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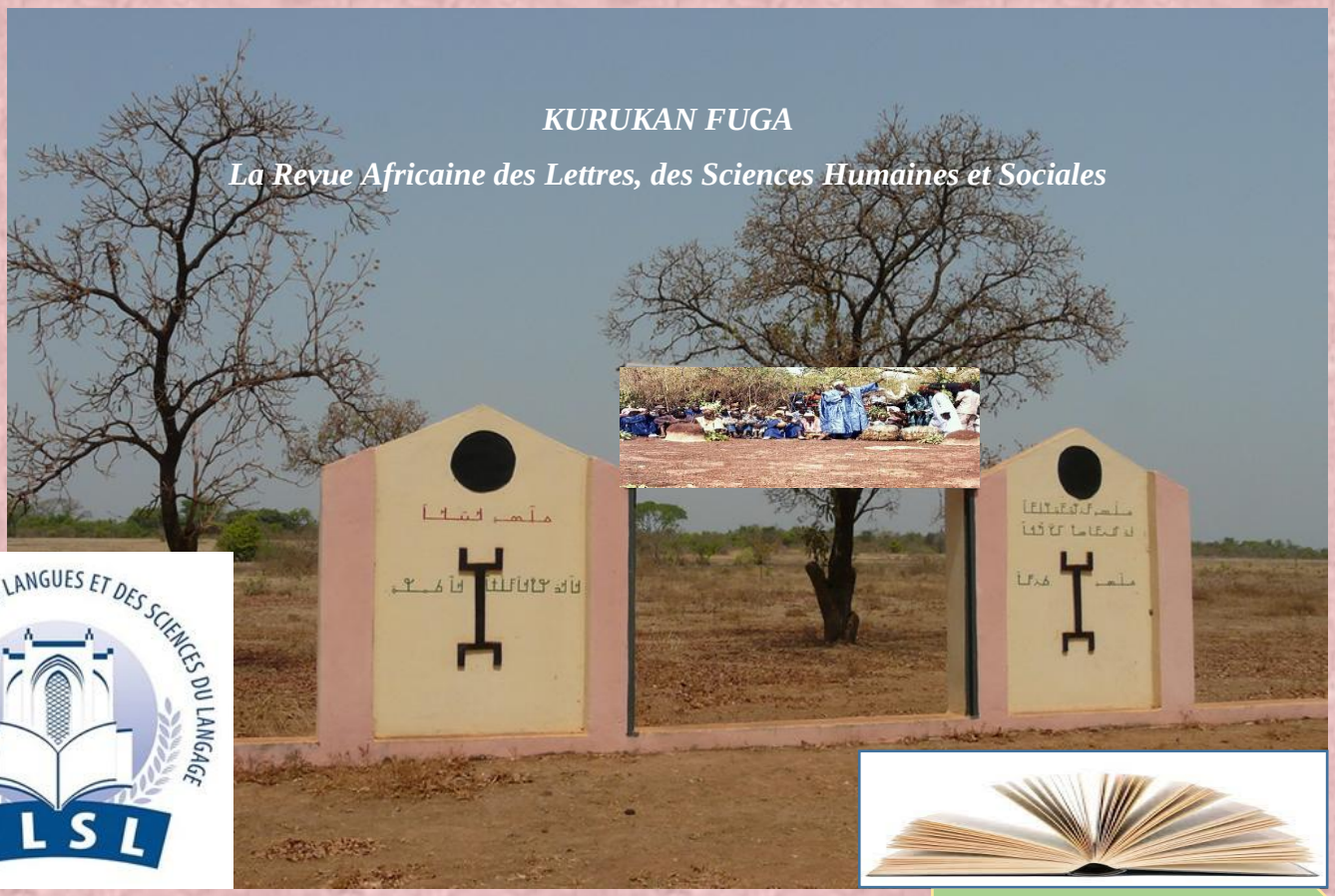

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RETHINKING ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION BEYOND GREEK AND ROMAN LENSES FROM A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Résumé

La civilisation égyptienne ancienne est souvent étudiée à travers les perspectives des historiens grecs et romains, qui l'ont encadrée dans leurs propres paradigmes culturels et intellectuels. Cette approche eurocentrique a influencé les interprétations modernes, éclipsant parfois les perspectives égyptiennes indigènes. Cette étude vise à réévaluer l'Égypte ancienne selon ses propres termes, en utilisant des outils théoriques postcoloniaux pour analyser ses contributions culturelles, politiques et intellectuelles indépendamment des récits grecs et romains. Cette étude aborde la problématique suivante : dans quelle mesure la prédominance des perspectives grecques et romaines a-t-elle façonné les interprétations modernes de la civilisation égyptienne ancienne, et comment un cadre alternatif peut-il fournir une compréhension plus authentique de son héritage historique et culturel? Les principaux objectifs consistent à analyser comment les sources grecques et romaines ont influencé l'historiographie de l'Égypte ancienne et développer un cadre analytique alternatif qui donne la priorité aux sources et aux perspectives égyptiennes indigènes et afrocentriques dans l'interprétation de sa civilisation. L'étude est fondée sur la théorie postcoloniale. La méthodologie utilisée est une recherche qualitative avec une approche comparative et déconstructive. Les données sont collectées par l'analyse du contenu de récits grecs et romains, de livres sur l'Égypte ancienne et de sources d'égyptologues modernes et d'érudits postcoloniaux. L'étude révèle d'abord que les perspectives grecques et romaines ont souvent déformé ou interprété de manière sélective l'histoire égyptienne pour l'adapter à leurs propres récits. Deuxièmement, des aspects clés de la civilisation égyptienne, tels que la gouvernance, la science et les croyances religieuses, ont été avancés indépendamment et ne sont pas simplement des précurseurs des idées gréco-romaines. Enfin, les textes égyptiens indigènes révèlent une perception de soi qui diffère considérablement des descriptions extérieures ultérieures. Sur la base des résultats, l'étude recommande que les chercheurs adoptent une approche historiographique décolonisée qui privilégie les sources égyptiennes primaires, les méthodologies interdisciplinaires et les cadres comparatifs qui ne privilégient pas les traditions classiques occidentales par rapport aux perspectives égyptiennes et africaines.

Mots clés : Civilisation égyptienne ancienne, Approche décolonisée, Eurocentrisme, Historiographie, Théorie postcoloniale.

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Abstract

Ancient Egyptian civilization is often studied through the perspectives of Greek and Roman historians, who framed it within their own cultural and intellectual paradigms. This Eurocentric approach has influenced modern interpretations, sometimes overshadowing indigenous Egyptian perspectives. This study aims to reassess Ancient Egypt on its own terms, using postcolonial theoretical tools to analyze its cultural, political, and

intellectual contributions independently of Greek and Roman narratives. This study addresses the following problematics: to what extent has the dominance of Greek and Roman perspectives shaped modern interpretations of Ancient Egyptian civilization, and how can an alternative framework provide a more authentic understanding of its historical and cultural legacy? The main objectives are to analyze how Greek and Roman sources have influenced the historiography of Ancient Egypt and develop an alternative analytical framework that prioritizes indigenous Egyptian and Afrocentric sources and perspectives in interpreting its civilization. The study is grounded in postcolonial theory. The methodology used is qualitative research with a comparative and deconstructive approach. The data are collected through content analysis of Greek and Roman accounts, books about ancient Egypt and sources from modern Egyptologists and postcolonial scholars. The study first reveals that Greek and Roman perspectives often misrepresented or selectively interpreted Egyptian history to fit their own narratives. Second, key aspects of Egyptian civilization, such as governance, science, and religious beliefs, were advanced independently and not merely precursors to Greco-Roman ideas. Last, indigenous Egyptian texts reveal a self-perception that differs significantly from later external descriptions. Based on the findings, the study recommends that scholars should adopt a decolonized historiographical approach that prioritizes primary Egyptian sources, interdisciplinary methodologies, and comparative frameworks that do not privilege Western classical traditions over Egyptian and African perspectives.
Key words : Ancient Egyptian civilization, Decolonized approach, Eurocentrism, Historiography, Postcolonial theory.

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Introduction

Ancient Egyptian civilization has long been a subject of fascination for scholars, historians, and archaeologists. However, much of the dominant discourse surrounding this civilization has been shaped by Greek and Roman interpretations, often neglecting indigenous perspectives. Western scholarship, particularly from the 19th and early 20th centuries, framed Egypt as an extension of the classical world, emphasizing its connections to Hellenistic and Roman influences rather than appreciating its independent and preexisting cultural, scientific, and philosophical advancements (Bernal, 1987; Asante, 2002). This Eurocentric bias in historical narratives has contributed to the marginalization of native Egyptian perspectives, reinforcing a colonial epistemology that continues to shape modern interpretations. Martin Bernal in *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (1987), argues: "The image of Egypt as the 'Other' of Greece is a modern invention, shaped by European colonial interests rather than historical realities." (p.2) Martin Bernal's statement critically challenges the long-standing Eurocentric narrative that separates ancient Egypt from the development of Greek civilization. His assertion that Egypt was constructed as the "Other" of Greece due to European colonial interests rather than historical realities highlights how modern racial and political ideologies have influenced the study of antiquity.

