What he wanted to implement in Africa was an 'Africanised' version of modernity. Emmanuel Ayandele's characterisation of Africanus Horton as a "prophet of modernization" outlines this very well (Ayandele 1979: 164). Still, although Horton rejected traditional African ways of life, his rejection was not based in any alleged 'natural inferiority' but in their relative discrepancy to his developmental ideal.

> In viewing the map of West Africa, and tracing out those political communities which are not due to the agency of more civilized politicians, we affirm that there are amongst them fixed and established Governments, although rude and barbarous; that the obedience to the supreme power in many cases is implicit, the

right of property is enforced by abjudicature; and, although the power of the supreme head has been used with extreme despotism, as in Dahomey and Ashantee, yet still it is as truly a political Government as that of France or England. By nature the African is a social being, possessing the capacity of commanding and obeying, and that type of improvement which advances as the reason is cultivated, which are the essential elements both of a political Government and a political community; and therefore Africans bear no relation whatever to those gregarious species of animals – apes, monkeys, &c. – to which some fantastic writers have likened them. (Horton 1969: 3f.)

To Horton 'inferiority' was not a matter of a fixed racial marker but a matter of opportunity. Human societies and cultures, he held, were changeable entities and, as might be seen in historical perspective, they have been changing continuously in time (Sonderegger 2002: 74ff.). Given the evident dynamism of his views on 'race' and cultural 'development' as well as his scientific expertise, the absence of any reference to the intellectual Darwinian revolution of the 1860s in Horton's account is striking but probably to him Darwinism looked like still another paradigm inclined to justify the degradation of Africans.

Alexander Crummell

The responses by other Africans, or rather African Americans living in Africa, to the racist challenges differed sharply from Horton`s scientifically informed critique not only of racism but of the very concept of "race". Alexander Crummell (1818-1898) who was born in New York where he was classically trained entered the priesthood and arrived in Liberia in 1853 to begin missionary work in service of the Protestant Episcopal Church (Adeleke 1998: 70ff.). Only a few years earlier Liberia had declared its independence and become a formally sovereign state (1847). Crummell lived there for twenty years before permanently returning to the United States. When he went to Liberia, he brought a great many preconceptions with him. According to Tunde Adeleke,

[…] Crummell was troubled by the inner conflicts of a complex identity – being both an African and an American. He responded with a philosophical reconciliation of the two identities. He espoused a Pan-African Christian ideology that underscored the historical and cultural connection between black Americans and Africans, as well as their mutual obligations and responsibilities for advancement. […]
Crummell`s philosophical response, from the very beginning, bore the imprints of normative European assumptions about Africa. Consequently, his professed pride in

being African was negated by both his proclamation of American identity and his later profession of alienation from Africa`s barbarism." (Adeleke 1998: 73)

Indeed, Crummell uncritically adopted the Eurocentric position held both by Western abolitionists and their counterparts. To Crummell, as to European missionaries, Africa was the "dark continent", inferior to the progressed, civilized countries of America and Europe and in need of their help. In his article *The Progress of Civilization along the West Coast of Africa*, Crummell emphasized the a-historical, passive character of the African setting in words reminiscent of German philosopher Hegel, though Crummell actually referred to the German historian Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776-1831):

> So far as Western Africa is concerned, there is no history. The long, long centuries of human existence, there, give us no intelligent disclosures. "Darkness covered the land, and gross darkness the people." (Crummell 1862: 106)

Actually, African life was designated as mere "existence", belonging more to the sphere of nature than to culture. The root of such "darkness", however, did not lie in "negro inferiority" but in Africa`s isolation, for

> […] the civilization of all races has been conditioned on contact. […] But so far as contact with the elements of civilization is concerned, so far as the possibility of being touched by the mental and moral influences of superior and elevating forces is implied, Africa might as well have been an island as a continent. The Desert of Sahara has served […] effectually to cut off Africa from the ancient civilizations […]. (Crummell 1862: 107f.)

