

GEOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY, AND HISTORY: THE (PROBLEMATIC) TRIUMPH OF *POLITICAL* TIME OVER THE EARTH IN G.W.F HEGEL'S *PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY*

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Abstract. *The discipline of history nowadays is concerned with rethinking the distinction between natural and historical times. A new philosophy of history must question both the ethnocentric and anthropocentric assumptions of the idea of history and the alleged independence of the time of the Earth and the time of the human species. In this paper, I want to analyze Hegel's conceptual relation between Geography, Geology and History as one case in which a radical differentiation between human time and natural time (that of other species or of the Earth) has taken place. This differentiation has made it difficult to discern the relations between human history and the history of the environment, resulting in estrangement between the two. I begin by briefly analyzing how this distinction has been produced in the modern history of Western thought and then observe how this distinction operates within Hegel's philosophy. Here, I will explore the paradigmatic case of the American continent. Secondly, I will explore one of the consequences of the triumph of the temporal logic of spirit upon the logic of space, one Hegel does not seem to consider as problematic, that is, the dematerialization of History (anti-thanatropic logic) understood as the destruction of the physical grounds upon which spirit develops. Finally, as a programmatic conclusion, I will take up Nuzzo's reading and suggest the need to talk in terms of a political geo-cosmology.*

Keywords. *Earth; America; Thanatropism; Dematerialization; Political Geo-cosmology*

1. Introduction

In this paper I am interested in offering a reading of the 'triumph of political time' over the Earth in Hegel's *Philosophy of*

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History¹. Recent readings have claimed the systematic importance of Geography or spatiality in Hegelian philosophy², however, these readings have not succeeded in tackling a major problem related to Hegel's conception of spatiality: the anti-thanatropic drifts of Spirit.

Following the important concept of 'thanatropism' that Oriane Petteni has developed in relation to Hegel's criteria for distinguishing different types of organisms³, I interpret Hegel's view of the relation of historical time towards the Earth as anti-thanatropic as parallel to the anti-thanatropic logic some organisms observe from their environment.

¹ I would like to thank Thomas Prouse for translating the first draft of this text originally presented in Spanish and to Addison Ellis for the English revision. Unless indicated otherwise quotations from German or French were translated by me. I would also like to thank Christophe Bouton for his comments to this paper, and to the anonymous reviewer's careful reading and enriching suggestions.

² For recent authors, such as Bond, a reevaluation of the role of geography played in Hegelian thought is necessary. However, highlighting that Hegel's philosophy has clear materialist drifts (e.g., climate as a determining factor of the *Volkegeist*) does not modify the meaning of the general statements regarding physical geography, especially those regarding the conditions of dematerialization needed for the actualization of freedom. It is important to acknowledge that Hegel takes up the perspectives of a Herderian anthropology, but we cannot ignore the consequences that he drew from it (D.W. Bond, *Hegel's Geographical Thought*, «Environment and Planning: Society and Space», XXXII (1), 2014, pp. 179-198). Lucas Pohl faces the question of external spatiality, asking how we can understand this 'outside' with Hegel's own ontological tools without perpetuating the violent consequences that his colonizing cartography has had. He suggests referring to a *structural topology* for thinking about the relation the subject has toward space as constitutive of its subjectivity (L. Pohl, *Hegel and the Shadow of Materialist Geographies*, «Acme. An International Journal for Critical Geographies», XVIII, 2019, pp. 285-307). I agree with the fact that according to Hegel, as we will see, external objectivity is determining the development of subjectivity in the *Science of Logic*. However, the dialectical-constitutive relation the subject entails with its objectivity also entails a hierarchical distinction that Pohl seems to ignore.

³ O. Petteni, *Breaking Free from Material Terrestrial Contingency: The Path of the Hegelian Spirit towards Absolute Freedom*, «Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy», XVII (3), 2021, pp. 224-249.

I take Hegel's Philosophy of History as a moment of Western intellectual history in which the meaning of History itself shifted towards a narrative regime and in which a strong differentiation between human and nonhuman temporalities took place. Although different temporalities in nature began to be assumed and addressed as meaningful for the understanding of historical temporality, human history triumphed over 'nature', time over Geography and Geology⁴. I present Hegel's version of the triumph of historical – i.e., political – time, by considering Hegel's understanding of the Earth and of the American continent.