By framing Egypt as fundamentally distinct from Greece, European scholars reinforced the notion of a purely "Western" intellectual tradition, downplaying the extensive cultural and intellectual exchanges between these civilizations. Bernal's argument aligns with postcolonial critiques that seek to deconstruct these artificial divisions and restore Egypt's rightful place as a foundational contributor to Mediterranean and global history.

Postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said (1978) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) have critiqued the ways in which Western scholarship often distorts and subjugates non-European histories. Within the framework of postcolonial studies, this paper seeks to challenge and rethink Ancient Egyptian civilization beyond the dominant Greek and Roman lenses,

advocating for a decolonized understanding of its history and contributions. Given the growing interest in reclaiming and rewriting African history from indigenous perspectives, this study is both relevant and necessary to reshape historical narratives in a more inclusive and accurate manner. To illustrate the above, Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978), states: "Egypt, like much of the Orient, has been constructed through European discourse, reducing its agency in shaping its own past." (p. 21) Said's statement underscores the way European discourse has historically framed Egypt – and the broader Orient – not as autonomous civilizations but as subjects of Western interpretation and control. By asserting that Egypt's historical agency has been diminished, Said critiques how colonial and Eurocentric scholarship have distorted the representation of non-European cultures, portraying them as passive or stagnant rather than as dynamic participants in shaping their own histories.

This critique is particularly relevant to the study of Egyptology, where Western scholars often positioned Egypt within a Greco-Roman framework, neglecting its deep African and indigenous roots. Said's argument aligns with postcolonial perspectives that challenge the dominance of Western epistemologies in defining non-Western histories, urging scholars to recognize the voices and narratives of the cultures they study.

The historiography of Ancient Egypt has been largely shaped by classical Greco-Roman interpretations, often diminishing the agency and achievements of its indigenous people. While Greek and Roman historians, such as Herodotus and Plutarch, documented aspects of Egyptian culture, their accounts were filtered through external perspectives, frequently presenting Egypt as a mysterious and exotic land rather than as an autonomous civilization with its own intellectual traditions. Furthermore, colonial-era Egyptology reinforced these biases, often portraying Egypt as a mere precursor to Western civilization rather than as a central force in African and world history (Obenga, 2004). Plutarch in *Isis and Osiris* (1^{st} - 2^{nd} century CE), argues: "The wisdom of the Egyptians was revered by the Greeks, and many of their mysteries were adopted into our own traditions." (p. 9) Plutarch's statement reflects the complex and often contradictory Greco-Roman perceptions of Egypt. On one hand, his recognition of Egyptian wisdom and its influence on Greek traditions acknowledges Egypt's intellectual and religious contributions to Mediterranean civilization. This aligns with historical evidence showing that Greek philosophers, such as Pythagoras and Plato, were influenced by Egyptian thought, particularly in mathematics, astronomy, and metaphysics.

However, Plutarch's framing of Egyptian religious practices as "mysteries" reflects a typical Greco-Roman tendency to exoticize Egyptian culture rather than fully engage with its philosophical depth. By portraying Egyptian wisdom as something mysterious or esoteric, he reinforces the idea that Egypt was a land of hidden knowledge rather than an active intellectual force in its own right. This interpretation contributed to later misrepresentations of Egyptian religion as irrational or secretive, a perception that persisted into modern Orientalist discourse.

While Plutarch's account is more respectful than some other Greco-Roman writings, his perspective still reflects an outsider's view, shaped by Greek cultural frameworks. His admiration does not necessarily translate to an accurate or unbiased representation of Egyptian traditions.

This study addresses the problem of historical distortion by critically analyzing how postcolonial theories can help rethink Ancient Egypt beyond Greco-Roman narratives. It seeks to explore alternative perspectives that foreground indigenous Egyptian voices, as well as Afrocentric scholarship that repositions Egypt within an African-centered historical framework. By questioning traditional historiographical methods and advocating for a decolonized approach, this study aims to provide a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of Ancient Egyptian civilization.

The main objective of this study is to challenge Eurocentric interpretations of Ancient Egyptian civilization by applying a postcolonial analytical framework. This study is grounded in postcolonial theory, particularly the works of Edward Said (1978), Frantz Fanon (1961), and Molefi Kete Asante (2007). Said's concept of *Orientalism* is particularly relevant, as it critiques the ways in which Western scholarship has exoticized and misrepresented non-European cultures, including Ancient Egypt. Fanon's analysis of colonial mentality and historical erasure provides insights into how African histories have been reconstructed through a Eurocentric lens. Asante's Afrocentricity offers a methodological alternative that seeks to reclaim African histories from an indigenous standpoint, emphasizing African agency and epistemology.

By utilizing these theoretical frameworks, this study critiques the classical Eurocentric paradigm and explores how African-centered perspectives can offer a more authentic and self-determined understanding of Ancient Egypt. It also examines how the legacy of colonial historiography continues to influence contemporary discussions on Egyptian history and identity.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, drawing from historical analysis, discourse analysis, and comparative historiography. The primary sources include ancient Egyptian texts, inscriptions, and artifacts, as well as accounts from classical Greek and Roman historians. Secondary sources include postcolonial critiques, Afrocentric studies, and contemporary Egyptological research.

The research instruments used include textual analysis of historical documents, critical discourse analysis of scholarly literature, and comparative studies that juxtapose Western and indigenous narratives. The relevance of this methodology lies in its ability to deconstruct colonial historiography while amplifying voices that have traditionally been excluded from dominant narratives. By integrating postcolonial and Afrocentric perspectives, this study offers an alternative framework for interpreting Ancient Egyptian civilization.

The study is comprised of five parts. First, Introduction, which deals with the background and justification of the study, the research questions and objectives and scope and significance of the study, theoretical and methodological frameworks and organization of the study. The second part tackles the misrepresentations of Egypt in Greco – Roman texts. The part three presents the deconstruction of Greco – Roman misrepresentations of Egypt. The fourth part discusses the findings and presents the key aspects of Egyptian civilization analyzed through indigenous and Afrocentric sources and alternative frameworks for studying Egyptian history. The last part deals with the conclusion and recommendations, which includes the summary of findings, and implications for decolonizing historiography.

1. Misrepresentations of Egypt in Greco – Roman Texts

The portrayal of Egypt in Greco-Roman texts has often been shaped by cultural biases, political motives, and misunderstandings. While Egypt was a highly advanced civilization with significant influence on Mediterranean societies, Greco-Roman writers frequently misrepresented its history, culture, and religious beliefs. This paper examines key misrepresentations, their origins, and their impact on historical perceptions of Egypt.

1.1.Greek and Roman Perceptions of Egypt

Greek and Roman writers viewed Egypt through the lens of their own cultural frameworks, often exoticizing or distorting its traditions. Egypt fascinated the Greeks as a land of ancient wisdom, but they also depicted it as mysterious and foreign. The Romans, after conquering Egypt in 30 BCE, reinforced these views, portraying Egyptians as subjects of a decadent and overly mystical civilization. In *Histories (2013),* Herodotus describes Egypt as "the gift of the Nile" but exaggerates certain aspects of Egyptian customs, such as their supposed obsession with cleanliness and elaborate funeral rituals. While his account preserves valuable historical details, it also contains inaccuracies, such as the idea that Egypt was entirely isolated from the rest of Africa. Herodotus in *The Histories,* states: *"Egypt is the gift of the Nile."* (p.5) Herodotus' famous statement underscores the centrality of the Nile River to Egypt's development and sustenance. The quote, though geographically and environmentally accurate, also reflects the Greek historian's attempt to understand and explain Egypt's unique nature within a framework familiar to his Greek audience. Herodotus, often considered the "father of history," presents Egypt not just as a geographical entity but as a civilization inherently shaped by its environment.

On one level, Herodotus' statement acknowledges Egypt's reliance on the annual flooding of the Nile for agricultural fertility, which allowed the civilization to thrive in an otherwise arid region. This river, which provides the life-giving water for agriculture, is indeed the foundation of Egypt’s prosperity. Herodotus’ focus on the Nile highlights Egypt’s agricultural genius and its ability to turn a seemingly inhospitable landscape into a cradle of civilization.