Obviously then, Crummell refused the racism of Huntian kind. Neither was blackness the source of Africa`s backwardness nor were Africans born slaves, but backward they were. To Crummell the reason for what he saw as an unhappy state was rather, in the first place, that Africans had lost the ties which connected them to the early beginnings of humankind – of which Crummell thought in the Biblical terms of paradise. In the second place, taking up the abolitionist tradition, he referred to the transatlantic slave trade as explanatory factor: "Three hundred years of misery have made West Africa the synonym of every thing painful and horrible." (Crummell 1862: 105) As wrote Kwame Anthony Appiah,

> Crummell shared with his European and American contemporaries (those of them, at least, who had any view of the matter at all) an essentially negative sense of traditional culture in Africa as anarchic, unprincipled, ignorant, defined by the absence of all the positive traits of civilization as "savage"; and savages hardly have a culture at all. (Appiah 1993: 21)

In such acceptance of Eurocentric measures and villainising images of Africa and Africans, Crummell adopted the racialized perspective on the world which was typical for the hierarchical paradigm of unilinear evolution that put Africans at the bottom. Crummell, however, took comfort in the thought that *The Future of Africa* – the title of his collected sermons delivered in Liberia – had already begun. When he wrote of "the recent transitional state into which that continent is passing, on the way to enlightenment and salvation" (Crummell 1862: 106), he obviously was thinking of Liberia and, perhaps, the British holdings on the coast:

> […] here, on this coast, […] is an organized negro community, republican in form and name; a people possessed of Christian institutions and civilized habits, with this one marked pecularity, that is, that in color, race, and origin, they are identical with the masses of rude natives around them; and yet speak the refined and cultivated English language […]. (Crummell 1862: 11)

He held English in high regard – being "*a language of unusual force and power*" (Crummell 1862: 22), "the language of freedom" (23), "*the enshrinement of those great charters of liberty*" (25), owing to "its peculiar identity with religion" (28) –, for he took it as "one of those ordinances of Providence, designed as a means for the introduction of new ideas into the language of a people; or to serve, as the transitional step from low degradation to a higher and nobler civilization." (Crummell 1862: 18) African languages, on the other hand, "were characterized by lowness of ideas", by "lack [of] ideas of virtue, of moral truth and those distinctions of right and wrong", by "the absence of clear ideas of Justice, Law, Human Rights, and Governmental Order, which are so prominent and manifest in civilized countries". They are dismissed "[a]s the speech of rude barbarians […] marked by brutal and vindictive sentiments, and […] a predominance of the animal propensities." (Crummell 1862: 20) Most disturbing to Crummell, however, were the well-functioning African religions as well as Africanized forms of Christianity that interfered with his missionary zeal. His speeches and writings served

> […] two important ends; namely, first, to show that the children of Africa have been called, in the Divine providence, to meet the demands of civilization, of commerce, and of nationality; and, second, that they are beginning, at least, to grapple with the problems which pertain to responsible manhood, to the great work of civilization, to the duties and requirements of national life, and to the solemn responsibility of establishing the Christian faith amid the rude forms of paganism. (Crummell 1862: 3f.)

In face of these opinions, Tunde Adeleke`s decision to entitle his chapter on Alexander Crummell *Religious, Moral, and Cultural Legitimation of Imperialism* seems more than appropriate. His lines of thought led him, first, to a positive evaluation of abolitionism and missionary works, of "*the beneficent operation of legitimate commerce*" (Crummell 1862: 110), of "the active spirit of travel and inquiry which marks the age" (112), and in his later writings to an accentuated pro-colonial stance that justified even King Leopold`s atrocities in the Congo (Adeleke 1998: 82ff.)

Edward Wilmot Blyden

A barely more modest welcome to European colonial occupation of African territories was given by another African American emigrant who, unlike Crummell, became a citizen of Liberia (Geiss 1969: 103): Caribbean-born Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912). He, who had come to Liberia – via the US – in late 1850, henceforth was vividly engaged in many occupations, as journalist and teacher, as pastor and politician. Between 1861 and 1895, he undertook seven lecture tours to the United States in order to promote individual migrations back to Africa (Livingstone 1975: 188). He repeatedly visited Europe and even, in 1866, Egypt and the Middle East. Due to political problems in connection with his presidential campaign, Blyden left Liberia for Sierra Leone in 1871. Though he frequently returned to Liberia`s capital Monrovia, Freetown then became his main residence and ultimately the place where he died in 1912 (July 1968: 210ff.).