Acknowledging this Hegelian perspective allows us to observe an important feature of his *Philosophy of History* related to some of his most lucid observations in the *Philosophy of Right*: the dangerous conditions under which capitalism has risen. However, whereas in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel shows some of these conditions as a threat to freedom, the *Philosophy of History* relates capitalism to the 'demaaterialization' of history without acknowledging the risks of this tendency⁵. Hegel's perspective in this case falls short in providing the

⁴ See H. Jordheim, *Stratigraphies of Time and History. Beyond the Outrages upon Humanity's Self-Love*, in *Times of history, times of nature: temporalization and the limits of modern knowledge*, ed. by A. Ekström and S. Bergwik, New York, Berghahn, 2022.

⁵ The massive deforestation of the Amazon rainforest began as soon as the arrival of fleets from the Netherlands was established. Several islands colonized by the British and Dutch, and left to the administration of the East India Company, caused climate change on a scale large enough to make it necessary to legislate the use of resources. See R.H. Grove, *Green imperialism, Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1600-1860*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 100-110 especially. Amitav Ghosh shows that the Spice Islands were completely razed – also by the Dutch to prevent the spread of nutmeg trees outside territories not controlled by the VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie), and that the population of the Malaccan Islands also paid a heavy price. I quote a passage from Ghosh to show that Hegel could not have been unaware of what the pre-capitalist colonial enterprises had brought about: «The monopoly of the VOC [...] on East Indian spices made the Dutch famous throughout Europe... The French encyclopedist Denis Diderot echoed this feeling: 'It is in Holland that the rest of Europe goes to find everything it lacks. Holland is the commercial center

right clues for an emancipatory political geo-cosmology⁶. A critique of the problematic assumptions of Hegelian philosophy allows for the necessary shift towards a philosophy of history where the separation and estrangement between the World and the Earth comes to the fore as an intellectual heritage that, as Patricia Purschert has suggest, must be assumed but also neutralized and critically reappropriated⁷.

2. *From Description to Narration: The Shift from Spatial to Temporal History and the Rise of Deep Time*

In *The Art of Painting*, the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer created one of his most celebrated works. The distinctiveness of this composition lies in its presentation of a dizzying *mise en abyme* of descriptive regimes: geography, history, and painting itself. History appears linked to geography on two representational levels: firstly, through the presence of small historical paintings contained within the ample margin of the large map of the 17 provinces of the Netherlands located in the background of the painting, and secondly, in the main scene that the picture depicts. Within this main scene, we can appreciate the closeness of the model, who embodies the muse

of Europe. The Dutch have worked so well that they have managed to fill, thanks to their ingenuity, all the needs of life, in defiance of the elements'». A. Ghosh. *The Nutmeg's Curse. Parables for a Planet in Crisis*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2021. Cited from the French edition A. Ghosh, *La malédiction de la muscade. Une contre-histoire de la modernité*, Marseille, Wildproject, 2024, p. 50.

⁶ See A. Nuzzo, *Changing the World of Spirit in Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, «Crisis and critique», VIII (2), 2021, pp. 279-305. Angelica Nuzzo argues Hegel's concept of 'World' implies a political cosmology. Nuzzo suggests that Hegel's political philosophy is a dimension from which it is still possible to think emancipatory change (p. 281). In the following pages, I will show that the concept of World is insufficient for this propose and that we also need to link this concept to the Earth. The Earth, in Hegel's philosophy, is not yet thought.

⁷ This is Patricia Purschert's position in *On the limit of spirit: Hegel's racism revisited*, «Philosophy and Social Criticism», XXXVI (9), 2010, pp. 1039-1051, p. 1040.

Clio, to the map behind her⁸. In other words, through the composition we are witnessing a complementary relationship between geography and history.

However, this relationship is not to be found in the fact that maps relate to the spatial character of reality and Clio to its temporal character, but rather *in the fact that both geography and history are governed by the same set of epistemic and symbolic values that reinforce each other: the description of the space*. Description is a regime of ordering reality that privileges categories such as simultaneity and juxtaposition over temporal categories such as succession and causality. In Vermeer's painting, history, coupled with geography, preserves these spatial characteristics. This pairing, which was typical up to the later part of the 17th century, made possible history's association with the faculty of memory, understood as the repository for that which is remembered⁹. From within this descriptive regime, history orders the characteristics of objects (whether a battle or a body)¹⁰. To produce history under the descriptive regime is to

⁸ For an analysis of Vermeer's paintings and the relevance of maps in them, see S. Alpers, *The art of describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983 and J. Maderuelo, *El Paisaje*, Madrid, Abada, 2005.