However, from a postcolonial perspective, this quote also speaks to the tendency of Greek writers to reduce Egypt to a passive entity, shaped entirely by external forces – such as the river – rather than emphasizing Egypt's own agency in shaping its culture, politics, and intellectual history. By framing Egypt’s greatness as a "gift" from the Nile, Herodotus subtly downplays the contributions of the Egyptians themselves in developing their civilization, suggesting that Egypt’s success was due more to natural blessings than human ingenuity or cultural achievement.

Moreover, this perspective may reflect a broader Greek tendency to romanticize or idealize foreign civilizations as passive receivers of nature’s bounty, while positioning Greece as the active, intellectual force in the Mediterranean world. It contributes to a narrative that often portrays Egypt as exotic, strange, and dependent on factors beyond its control.

Overall, Herodotus’ quote captures both the respect and the limitations inherent in ancient Greek views of Egypt: admiration for its prosperity, but also a reduction of its agency and achievements.

In *Bibliotheca historica* (1932), Diodorus Siculus includes both admiration and criticism of Egypt. While he credits Egypt with scientific and cultural achievements, he also emphasizes mythical accounts, such as the idea that Egyptian kings were originally gods. He argues: "The Egyptians say that their ancestors were the first of all men and that the Greeks learned from them many of their laws and customs." (p. 10) Siculus' statement highlights a critical tension in Greco-Roman perceptions of Egypt. On one hand, this quote acknowledges the significant influence that Egypt had on Greek culture, particularly in the areas of law, customs, and philosophy. The claim that the Greeks "learned from them" signals a recognition of Egypt as a source of wisdom and foundational knowledge, emphasizing that Greek civilization was indebted to Egypt's intellectual and cultural achievements.

From a historical perspective, this acknowledgment is significant, as ancient Greek thinkers such as Pythagoras, Plato, and Herodotus did indeed draw heavily on Egyptian thought, particularly in areas such as geometry, mathematics, and metaphysical philosophy. Egypt's long-standing history and rich intellectual tradition provided a foundation from which the Greeks could build, and Diodorus is here noting that Egypt's influence was central to the Greeks' development of their own laws and customs.

However, the second part of Diodorus' statement - *"The Egyptians say"* – indicates a level of skepticism or distance. By attributing this idea to the Egyptians themselves, Diodorus places the assertion within the realm of Egyptian self-identity and historical tradition, as though their claims of being the "first of all men" could be viewed as culturally self-serving or exaggerated. This reflects the common Greek tendency to view foreign narratives about their own history with a degree of suspicion, positioning Egypt as the "other" whose claims were worthy of attention but perhaps not fully credible in the Greek worldview.

This statement is also a reminder of how Greco-Roman texts sometimes simultaneously acknowledge the intellectual and cultural contributions of Egypt while framing them in ways that diminish Egyptian agency and autonomy. By presenting the Egyptian view as something to be quoted rather than accepted as fact, Diodorus exemplifies a form of Greco-Roman colonialist discourse, wherein Egyptian knowledge and history are filtered through a Greek lens, ultimately reinforcing Greek superiority.

From a postcolonial perspective, Diodorus' narrative illustrates the subtle ways in which Egyptian contributions were both acknowledged and undermined. The acknowledgment of Egyptian influence is couched within a framework of Greek superiority, implying that while Egypt was respected for its wisdom, it was still viewed as inferior or "other" in comparison to Greek civilization.

Thus, Diodorus' statement both celebrates Egypt's cultural significance and subtly marginalizes its own claims to historical agency, framing Egypt as an important "teacher" to Greece while also positioning it as distant, foreign, and subordinate.

2.2.Religious Misrepresentations

Greco-Roman authors often misunderstood or deliberately altered Egyptian religious beliefs to fit their own cultural perspectives. Greek and Roman writers, such as Juvenal and Plutarch, mocked Egyptian religious practices, particularly the veneration of animals like the

Apis bull and sacred cats. They framed these beliefs as irrational, ignoring the complex theological system behind them. Egyptian religious rituals were frequently misinterpreted as magical rather than spiritual. Roman sources, especially during the later empire, described Egyptian priests as sorcerers rather than religious scholars, reinforcing stereotypes of Egyptian mysticism. Juvenal argues: "The crocodile is worshipped in one place, the ibis in another – foolish and barbarous practices of an enslaved people." (p. 10) Juvenal's quote exemplifies the Roman disdain for Egyptian religious practices, which were frequently depicted as exotic, irrational, and barbaric from the Roman perspective. Juvenal's satirical tone and language contribute to the larger Greco-Roman construction of Egypt as a land of "otherness," marked by perceived superstition, irrationality, and decadence.

The reference to the worship of animals, such as the crocodile and ibis, is a common critique of Egyptian religious practices in ancient Greek and Roman texts. Juvenal's description frames these practices as "foolish and barbarous," implying that such beliefs are primitive and beneath the rationality of Roman society. This reflects the broader Roman tendency to denigrate the religious traditions of Egypt, often portraying them as bizarre or unintelligible rather than recognizing their cultural and spiritual significance.

Additionally, the use of terms like "enslaved people" is significant. Juvenal may be alluding to Egypt's historical political subjugation, particularly its annexation by Rome in 30 BCE, after the defeat of Cleopatra VII. In this context, Juvenal's critique could also reflect Roman superiority over a land once rich in culture and power but now seen as politically and culturally "dominated." His use of "enslaved" evokes the image of a civilization that is both culturally debased and politically subjugated, reinforcing the colonial mindset that positioned Rome as the superior, civilizing force over Egypt.

From a postcolonial perspective, Juvenal's mockery illustrates the deeper, racially charged prejudices of Greco-Roman society toward Egypt and its religious practices. The idea of worshipping animals – deemed irrational by Roman standards – became a symbol of Egyptian "barbarism," used to justify Roman superiority and domination. In this light, Juvenal's satire is not just an attack on specific religious practices but also on the entire cultural and spiritual framework of Egypt, which was often seen as antithetical to Roman ideals of civilization, rationality, and order.

This type of misrepresentation played a significant role in shaping later Western perspectives on Egypt, reinforcing the Orientalist trope of the "irrational East" in contrast to the "rational West." Juvenal's critique reflects how Roman imperialism functioned not only through political and military control but also through cultural and intellectual means, reducing Egyptian civilization to a series of exotic and backward practices that were seen as needing Roman oversight and "correction."

In short, Juvenal's quote encapsulates the Roman tendency to view Egypt through a colonial lens – seeing it as a land of superstition and weakness, reinforcing the idea of Roman superiority and cultural dominance. This misrepresentation served to justify both political domination and the larger Orientalist narratives that would persist in Western thought for centuries.

Consequently, Afrocentric scholars like Cheikh Anta Diop, Théophile Obenga and many others deconstruct the above in their works by providing an African perspective of Egypt. Thus, Molefi K. Asante states:

> The earliest theory of salvation is the Egyptian theory. The Egyptian Mystery System had as its most important object, the deification of man, and taught that the soul of man if liberated from its bodily fetters, could enable him to become godlike and see the Gods in this life and attain the beatific vision and hold communion with the Immortals (Ancient Mysteries, C. H. Vail, P. 25). Plotinus defines this experience as the liberation of the mind from its finite consciousness, when it becomes one and is identified with the Infinite. This liberation was not only freedom of the soul from bodily impediments, but also from the wheel of reincarnation or rebirth. It involved a process of disciplines or purification both for the body and the soul. Since the Mystery System offered the salvation of the soul it also placed great emphasis upon its immortality. The Egyptian Mystery System, like the modern University, was the centre of organized culture, and candidates entered it as the leading source of ancient culture. (p. 23)

Molefi K. Asante's statement draws attention to the profound spiritual and philosophical legacy of ancient Egypt, particularly through its Mystery System, which he argues laid the foundation for concepts of salvation, immortality, and self-deification. Asante's assertion that *"the Egyptian theory of salvation" was the earliest* directly challenges conventional Western narratives, which often downplay Egypt's spiritual and philosophical contributions in favor of Greco-Roman or Christian frameworks. In this context, Asante emphasizes that Egypt's ancient Mystery System was a deeply transformative process designed to elevate the soul, offering both liberation from bodily constraints and spiritual enlightenment.

The mention of the deification of man as a central goal of the Egyptian Mystery System aligns with Egypt's broader religious and philosophical ideas, which often focused on the divine potential within humanity. The belief in the possibility of becoming godlike, either in this life or through spiritual practices, reflects the deeply mystical and esoteric nature of Egyptian religious thought. Asante's reference to the soul's liberation parallels modern interpretations of spiritual enlightenment, where ultimate freedom comes from transcending the physical and reaching an understanding of the divine.