Blyden`s response to the scramble for Africa and the partition of the continent among the European powers was quite pragmatic (Geiss 1969: 121f.). In 1895, he enthusiastically spoke in favour of the European military initiative (Blyden 1895: 318ff.) and, displaying his classical education, he foretold a bright future – allegedly resulting from the colonial impact:

> The scramble is over, and now the question is how to utilize the plunder in the interest of civilization and progress.

> The task which Europe has imposed upon itself is a vast one – surpassing the labours of Hercules. But intelligence, energy and science will cleanse the Augean stables – the swamps and morasses which disfigure and poison the coast regions. They will destroy the Lernean hydra of African fever. They will bring the golden apples from the hidden gardens of the wealthy interior. (Blyden 1971/1894: 317f.)

That European imperialism was "plunder" was a fact of minor importance, for Europe stood for "civilization and progress" and the partition had already taken place. The question, as important to Blyden as to European colonizers, was how to exploit those "hidden gardens of the wealthy interior" and to whose advantage. Naturally, with regard to the second point their answers were quite different – Blyden thinking of the benefits to Africans, Europeans thinking of the gains for the metropoles. Although Blyden, from time to time, uttered critique on the excesses of colonial conquest, he generally maintained a positive view of European colonialism and looked forward into a bright future for Africa. As late as 1907, on the occasion of his retirement, he enthusiastically spoke in favour of

> […] the introduction of civilisation among backward races. … The view which among the younger generation of European statesmen is becoming popular with regard to Africa is one which is opposed to an international policy which includes annexation and conquest, but a policy of peaceful penetration, of commercial influence, by roads and railways and schools and farms, and of non-interference with the wholesome customs and religions of the natives. Under the new *régime* Africa may congratulate herself, thank God, and take courage. (Blyden, quoted in Anonymous 1912: 364)

In 1909 Blyden even argued that Western imperialism "was what the other races of the world needed." (Livingstone 1975: 200) His enthusiasm for European influence, however, was somewhat softened by his appreciation of the influence of Islam, a theme that continually grew in intensity after Blyden`s first visit to Arabian lands in 1866 (July 1968: 226f.). He offered some articles in defence of this religion so detested by most Christian authors of the time. In the European attitude towards Islam, Blyden recognised a kindred pattern of depreciation to the one working against Africans. Consequently, he criticised such prejudices convincingly:

> The generality of European writers on the subject [Islam] take it for granted that there is no need for giving special attention to Islam in West Africa, for it must only be an imitation if not caricature of Islam in Arabia, just as they allege that

> Christianity among negroes must always be of a degenerate quality. (Blyden 1902: 12)

Of course, both of these presumptions are baseless and they were rightly repudiated by Blyden. Nevertheless, in many regards, Blyden`s image of Africa resembled the European one, and the same applies to his prospects for a desirable future of that continent. As early as 1859, he declared,

> But it must be borne in mind that the aborigines are not settled along the coast in independent republican communities. They are under the most despotic rule; the king or head-man having absolute control over his subjects or "boys". (Blyden 1971/1859: 137)

Such slavish conditions, as was assumed, led to stagnation – to "[t]he permanence for centuries of the social and political states of the Africans at home" (Blyden 1971/1869: 142). No progressive developments could then have happened. In some respects, Blyden`s explanation recounted Crummell`s reasoning, as, for instance, when he was writing that the stagnation

> […] must be attributed, first, to the isolation of the people from the progressive portion of mankind; and, secondly, to the blighting influence of the traffic introduced among them by Europeans. (Blyden 1971/1869: 142)

Unlike Crummell, however, Blyden had a positive view of "African Africans" whom he frequently labelled "pure negroes", like he did in regard to himself (Livingstone 1975: 220). Therefore his reading of the transatlantic slave trade was much more critical:

> Had not the demand arisen in America for African labourers, and had European nations inaugurated regular traffic with the coast, the natives would have shown themselves as impressible for change, as susceptible of improvement, as capable of acquiring knowledge and accumulating wealth, as the natives of Europe. (Blyden 1971/1869: 142)

Blyden had a deep belief in the equal capabilities of Africans but, at the same time, he believed in the absolute racial difference of the "negro" and spoke out for "racial exclusiveness involving both physical segregation and biological purity." (July 1968: 222) In 1877 Blyden opined,

> A white man and a black man can work harmoniously together, for the conditions between them are well-defined, but the mixture of their blood begets a new character which neither of them understands; a nondescript which baffles and deceives both; and therefore as the Negro becomes cultivated and enlightened, he will be as careful in transmitting his blood pure as Europeans are. (Blyden, quoted in Livingstone 1975: 220)

In order to bring these conflicting ideas together, Blyden argued for human equality but racial distinctness:

> […] we have souls as well as they. […] our hearts are made of the same material with theirs, […] we feel as well as they; […] the words nationality and independence possess as much charm and music for us as for them. (Blyden 1976/1862: 145)

And he developed a peculiar concept of the complementary of the world`s races. Being absolutely different in almost every character, every race must fulfil a special role that has been designated to her by god`s providence.

> Where the Negro was sympathetic, morally profound, in tune with nature and with the community of spirits, the European was didactic, physically and mentally strong, materialistic, accomplished in the sciences and politics, preoccupied with the improvement of his immediate environment, and ever inclined to dominate other races that they might better serve his purposes. (July 1968: 220)

In *Africa`s Service to the World* – the heading of a speech held in the US in 1881 – there is even an elaborate eschatological narrative justifying the peculiarity of being African while binding his fortune close to that of Europe:

> If service rendered to humanity is service rendered to God, then the Negro and his country have been, during the ages, […] tending upward to the Divine. Take the country. It has been called the cradle of civilization, and so it is. The germs of all the sciences and of the two great religions now professed by the most enlightened races were fostered in Africa. […]
> English, and French, and Germans, are now in the struggle of an intense competition for the hidden treasures of that continent. Upon the opening of Africa will depend the continuation of Europe`s prosperity. Thus Providence has interwoven the interests of Europe with those of Africa. […]
> Thus Ethiopia and Ethiopians, having always served, will continue to serve the world. […] And in the light of the ultimate good of the universe, I do not see why the calling of the one should be considered the result of a curse, and the calling of the other the result of special favour. The one fulfills its mission by domination, the

other, by submission. The one serves mankind by ruling; the other serves mankind by serving. The one wears the crown, wields the sceptre; the other bears the stripes and carries the cross. […] And if the principle laid down by Christ […] that he who would be chief must become the servant of all, then we see the position which Africa and the Africans must ultimately occupy. (Blyden 1976/1881: 112ff.)

Blyden`s racism gets clearest in his views of Africans of mixed descent (as, in fact, all of us are and ever were, given the human origin in Africa). In course of his life in Liberia, from the beginning, Blyden developed bad contempt for the dominant social stratum in Liberia to which he frequently referred as a "mongrel horde" (Livingstone 1975: 200). According to Thomas Livingstone´s interpretation,

> Blyden, a pure Negro, grew ever more committed to championing the purity of his race; his thoughts were ever more preoccupied with a Manichean duality of black and white that separated man from man and from himself. […] Blyden, vacillating between rejection and acceptance of both white society and black culture, directed his bitterness against mulattoes. […] Blyden`s hatred of mulattoes probably also reflected the envy of the marginal man of those whose marginality is not quite so complete. […] The man who so respected whites and despised mulattoes lamented that if he had been white, or mulatto, he would have succeeded in life. The fault of his life, he claimed, was not his race, but given the state of racial development, it had impeded his progress. (Livingstone 1975: 220; cf. Blyden 1976/1862: 148ff.)