The comparison between the Egyptian Mystery System and the modern university is particularly striking. Asante places Egypt's ancient Mystery System within the realm of organized culture and knowledge, likening it to a formal institution of learning. This comparison underscores the idea that Egyptian religious and philosophical thought was not simply a set of rituals but a sophisticated intellectual tradition that sought to guide individuals toward higher consciousness and ultimate truths. By drawing this parallel, Asante seeks to elevate the Egyptian system as a precursor to structured, higher education systems, challenging Western academic frameworks that often marginalize African intellectual contributions.

Furthermore, Asante's discussion of the "wheel of reincarnation or rebirth" places Egyptian thought in the broader context of global spiritual traditions, suggesting that the Mystery System's ideas about the soul and its journey – both within the body and beyond – prefigured later religious concepts, such as those found in Eastern philosophies. His mention of purification as a necessary process for liberation suggests that the Egyptian Mystery System was not merely a set of beliefs, but a rigorous discipline that involved both mental and physical transformation.

From a postcolonial perspective, Asante's work aims to reclaim and honor Egypt's central place in the development of global spiritual and philosophical systems. The focus on Egypt as the "leading source of ancient culture" challenges the historical erasure of African civilizations and intellectual traditions, which have often been overshadowed by Greco-Roman and later Western dominance. Asante's work reaffirms Egypt's vital role in shaping not only African heritage but also the foundations of global thought.

2.3.Political and Colonial Biases

Greek and Roman rulers used Egypt's image to justify their own power and control over the region. Roman sources, particularly those of writers like Cicero and Plutarch, vilified Cleopatra VII, presenting her as a seductive and manipulative ruler rather than an intelligent and capable leader. This portrayal aligned with Rome's need to justify its conquest of Egypt. Roman texts often depicted Egypt as a place of decadence and luxury, contrasting it with the supposed discipline of Rome. This narrative was politically useful in portraying Roman conquest as a civilizing mission. To illustrate the above, Strabo states: "The Egyptians, by nature, are prone to rebellion, and only firm Roman rule can ensure stability in their land." (p. 10) Strabo's statement reflects a classic example of Greco-Roman perceptions of Egypt as a civilization in need of external control and governance. Strabo, a Greek geographer and historian, often viewed non-Greek societies through a lens shaped by Roman imperial ideology, and this quote encapsulates the Roman belief in their own civilizing and stabilizing influence over "barbarian" lands.

Strabo's characterization of the Egyptians as "prone to rebellion" is a significant and troubling stereotype that was often used by the Romans to justify their imperial dominance. It suggests that Egyptians were inherently unstable, unreliable, or ungovernable, requiring strong external control to maintain order. This kind of portrayal echoes the broader Roman tendency to depict subject peoples – especially those they conquered – as needing the discipline and governance of Roman rule. By portraying Egyptians as rebellious by nature, Strabo not only delegitimizes their political agency but also reinforces the justification for Roman colonial control.

From a postcolonial perspective, Strabo's statement reveals the underlying racial and cultural biases that shaped Roman and later Western interpretations of Egypt. The idea that Egyptians were "prone to rebellion" frames their resistance to foreign rule as an inherent flaw, rather than acknowledging the legitimate desire for autonomy or resistance to foreign oppression. This view echoes colonial narratives that often framed indigenous resistance as barbaric or irrational, ignoring the political and social context that led to such uprisings.

The idea of "firm Roman rule" as a stabilizing force also reflects the imperial mindset that justified the subjugation of Egypt – and many other regions – by framing Roman control as both necessary and benevolent. By positioning Roman rule as the only thing capable of ensuring "stability," Strabo reinforces the colonial ideology that equated foreign domination with peace and order, disregarding the possibility that Egypt might have been capable of governing itself or maintaining stability without foreign interference.

Moreover, Strabo's framing of the Egyptians as "prone to rebellion" also reflects a form of "othering," where Egypt is seen as fundamentally different from the Roman Empire, which viewed itself as the epitome of order and governance. This "othering" of Egypt served to dehumanize its people, portraying them as less civilized, less capable of self-rule, and in need of Roman oversight.

In the context of Roman imperialism, Strabo's statement can be seen as a rhetorical device to legitimize Roman domination over Egypt. It situates Roman authority as a force that tames, controls, and stabilizes, implying that Egypt's civilization, regardless of its historical grandeur, is inherently in need of foreign intervention.

In short, Strabo's quote is a reflection of Roman imperial ideology, which framed Egypt and other conquered lands as inherently chaotic and in need of Roman rule to ensure order. This portrayal is problematic from a postcolonial perspective, as it reduces the complex social, political, and historical realities of Egypt to a simplistic and biased narrative that served to justify colonial subjugation.

Later, the same narrative would be implemented by colonizers through their so-called "the burden of the white man's mission of civilizing Africans". Therefore, they presented Africans as deprived of civilization and history. Consequently, Afrocentric scholars would deconstruct such a view by writing back the history of the continent as illustrated in the following statement: "The history of Africa and the history of Black people did not start in slavery. And it is not going to end with slavery" (Clarke, 1991, p. 16). This quote challenges the Eurocentric narrative that portrays Africans as passive recipients of slavery and colonialism. Clarke emphasizes that African history is much longer and richer than the period of slavery, and that Black people have a future beyond oppression.

In other words, Clarke emphatically asserts that the history of Africa and Black people extends far beyond the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade. This is a crucial point because for too long, the historical narratives of Africans and African descendants were often reduced to, and sometimes even defined by, the experience of enslavement. Clarke's statement is a reminder that this chapter of history, while significant, is not the entirety of the story. By stating that the history did not start with slavery, Clarke draws attention to the rich and diverse cultures, civilization, and histories that existed on the African continent long before the arrival of European colonizers and the Atlantic slave trade. These include the great empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhai, and the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Nubia, and others. These societies had advanced systems of governance, culture, and technology.

Moreover, Clarke's words also emphasize a forward-looking perspective. By asserting that this history "is not going to end with slavery," he signals the resilience and enduring contributions of African and African-descendant communities to the world. It is a call to recognize the ongoing agency and impact of these communities in shaping the future. In short, this statement by John Henrik Clarke serves as a rallying cry for the reclamation of African and African diaspora history, emphasizing its depth, breadth, and enduring significance. It challenges stereotypes and narrow narratives, inviting a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of the historical and contemporary contributions of Black people to the world.

3. Deconstruction of Greco – Roman misrepresentations of Egypt:

The study of ancient Egypt has long been influenced by Greco-Roman narratives, which often misrepresented Egyptian civilization due to cultural biases, political motivations, and limited understanding. These distortions have shaped modern perceptions, reinforcing Eurocentric historical frameworks. Deconstructing these misrepresentations requires incorporating indigenous Egyptian perspectives and archaeological evidence.

3.2.Deconstructing the Myths: Reclaiming Egypt's Narrative

Modern scholarship, archaeology, and critical historiography have challenged Greco-Roman misrepresentations by providing evidence-based reconstructions of Egyptian civilization.

3.2.1.Egypt's Intellectual and Scientific Contributions:

The Greeks often claimed Egyptian wisdom as their own. For instance, figures like Pythagoras and Plato are believed to have studied in Egypt, yet their intellectual debts were minimized in Greek accounts. In *Nations Nègres et Culture*, Check Anta Diop illustrates them as follows:

> The Ethiopians first, the Egyptians then, according to the unanimous testimony of all the ancients, created and brought to an extraordinary degree of development all the elements of civilization while the other peoples especially the Eurasians were plunged into barbarism. The Greeks only took up and developed to some extent the Egyptian inventions, while stripping them, by virtue of their materialistic tendencies, of the "idealistic" religious capacity that surrounded them. The harshness of life in the Eurasian plains seems to have developed... (p. 44)

The foregoing certifies not only the valuable contribution of the ancient Egyptians, but it also shows us the degree of barbarism in which Eurasian countries were plunged. Ancient Egypt brought to humanity all the elements of civilization contrary to the general or Eurocentric views. From the above, it is clear that precolonial Egypt was not a land of violence, theft, persecutions, etc. It was instead a peaceful land on which justice and wealth were equally shared. The harshness of the environment forged Europeans and condemned them to survival. That is why, they exercised violence first on one another and then annexed the rest of the world. The cruelty of the environment led them to developing a certain form of individualism that pushes them to exercise all sorts of immoral practices. Moreover, the quote underscores the historical contributions of the Ethiopians and Egyptians to the early development of civilization. It implies that these African societies were at the forefront of cultural and technological progress, a perspective often overlooked in Eurocentric historical narratives.