In Blyden`s view, being black was a gift. However, the times were not yet ready to understand that. The premise of African particularity led him to the development of a trendsetting concept – that of the "African personality" which re-emerged some decades later, somewhat modified, in its French version of *negritude* (July 1968: 212ff., Geiss 1969: 122, Senghor 1970: 179f.). First overtly used in 1865, in 1893 Blyden justified the necessity of developing the "African personality" thus,

> […] the duty of every man of every race is to contend for its individuality – to keep and develop it … If you are not yourself, if you surrender your personality, you have nothing left to give the world. You have no pleasure, no use, nothing which will attract and charm men, for by your suppression of your individuality you lose your distinctive character (Blyden, quoted in Mährdel 1994: 182)

Obviously seizing and integrating current nationalist as well as racist patterns of thought, Blyden`s hope for Africa rested in a recovery of the consciousness of a peculiar Africanness which he frequently defined in

racial terms. The future of Africa did not lie, according to him, in the hands of the mixed populations of the Westernized coastal settlements, but in the hands of the "pure Negroes" who should cooperate with the civilizing forces of Islam and European colonialism. Blyden was quite eager to implement what he saw as progressive developments. On the other hand, he constantly emphasized that active steps of appropriation on behalf of the Africans were necessary to reach progress. Therefore, he constantly argued for active appropriation and critical selection, not passive obedience and simple receiving. Such agency, however, that kind of African personality he had in mind was as much a challenge of the future as of the present. It was something that, according to him, must be developed individually time and again.

Conclusion

The scholarly battle between 'Darwinians' and the frankly racist anthropology of the ASL, particularly of James Hunt and Richard Francis Burton, that took place in the 1860s was eventually won by the evolutionist paradigm. In the debates of the times, partly explicitly, partly implicitly, religious and secular activities, missionary and colonial ambitions, as well as slavery, the slave trade and the "negro's place in nature" were continuously at issue. When the ASL ceased to exist, the new anthropological institution led by Thomas Henry Huxley, the AIGBI, unified those British scholars who took interest in African affairs on a, as was believed, scientifically solid basis. In fact, however, the evolutionists adopted the belief, so vehemently propagated by their "anthropological" adversaries, namely that racial difference was real and of primary importance to any explanation of the different levels of socio-cultural life found among the people of the world.

In some respects, the evolutionists simply followed the tendency of their times. As has been shown, both missionary and anti-slavery discourse had become infected by "man`s most dangerous myth", i.e. the racial "disease" (Montagu 1997: 179), in course of the 19th century. The 1860s saw the acceleration and intensification of a process that had already begun some decades earlier, "the racialization of the globe" (Dikötter 2008). The importance of the scholarly debates lies in the fact that "race" henceforward

became scientifically ennobled – the more so as biology developed into the leading model for all sciences and, as *Weltanschauung*, massively increased its popular appeal. Regarding 'race' both Darwin and Huxley were all-embracing in their approach claiming they could integrate the best of both schools of thought – the polygenetic and the monogenetic – in their evolutionary synthesis. Such comprehensive approach was congenial to the broader universalistic currents of the times which aimed either at imperial extension or world-wide humanitarian activity.

Darwin, for instance, who took a firm interest in global affairs – which is witnessed by his extensive correspondence with European missionaries, travellers, administrators and military personnel in all parts of the world –, could first write, "Even the most distinct races of man are much more like each other in form than would at first be supposed;" but then immediately continue that "certain negro tribes must be excepted […]." (Darwin 2007/1871: 146) On the one hand, Darwin admitted one human species, a single humanity. But for all that, he was still ready to uphold the existence and importance of a deep going racial divide. Racism was still there, but it was hiding behind the role of objective observer of physical traits to which the evolutionists adhered. That role allowed for mistaking outside observation for an objective one, indeed, identifying the two. Once again, a passage of Darwin illustrates that well:

> Whether primeval man, when he possessed but few arts, and those of the rudest kind, and when his power of language was extremely imperfect, would have deserved to be called man, must depend on the definition which we employ. In a series of forms graduating insensibly from some ape-like creature to man as he now exists, it would be impossible to fix on any definite point where the term 'man' ought to be used. But this is a matter of very little importance. So again, it is almost a matter of indifference whether the so-called races of man are thus designated, or are ranked as species or sub-species; but the latter term appears the more appropriate. Finally, we may conclude that when the principle of evolution is generally accepted, as it surely will be before long, the dispute between the monogenists and the polygenists will die a silent and unobserved death. (Darwin 2007/1871: 157)

This proved to be a momentous fallacy because most contemporaries regarded "primeval" and "primitive" to be synonyms. The naturalising diction used made the evolutionists indifferent to the cultural nuances and blind to the political implications of linguistic use. To actually living

humans, however, to be "ranked as species or sub-species" or simply as "man" did make a difference all too real.

One of the covered African writers, Africanus Horton, knew this only too well, and consequently he developed a fundamentally anti-racist view on human variability, referring to his medical training and scientific expertise as well as his far reaching first-hand knowledge of West African countries. However, the Africans` response to Western racism was not uniform. Alexander Crummell, for instance, joined in the Euro-American chorus, accepting many of the racist ideas himself. Although he refuted to accept "race" as the crucial factor for explaining Africa`s backwardness, he adopted almost all the prejudices against Africans who wished for no contact with Western culture. Different again was Edward Wilmot Blyden`s approach. Despite his appreciation of Western civilization, to him, what he called "pure negroes" were crucial in building up that self-conscious "African Personality" that he believed to be necessary for both the improvement of Africa and the betterment of the whole world. Blyden critically responded to the racist challenge of being called inferior but he built up a conceptual scheme of African superiority which was grounded in his readings of the Bible as much as in his acceptance of racial fundamentals.

The evolutionists are marked by an all-embracing, rhetorically powerful "European universalism" (Wallerstein 2006). They adhered to Victorian norms and values. Though they were liberal in political orientation, their liberalism was reserved for the imperial citizens and stopped in the face of the imperial subjects. Neither Darwin nor Huxley, but neither Hunt nor Burton, nor Livingstone and other philanthropists had the meanest doubt about their own superiority. Interestingly, a similar "European universalism" – or Eurocentrism – can be traced in the works of African writers. Alexander Crummell resembled the common Eurocentric points of view the most. He accepted European superiority in almost every sphere of life, knitting together in particular the English language and Christianity. To him civilization and the belief in the Christian god were both sides of a single coin. Christian beliefs were held in high esteem by Africanus Horton too. He likewise accepted the overall superiority of European civilization which to him was manifest in Christianity, commerce and education. However, Horton convincingly demonstrated that "race" could not be seriously used in order to explain the differences in material and spiritual

culture found in Africa and Western Europe. His medical expertise led him to pointing to history and the importance of human relations as the only intelligible means for explanation.

Edward Wilmot Blyden, again, fully embraced European racism but turned it to its head. He announced a godly master plan in which Africans were chosen to fulfil the noblest and most promising role here on earth – that of serving the needs of humanity. In his passion play, slavery became the sign of being chosen for such highest duty – a strange calling indeed. Only in his later life, being somewhat disappointed by the lasting European colonial impact, occasionally Blyden spoke out against European and Christian influences on Africa. For a while he praised the civilizing impact of Islam to the skies. This was in strange reminiscence of Richard Burton whom he had never met, although in 1881 Burton had unsuccessfully tried to "meet the man he admiringly referred to as the "ʾHonorable Professor E.W. Blydenʾ" (Kennedy 2005: 163). With keen sense, Burton had recognised his kindred spirit in Blyden as regards the matter of racial divide.

In Blyden`s last book, *African Life and Customs* (1908), he drafted an idyllic sketch of pristine Africa. Here then at last, David Livingstone`s dream reappeared, now dreamt by an African of diasporic origin who, in several attempts, was searching and struggling for a way – open to men of his appearance – to lead a normal life. It is doubtful that he chose the right route.

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