The reference to the "unanimous testimony of all the ancients" suggests that multiple ancient sources acknowledged the achievements of Ethiopians and Egyptians. This emphasizes the historical significance of these civilizations and their impact on the ancient world. The quote acknowledges that Greek civilization was influenced by Egyptian inventions but notes that the Greeks, due to their materialistic tendencies, stripped away the religious and idealistic aspects that surrounded these inventions. This observation highlights the interplay of cultural values and influences among civilizations.

The quote also draws a contrast between the values and practices of African societies (such as Egyptians) and those of Eurasian plains. It suggests that the harsh conditions of Eurasian plains led to different moral values, including acceptance of practices like theft, nomadism, and war. This comparison reflects the diverse development of moral and ethical systems across different regions. This quote offers a historical perspective on the development of civilization, emphasizing the complexity of cultural interactions and value systems in early human societies. It challenges the idea of a monolithic or linear path of progress, highlighting the diversity of human experiences and interpretations of morality. The quote in the end acknowledges the importance of recognizing the contributions of African civilization to early human development. It counters historical narratives that have sometimes marginalized or downplayed the role of African societies in shaping world history. In short, this quote highlights the early contributions of African civilization, specifically the Ethiopians and Egyptians, to the development of human civilization. It also underscores the complexity of cultural values and their influence on the trajectory of civilizations, challenging simplistic or Eurocentric views of history.

The *Rhind Mathematical Papyrus* and the *Edwin Smith Papyrus* show that Egyptians developed advanced mathematics and medical practices long before Greek civilization. Arnold Buffum Chace (1927) states:

> We have very few traces of Egyptian arithmetic from a date earlier than the original sources of the Rhind papyrus. But before this date there was a long period of Egyptian civilization, and we may well believe that for more than a thousand years there had been a slow development of the elaborate system before us. The Egyptians apparently conceived of two kinds of numbers, an ascending series from 1 to 1,000,000 of numbers that we call integers, and a corresponding descending series consisting of % and reciprocal numbers or unit fractions. (p.3)

Arnold Buffum Chace's statement highlights the complexities of ancient Egyptian mathematics, particularly in the context of its development over a long period of time.

Chace's emphasis on the *Rhind Papyrus* underscores the significant role that this document, dating from around 1650 BCE, plays in our understanding of Egyptian arithmetic. The Rhind Papyrus is one of the oldest surviving texts detailing Egyptian mathematical knowledge, and it offers a glimpse into the methods Egyptians used to solve mathematical problems, especially in areas like measurement, commerce, and construction. Chace acknowledges that there were no comprehensive records of Egyptian arithmetic before the Rhind Papyrus, but suggests that the system presented in it must have had centuries of development prior to this time. This reflects a broader understanding that ancient civilizations, including Egypt, built upon accumulated knowledge over millennia, even if much of it has been lost or is difficult to trace.

Chace also points out the distinctive approach the Egyptians had to numbers. The reference to *two kinds of numbers* – integers (whole numbers) and unit fractions – illustrates the unique way Egyptians conceptualized and worked with numerical values. Unlike modern systems that use a base-10 system to represent all numbers, the Egyptians employed a system that emphasized unit fractions, which are fractions with a numerator of 1 (e.g., 1/2, 1/3, 1/4). Their mathematical system, especially in dealing with large numbers, was largely built on summing

these unit fractions to represent quantities. This method may seem cumbersome by today's standards, but it was highly effective in the practical contexts in which it was used, such as for trade, land measurement, and the construction of monumental architecture like the pyramids.

From a postcolonial perspective, Chace's analysis of Egyptian arithmetic provides a powerful counter-narrative to the long-standing dismissal of ancient Egyptian intellectual achievements. For much of history, Egypt was perceived through a Eurocentric lens that undervalued its contributions to science, mathematics, and other intellectual disciplines. Chace's focus on the sophistication of Egyptian mathematical concepts – especially the dual series of integers and unit fractions – helps to elevate Egypt's historical contributions to world civilization and challenges modern assumptions about the primacy of Greek and Roman mathematical traditions.

The construction of the pyramids and temples reflects sophisticated engineering and astronomical alignments, contradicting Greek depictions of Egyptian knowledge as mystical rather than scientific. Molefi K. Asante argues:

> Geometry and Arithmetic were sciences of transcendental space and numeration, the comprehension of which provided the key not only to the problems of one's being; but also to those physical ones, which are so baffling today, owing to our use of the inductive methods. Astronomy dealt with the knowledge and distribution of latent forces in man, and the destiny of individuals, laces and nations. (p. 24)

Molefi K. Asante's statement presents a deeply philosophical and spiritual perspective on the ancient Egyptian sciences, elevating them beyond mere practical tools to a profound understanding of the cosmos and human existence.

Asante's interpretation suggests that, for the ancient Egyptians, geometry and arithmetic were not just technical fields of study focused on numbers and measurements. Instead, they were seen as gateways to understanding *transcendental space* – a realm beyond the physical, tied to the metaphysical and spiritual dimensions of existence. This aligns with the idea that Egyptian knowledge systems were intricately connected to their broader worldview, where everything, from the material to the spiritual, was interrelated. Geometry, in this context, was not merely about the measurement of land or the construction of buildings, but a way to understand the underlying order of the universe. Arithmetic, similarly, was more than counting; it was a means to comprehend the patterns and rhythms of life, nature, and the cosmos.

By suggesting that these sciences provided the *key to one's being*, Asante is emphasizing that the knowledge of mathematics and geometry was integral to understanding not just the world around the Egyptians, but also their place within it. This knowledge, in turn, could guide individuals in resolving the *baffling* physical problems that still trouble us today. Asante's critique of modern science, particularly the use of *inductive methods*, highlights a disconnection in contemporary scientific inquiry from the holistic, integrated approach of ancient Egyptian thought. Inductive methods, which rely on observations and generalizations to build theories, might miss the broader metaphysical insights that the Egyptians embedded within their systems of knowledge. In contrast, the Egyptians saw the physical world as a reflection of deeper spiritual truths and cosmic order, blending empirical observation with metaphysical understanding.

The reference to astronomy in Asante's quote further elaborates this idea, positioning it as a discipline that connected human existence with cosmic forces. For the Egyptians, astronomy was not simply about charting the stars and planets; it was about understanding the *latent forces* that governed both the cosmos and the human soul. In this view, the study of celestial movements and the distribution of forces was linked to the understanding of human fate, destiny, and the lives of nations. This reflects the deep interconnection between Egyptian science, spirituality, and political life – where understanding the stars could offer insights into the future of individuals and entire civilizations.

From a postcolonial perspective, Asante's view of Egyptian science counters the Eurocentric narrative that often sidelines African civilizations in the history of science and philosophy. By placing ancient Egypt at the center of knowledge about the cosmos and human existence, Asante challenges the historical erasure of Egypt's intellectual and spiritual contributions, which were long overlooked or misrepresented by Western scholars. This view is not only a reclamation of Egypt's intellectual legacy but also a critique of modern science, which, Asante argues, has become overly fragmented and disconnected from the holistic, integrative wisdom of ancient African knowledge systems.

In this context, Asante's argument serves as a powerful reminder that the ancient Egyptians were not merely primitive or pre-scientific, as often portrayed in colonial discourse, but were engaged in sophisticated systems of thought that addressed the full spectrum of human experience, from the physical to the spiritual. Their knowledge of geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy was deeply intertwined with their metaphysical understanding of existence and their view of the universe as a holistic, interconnected system.

In a nutshell, Asante's statement highlights the profound and integrated nature of ancient Egyptian knowledge systems. It positions Egyptian science as a key to understanding the physical and metaphysical dimensions of life, offering an alternative to the often fragmented and reductionist approaches of modern science. This interpretation is crucial in the process of decolonizing the history of science, as it invites a reevaluation of the contributions of African civilizations to global intellectual heritage and challenges the dominant Eurocentric narrative that has historically marginalized these contributions.

3.2.2.The Myth of Egypt's Stagnation

The idea that Egypt remained unchanged for thousands of years is inaccurate. Political shifts, such as the transitions between the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, demonstrate evolution in governance, military strategies, and cultural development. Egyptian art and architecture also evolved, with styles adapting in response to internal and external influences, including Nubian, Levantine, and later Hellenistic elements. George G. M. James in *Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy* (1954) states:

> For centuries the world has been misled about the original source of the Arts and Sciences; for centuries Socrates, Plato and Aristotle have been falsely idolized as models of intellectual greatness; and for centuries the African continent has been called the Dark Continent, because Europe coveted the honor of transmitting to the world, the Arts and Sciences. (1954, p.8)

The foregoing shows the extinct to which the ancient Egyptian's philosophy was falsely attributed to the Greeks. For many years, such a falsification dominated the world and the sphere of sciences. Thanks to the works of James and the like, Egypt is recognized today as the birthplace of sciences and not Greece or the Western world. In other words, the quote challenges the traditional Western narrative that often highlights figures like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as the sole models of intellectual greatness. By doing so, it encourages a reevaluation of intellectual history to acknowledge contributions from other parts of the world, particularly Africa. The quote also points out that Africa has been referred to as the "Dark Continent" in historical discourse. This term has been used to suggest that Africa was a place devoid of civilization or intellectual achievements, which is a stereotype and misrepresentation of the continent's rich history and diverse cultures.

It suggests that Europe had a vested interest in being seen as the sole transmitter of arts and sciences to the world. This can be interpreted as a critique of Eurocentrism, a perspective that places Europe at the center of historical and intellectual developments while marginalizing the contributions of other regions. The quote calls for recognizing Africa's contributions to the arts and sciences. This aligns with efforts in Afrocentric scholarship to highlight the intellectual and cultural achievements of African civilization throughout history. The quote likely emerged within a broader context of challenging colonial-era narratives and advocating for a more inclusive and accurate understanding of history. It reflects a desire to rectify historical misrepresentations and elevate the contributions of African culture. It alludes to the idea that African civilization made significant contributions to human knowledge, arts, and sciences. This idea has gained increasing recognition in modern scholarship, which emphasizes the advanced nature of ancient African cultures like Egypt, Mali, and others. In short, this quote encourages a critical reevaluation of traditional narratives about intellectual history and Africa's role in it. It highlights the need to move away from Eurocentric perspectives and recognize the diverse and significant contributions of African civilization to the world's cultural and intellectual heritage.

3.2.3.Reinterpreting Religious Practices

Greco-Roman authors often depicted Egyptian religion as overly ritualistic or irrational. However, Egyptian religious beliefs were deeply philosophical, based on concepts such as *ma'at* (cosmic balance) and ethical judgment in the afterlife. Temples were not only religious centers but also hubs of administration, education, and economic activity, challenging the notion that Egypt was dominated solely by a priestly elite. Molefi K Asante thus deconstructs the forgoing as follows:

> Their education consisted not only in the cultivation of the ten virtues, which were made a condition to eternal happiness, but also of the seven Liberal Arts which were intended to liberate the soul. There was also admission to the Greater Mysteries, where an esoteric philosophy was taught to those who had demonstrated their proficiency. (Ancient Mysteries C. H. Vail p. 24–25). Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic were disciplines of moral nature by means of which the irrational tendencies of a human being were purged away, and he was trained to become a living witness of the Divine Logos. (p. 24)

Molefi K. Asante's interpretation of ancient Egyptian education, as conveyed in the quote, offers a profound reflection on the holistic and spiritual nature of ancient Egyptian education, emphasizing its moral and metaphysical foundations.

Asante's description of Egyptian education highlights that it was not merely focused on technical or practical knowledge, but rather on the cultivation of virtues that were essential for achieving eternal happiness and spiritual liberation. The *ten virtues* referenced here could be seen as an early form of moral education aimed at shaping the character of individuals in alignment with higher, divine principles. This aspect of education was not about rote learning or intellectual prowess alone; it was about guiding individuals toward a deeper understanding of their place in the universe, their relationship with the Divine, and the cultivation of a virtuous life that would ensure spiritual elevation.

The mention of the *seven Liberal Arts* further expands on the intellectual scope of Egyptian education. In this context, these disciplines – traditionally known in the Western tradition as subjects like grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy – are described as tools for the liberation of the soul. The educational process was therefore one of spiritual growth, intellectual development, and moral refinement. The aim was to liberate the soul, purging it of the *irrational tendencies* that clouded human judgment and spiritual clarity. These *irrational tendencies* could refer to emotions or impulses that were seen as hindrances to achieving harmony with the Divine order of the cosmos.

Asante's emphasis on the role of *Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic* as moral disciplines is particularly insightful. These subjects were traditionally seen in Western education as essential for intellectual training, but Asante's interpretation invites a deeper, more spiritual reading. Grammar, rhetoric, and logic were not merely tools for communication or intellectual argumentation; they were viewed as processes through which individuals could purify themselves morally. The idea of becoming a *living witness of the Divine Logos* is a powerful concept, suggesting that through mastering these disciplines, an individual could embody divine principles and become an example of divine order in the world.

This approach to education also reveals a key aspect of ancient Egyptian thought: the integration of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of life. In ancient Egyptian society, knowledge was not compartmentalized or segregated into separate domains of thought, as it often is in modern education. Instead, intellectual pursuits were intimately connected with ethical and spiritual growth. This unified worldview challenges modern educational systems that often treat intellectual development and moral/spiritual growth as distinct or unrelated fields.

From a postcolonial perspective, Asante's analysis offers a powerful counterpoint to the long-standing view that African education systems – especially those of ancient Egypt – were primitive or unsophisticated. By emphasizing the profound moral and spiritual dimensions of Egyptian education, Asante reclaims a rich intellectual heritage that was often minimized or misrepresented in Western discourse. His analysis shows that ancient Egyptian education was deeply philosophical, aiming to cultivate not only the mind but also the soul, in pursuit of a higher understanding of the cosmos and human existence.

Furthermore, Asante's analysis challenges the often Eurocentric perspective that sees Western traditions as the pinnacle of intellectual and educational development. The description of the *Greater Mysteries* and the esoteric philosophy taught to the most advanced students underscores the depth and complexity of Egyptian knowledge, which was far more than just a precursor to later Western intellectual traditions. It was a sophisticated, self-contained system that integrated spirituality, ethics, and intellectual development in ways that modern Western systems often fail to achieve.

All in all, Asante's deconstruction of ancient Egyptian education highlights the deeply spiritual and holistic nature of their intellectual traditions. By focusing on the liberation of the soul through the mastery of intellectual disciplines, he paints a picture of an educational system that was designed to prepare individuals not only for worldly life but also for spiritual ascension. This vision of education contrasts sharply with the secular, compartmentalized education systems that have dominated the Western world since the Enlightenment. Asante's argument is a powerful reminder of the intellectual and spiritual contributions of ancient African civilizations, which have often been overlooked or misunderstood.

3.2.4.Challenging Racial and Ethnic Misrepresentations

Greco-Roman writers often depicted Egypt as separate from Africa, aligning it more closely with the Mediterranean world. G. W. F. Hegel's assertion in his *Philosophy of History* (1820s), divides Africa up into three regions: **North Africa, Egypt,** and **"Africa proper."** Hegel describes the region thus:

> *Africa proper*, as far as History goes back, has remained — for all purposes of connection with the rest of the World — shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed within itself — the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night. Its isolated character originates, not merely in its tropical nature, but essentially in its geographical condition... (p.109).

The foregoing assertion is no more than a pure racist division of the African continent. It is not based on any historical and scientific documents. Wherever there is a people, there are civilization, culture and historical grounds. Africa has never been cut off the rest of the world. It developed early in history commercial links with the other parts of the globe. In the past, Africans were so civilized that even if they went a war, there would be times of ceasefire to allow the warriors to work the farms. Women and children were also avoided during the wars. But we have seen in the West wars devastating everything, including children and women and most of the time extermination of an entire community. The quote as stated by Hegel highlights the geographical condition of Africa as a factor contributing to its historical isolation. Africa's vast size, diverse landscapes, and geographical features such as deserts and dense forests did, indeed, create challenges for early intercontinental connections and exchanges. The phrase "enveloped in the dark mantle of Night" is a metaphor that suggests Africa's historical obscurity or lack of visibility in the global historical narrative. Similarly, describing it as the "land of childhood" implies that Africa's historical development might have been less documented or understood in comparison to regions with more extensive written records. However, archaeological and linguistic evidence confirms Egypt's deep connections with Nubia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Modern Afrocentric scholarship, led by thinkers like Cheikh Anta Diop, has highlighted Egypt's African cultural and genetic heritage, countering colonial-era narratives that sought to Europeanize ancient Egyptian history. He therefore argues: "The Ancient Egyptians were Negroes. The moral fruit of their civilization is to be counted among the assets of the Black world." (Diop, 1987, p. 34.)

Diop asserts that the achievements of ancient Egypt should be considered as a part of the broader African legacy, as the ancient Egyptians were Black Africans. This challenges the Eurocentric view that ancient Egypt was a non-African civilization. It is also a testimony that Egypt has never been part of Asia as stated and affirmed by Hegel. Egypt has always been an integral part of Africa geographically and most importantly culturally. Diop, along with other Afrocentric scholars, argued that the ancient Egyptians were of black African descent. This perspective seeks to reclaim African heritage and reposition it at the center of world history. Diop's reference to the "moral fruit of their civilization" underscores the broader impact of ancient Egyptian culture. He suggests that the ethical and cultural values developed by the ancient Egyptians should be recognized as valuable contributions to the broader "Black world," which encompasses the African diaspora.

Furthermore, this quote is empowering for people of African descent as it asserts a shared heritage and cultural legacy. It challenges narratives that have historically marginalized or obscured the contributions of Africans to world civilization. It is important to note that Diop's views, particularly regarding the racial identity of the ancient Egyptians, have been a subject of scholarly debate and controversy. Some scholars argue that the issue of racial identity in the ancient world is complex and may not align neatly with modern racial categories.

3.3.Moving Beyond Greco-Roman Lenses

To reconstruct a more accurate image of Egypt, scholars and educators must prioritize indigenous Egyptian and Afrocentric perspectives, interdisciplinary research, and decolonized historical methodologies. That means using hieroglyphic, hieratic, and demotic texts rather than relying solely on Greek and Roman accounts. Then, recognizing Egypt's connections with neighboring African civilizations, such as Nubia and Kush, to provide a more holistic view of its place in world history. Cheikh Anta Diop argues: "Egypt is the key to the ancient world, the best guide to the understanding of African humanity." (Diop, 1974, p. 6.) Diop, through the above statement, suggests that ancient Egypt is essential to understanding African history and civilization. He argues that the cultural achievements of ancient Egypt are a part of the broader African heritage and should be viewed as such.

Therefore, the study of ancient Egypt is of paramount importance and starting point for any postcolonial African in their search of the origins of humanity. Moreover, Diop emphasized the importance of cultural continuity in understanding ancient Egyptian civilization. He demonstrated that many cultural practices and beliefs in ancient Egypt had parallels in other African societies, providing evidence for the interconnectedness of African civilization.

Greco-Roman texts have long shaped the way Egypt has been perceived, often distorting its history through exoticization, political propaganda, and cultural appropriation. By critically analyzing these misrepresentations and incorporating indigenous Egyptian and Afrocentric

sources, modern scholarship can reconstruct a more accurate and nuanced understanding of Egypt's civilization. Breaking free from Greco-Roman frameworks allows for a richer appreciation of Egypt's true historical legacy, independent of foreign biases.

3.4.Writing and Intellectual Contributions

Egyptian civilization made significant advancements in writing, science, and mathematics. Walter Rodney argues: "Egypt was not only a great producer of knowledge in ancient times; she was also a great transmitter of knowledge to the rest of the world." (1972, p. 73). Rodney argues through the foregoing that Egypt not only produced knowledge, but also played a crucial role in disseminating knowledge to other parts of the world. Ancient Egypt indeed made substantial contributions to various fields of knowledge, including mathematics, medicine, architecture, and astronomy. The civilization's achievements in these domains are well documented and have had a lasting impact on human history.

Egypt's role as a transmitter of knowledge is equally noteworthy. Through trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchanges, Egypt shared its expertise with neighboring regions, such as the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean world. This knowledge transfer played a vital role in the development of other civilizations. Egypt's prominence as a center of learning and culture fostered interaction with neighboring civilizations, leading to a rich exchange of ideas. For instance, ancient Greece was influenced significantly by Egyptian mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy, as acknowledged by scholars like Herodotus and Aristotle. Moreover, the quote highlights Egypt's global significance in the context of knowledge dissemination. Its contributions not only enriched the local culture but also had a broader impact on the world's intellectual heritage. This emphasizes the interconnectedness of ancient civilizations and the role of Egypt as a key player in this global exchange. Recognizing Egypt's dual role as a creator and transmitter of knowledge is essential for understanding the dynamics of ancient civilizations. It showcases how knowledge and innovation were shared and propagated across borders, contributing to the collective advancement of human civilization.

In short, the quote acknowledges Egypt's pivotal role in the history of knowledge by emphasizing its contributions and its function as a bridge for the transmission of knowledge to other parts of the ancient world. Egypt's legacy continues to be a subject of study and inspiration in contemporary times, highlighting the enduring impact of its intellectual and cultural achievements. Egypt's ancient civilization was undoubtedly a center of intellectual and cultural achievement. From advancements in mathematics and architecture to the development of hieroglyphic writing and medical practices, Egypt made significant contributions to various fields of knowledge. The construction of monumental structures like the pyramids is a testament to their architectural and engineering prowess. Beyond its own intellectual achievements, Egypt played a crucial role in transmitting knowledge to other civilizations. This transmission occurred through various means, including trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. Egypt's strategic location at the crossroads of Africa and Asia facilitated the exchange of ideas and technologies.

One of the most well-known examples of Egypt's influence is its impact on ancient Greece. Greek scholars, including Pythagoras and Herodotus, are believed to have traveled to Egypt to study various subjects, such as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. They brought back

knowledge and insights that would later shape Western thought and philosophy.[9] Egypt's contributions to knowledge continue to be a subject of study and fascination in the modern era. Archaeological discoveries, such as the Rosetta Stone, have provided invaluable insights into Egypt's ancient language and culture.

Additionally, the preservation of papyrus scrolls has allowed scholars to decipher and understand ancient Egyptian texts. This quote highlights the importance of considering Egypt's historical significance within the broader context of human civilization. Egypt's role as a knowledge producer and transmitter is a testament to the interconnectedness of ancient societies and the enduring legacy of their contributions. In summary, Egypt's historical importance in the production and transmission of knowledge is well documented.

It serves as a reminder of the rich tapestry of human history and the way in which civilizations have influenced and enriched one another through the ages. "The pyramids are not just a memorial to some Pharaohs; they are also evidence of the highly developed technology which Africans had achieved more than four thousand years ago" (1972, p. 65). Here, Rodney challenges the Eurocentric view that the pyramids were built solely by non-African people and asserts the technological advancements achieved by ancient Africans. The construction of the Egyptian pyramids, especially the Great Pyramid of Giza, remains a testament to the advanced engineering and architectural capabilities of ancient Egyptians. These monumental structures were built with remarkable precision and ingenuity, considering the limited technological resources available at the time.

The above quote rightly attributes the technological prowess to Africans. It is crucial to acknowledge that Egypt is part of the African continent, and its achievements are an integral part of African history. The pyramids are symbolic of the broader technological achievements in various African regions. The pyramids have global significance as architectural marvels and cultural icons. They continue to captivate the imagination of people worldwide and are recognized as some of the most iconic structures in human history. Their construction methods and mathematical precision continue to be subjects of study and admiration.

Understanding the technological achievements of ancient civilizations, such as those in Africa, provides a broader historical perspective. It challenges the notion that advanced technology and civilization were exclusive to certain regions and peoples. It also challenges Eurocentric narratives that historically marginalized or overlooked African contributions to human civilization. The preservation of the pyramids and ongoing archaeological research allow modern scholars to gain insights into the engineering techniques, tools, and labor practices of ancient Egypt. This knowledge contributes to a deeper understanding of the capabilities of ancient African societies. In short, the quote emphasizes the importance of recognizing and celebrating the technological achievements of ancient African civilizations, particularly in the context of the iconic Egyptian pyramids. These structures stand as enduring symbols of human ingenuity and serve as a reminder of Africa's rich historical and technological legacy.

As a matter of fact, Bernal highlights the contributions of African civilization to the development of Western civilization in the following lines: “The Greeks were impressed by the high level of civilization in Egypt and so set about incorporating elements of it into their own

culture. But they were never able to completely conceal the fact that much of their knowledge came from the Egyptians." (1987, p. 146).

Bernal argues that the contributions of ancient African civilization to the development of Western civilization have been systematically ignored or downplayed by Eurocentric scholars. He suggests that the academic establishment has been shaped by colonialism and racism, leading to a distorted view of history. Moreover, the quote highlights that the Greeks, known for their contributions to Western civilization, were deeply influenced by the advanced civilization of Egypt. It suggests that elements of Egyptian culture and knowledge were incorporated into Greek culture. The quote also acknowledges the high level of civilization in Egypt and how the Greeks were impressed by it. It underscores the importance of recognizing the achievements of Egyptian civilization, which often served as a source of inspiration for other ancient cultures. The quote suggests that the Greeks did not entirely conceal the fact that much of their knowledge came from Egypt. This implies that there was an awareness of the influence, and it was not entirely hidden or denied. It highlights the notion of cultural exchange and diffusion of knowledge between civilizations. The Greeks, like many other societies throughout history, benefited from interactions with neighboring or advanced cultures, incorporating aspects of these cultures into their own.

The quote contributes to a more accurate historical understanding by dispelling the idea that Greek civilization developed in isolation. It recognizes the interconnectedness of ancient cultures and challenges any Eurocentric biases that downplay the contributions of non-Western civilizations. In short, this quote emphasizes the significant influence of Egyptian civilization on ancient Greece and how elements of Egyptian culture and knowledge were absorbed into Greek culture. It serves as a reminder of the importance of acknowledging the contributions of various civilizations to the development of human culture and knowledge.

4. Key Aspects of Egyptian civilization

The civilization of ancient Egypt, one of the world's oldest and most enduring cultures, flourished for thousands of years along the banks of the Nile River. Its legacy continues to influence contemporary society, not only in terms of architectural marvels but also in its contributions to philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and spirituality. Here are some of the key aspects of Egyptian civilization that defined its uniqueness and long-standing impacts:

4.1. **Geography and the Nile River**

The Nile River was central to the development and sustenance of Egyptian civilization. Egypt was a desert region, but the Nile's annual flooding provided fertile soil, which enabled agriculture to flourish. This geographic feature is why the Egyptians often referred to their land as "the gift of the Nile." The river also served as a transportation route and provided a natural barrier from invaders, contributing to the long stability and continuity of the civilization.

4.2.Religion and Spirituality

Religion permeated every aspect of Egyptian life. The Egyptians were polytheistic, worshipping a vast array of gods and goddesses, each with specific domains and attributes.

Among the most prominent deities were **Ra** (the Sun God), **Osiris** (God of the afterlife), **Isis** (Goddess of magic and motherhood), and **Horus** (God of kingship). The concept of **Ma'at** – the divine order, truth, and justice – was central to Egyptian religion, with the Pharaohs believed to be divine representatives of the gods on Earth.

The Egyptians also had a complex understanding of the afterlife. The idea of an eternal soul and the pursuit of immortality were paramount, leading to the development of elaborate burial practices, including mummification, and monumental tombs like the **Pyramids** of Giza. The famous ***Book of the Dead*** served as a guide to the afterlife, outlining spells and rituals to ensure a safe passage to the realm of Osiris.

4.3.Pharaohs and Political Structure

Egypt was a theocratic monarchy, with the Pharaohs regarded not only as political leaders but also as living gods. The Pharaoh was the supreme ruler and the intermediary between the gods and the people. This divine kingship gave the Pharaohs considerable authority and power to maintain law and order, oversee monumental building projects, and lead military campaigns. The political structure of Egypt was highly centralized, with a strong bureaucracy to manage affairs like agriculture, taxation, and trade.

Egyptian society was stratified, with the Pharaoh at the top, followed by priests, scribes, artisans, farmers, and slaves. However, the relatively stable political system allowed for social mobility, especially for those who were educated, such as scribes, who played an essential role in governance and record-keeping.

4.4.Architecture and Monumental Construction

Ancient Egypt is perhaps best known for its architectural achievements, which include the construction of the pyramids, temples, tombs, and the great Sphinx. These structures were not only feats of engineering but also served religious, political, and social purposes. The pyramids, such as the Great Pyramid of Giza, were built as tombs for Pharaohs, reflecting the Egyptians' deep reverence for the afterlife. These massive structures were aligned with celestial bodies and represented the Pharaoh's power and divine status.

Temples, such as the Temple of Karnak and the Temple of Luxor, were also significant, built to honor gods and goddesses. The scale and grandeur of these buildings were intended to inspire awe and demonstrate the wealth and power of the Pharaoh.

4.5.Writing and Intellectual Achievements

The Egyptians developed a complex writing system called **hieroglyphics**, which combined logographic and alphabetic elements. Hieroglyphics were used for religious texts, monumental inscriptions, and administrative records. The ability to read and write hieroglyphs was a skill associated with the educated elite, particularly the scribes who held significant roles in Egyptian society.

Egyptian intellectual achievements extended beyond writing. Egyptians made major contributions to **mathematics** and **geometry**, which were applied in architecture, land surveying, and the creation of calendars. **Astronomy** was vital for determining the flooding cycles of the Nile and aligning structures with celestial events. **Medicine** in ancient Egypt was

highly advanced, with practitioners using a variety of herbs, surgical techniques, and knowledge of the human body to treat ailments.

4.6.Art and Culture

Egyptian art was highly symbolic and adhered to a strict set of conventions that emphasized order and harmony. Art was often used for religious purposes, such as decorating tombs and temples with depictions of gods, Pharaohs, and the afterlife. Unlike Western art, Egyptian art prioritized the symbolic representation of the divine and eternal, often focusing on the **preservation of the soul** and the afterlife rather than individualistic or naturalistic portrayals.

Music and **dance** were also important cultural elements in Egyptian society, often linked to religious rituals and celebrations. The use of instruments like the lyre, flute, and drum was widespread, and festivals played a crucial role in maintaining the relationship between the people and the gods.

4.7.Economy and Trade

The Egyptian economy was primarily agrarian, with the fertile land along the Nile supporting crops like wheat, barley, and flax. The Egyptians also raised cattle, goats, and other livestock. **Trade** played an important role in Egypt's economy, with the civilization engaging in commerce with neighboring regions, including Nubia, Mesopotamia, and the Mediterranean. This trade network allowed Egypt to obtain valuable materials like timber, gold, and precious stones that were not readily available in Egypt.

Craftsmanship also flourished in Egypt, with skilled artisans producing jewelry, pottery, textiles, and other goods. Scribes, merchants, and traders played crucial roles in the administration and economic activities.

4.8.Social Structure and Daily Life

Egyptian society was hierarchical, with distinct classes ranging from the Pharaoh and elite priests to farmers and laborers. However, the structure was relatively stable, and there was some degree of mobility, particularly through education and employment in the bureaucracy or priesthood. Family life was central to Egyptian society, with a strong emphasis on respect for elders and the continuity of the family line. Women had significant rights, including owning property, initiating divorce, and serving in priestly roles.

Daily life in Egypt was influenced by the cycles of the Nile, with most people working as farmers or laborers. Urban centers, such as **Thebes** and **Memphis**, were bustling hubs of commerce, culture, and religious life.

4.9.Science and Medicine

The ancient Egyptians were pioneers in fields like **medicine** and **anatomy**, applying their knowledge of the human body to develop early surgical techniques and medicinal practices. Their understanding of the circulatory system, for example, was advanced for its time, and many of their medical practices were based on natural remedies derived from plants and herbs.

The Egyptians also made significant contributions to **mathematics** and **astronomy**, which influenced both later cultures and modern science. They devised a calendar system based on

the lunar and solar cycles, which was remarkably accurate, and their advances in geometry enabled them to construct their monumental architectural achievements.

In other words, **t**he key aspects of Egyptian civilization reflect its deep connection to both the physical and metaphysical worlds. From the practical applications of agriculture, engineering, and medicine to the rich cultural and spiritual life of the people, ancient Egypt's achievements continue to fascinate and inspire. The civilization's legacy endures in its monumental architecture, intellectual contributions, religious traditions, and its profound understanding of the interconnectedness between the divine, nature, and humanity.

In modern times, there is renewed interest in the holistic nature of Egyptian civilization and its influence on the development of Western thought, particularly in the fields of religion, science, art, and philosophy. This enduring legacy serves as a reminder of Egypt's central role in the broader narrative of human history and cultural development.

Conclusion

The paper has explored the significance of rethinking Ancient Egyptian civilization beyond Greek and Roman lenses**,** particularly through the lens of postcolonial theory. It has examined the impact of Greco-Roman historiographical frameworks, which have often portrayed Egypt as an exotic "Other," constructed through colonial and imperialistic discourses. Ancient Egyptian civilization has long been seen through the distorted lens of Greek and Roman interpretations, where Egypt was reduced to a subject of fascination, mystification, or outright disdain. Figures like Herodotus, Plutarch, and Juvenal reinforced stereotypes of Egypt as a land of superstition and barbarism, undermining its historical agency and intellectual achievements.

However, by adopting a postcolonial approach, we begin to recognize how these Greco-Roman perspectives were constructed and imposed to justify colonial and imperial ambitions. The discourse surrounding Egypt, particularly in the modern era, is not just an ancient relic but also a reflection of ongoing historical power dynamics. The Eurocentric narratives, which have dominated the historiography of Egypt, have relegated Egypt's contributions to civilization to the margins, overshadowing its role in shaping the cultures and philosophies of the ancient world.

Rethinking Ancient Egyptian civilization from a postcolonial perspective opens up new avenues for understanding its true legacy and significance in global history. By challenging the longstanding biases of Greco-Roman historiography, we can reclaim Egypt's agency and recognize its profound contributions to human civilization. The decolonization of Egyptian history does not only correct historical inaccuracies but also empowers African scholarship, offering a richer, more inclusive narrative for future generations. Through these efforts, we move closer to a world where history is seen from multiple perspectives, fostering a more equitable and just understanding of the past.

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