⁹ Pascal and then Voltaire and Diderot continue to think of history as a discipline for which memory is required rather than reason. Pascal even relates geography to history due to the fact that both collect data and do not deduce through reason. On this matter see W. Lepenies, *Das Ende der Naturgeschichte. Wandel kultureller Selbstverständlichkeiten in den Wissenschaften des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1976, pp. 34-35. This way of conceiving history is born from the Baconian vision rescued by the encyclopedic thought of Diderot. Civil history, as the history of what human beings do, is differentiated from religious history and natural history. The three types of history are for Bacon – and in some ways still for the encyclopedists – a collection of facts, not narratives of events. See M. I. Mudrovic, *Historia, narración y memoria. Los debates actuales en filosofía de la historia*, Akal, Madrid, 2004.

¹⁰ The famous physiologist Caspar Friedrich Wolff still speaks of history as a synonym of 'anatomy', that is, as the practice of listing the components of a body. See C.F. Wolff, *Theoria Generationis*, Halae ad Salam, Litterris Hendelianis, 1759.

subordinate oneself to the geography of the object. This is what Koselleck has called 'Spatial History'¹¹.

But again, according to the same author, the concept of Spatial History was transformed as new conceptions of the organic and the development of living beings were not only introduced in natural history but also in the philosophical domain. Significant conceptual changes relating to the concepts of 'life'¹² and 'organism'¹³ contributed to the conceptual transformation of the concept of History, allowing the implementation of causal explanations and the introduction of the narrative of development both in nature and in relation to human events¹⁴. The incorporation of causal and purposive logic, typical of some beings in nature and partially or wholly absent from the idea of history within the descriptive paradigm, significantly affected the understanding of natural and human events¹⁵ and gave rise to the modernization (temporalization) of human history. This conceptual change also brings with it the appearance of an increasing number of temporalities in nature. It took around two centuries to settle and leads us from Steno to Darwin, from Vico to

¹¹ Lepenies, *Das Ende*, pp. 34-35.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ See T. Cheung, *What is an 'organism'? On the Occurrence of a New Term and Its Conceptual Transformations 1680-1850*, «History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences», XXXII (2), 2010, pp. 155-194.

¹⁴ R. Koselleck, *Entwicklung, Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, ed. by O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck, vol. 2, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1975. The author affirms: «When around 1770 the concept of development was used in the context of the socio-political world, it was a transfer of the biological and anthropological concept» (p. 201).

¹⁵ The concept of development appears in the ontogenetic theses of Haller and Bonnet. It also appears in Wolff's epigenetic theses and, of course in Buffon. See P.H. Reill, *Vitalizing nature in the Enlightenment*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005, pp. 134-138. See also C. Bouton, *From Biological Time to Historical Time: the Category of "Development" (Entwicklung) in the Historical Thought of Herder, Kant, Hegel, and Marx*, in *Biological Time, Historical Time. Transfers and Transformations in 19th Century Literature*, ed. by N. Bender and G. Séginger, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2019, pp. 61-76.

Hegel. This long and complex process cannot be presented here. I will only approach the general problem of how natural time came to be re-spatialized again and how a particular kind of time, human time, triumphed over nature.

For Buffon, one of the great forerunners of the transformation of the temporality of nature, time in nature is attributed to species but not to nature as an autonomous domain. Buffon states: «Nature is a perpetually living work, an incessantly active worker [...] [but] it never distances itself from the laws that have been prescribed for it, it does not alter in any way the plans that have been drawn up for it»¹⁶. Nature remains fixed in a temporality that resembles eternity. It contains change but it does not itself change¹⁷. However, by introducing temporality into the understanding of species, a step that constitutes at least the beginnings of the suspicion that fixity of species as well as the classificatory method that accommodates a fixed nature was not suitable for all species, Buffon introduces the possibility for a change in the idea of natural history. His research on some of the species he was able to study caused a move towards the frank admission of time as one of the most important factors in explaining change within nature¹⁸.

¹⁶ Buffon, *De la nature, Première Vue*, p. 31. Cited in Roger, *Les sciences de la vie dans la pensée française du XVIIIe siècle*. Roger adds: «Time only exists for individuals, nature is outside of time», p. 576.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*. After Buffon's ambiguous claims, the idea of a fixed Nature has been challenged by several authors, from Goethe to Humboldt or Cuvier and Lyell. By challenging this very idea the concept of nature underwent a semantic change perceptible, for example, in Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. There, *Nature* emerges as a set of simultaneous temporalities governed by the mechanisms of natural selection. Evolution acquires a new meaning, implying non-teleological change. For these discussions, see A. Wulf, *The Invention of Nature*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2015.

¹⁸ Buffon states: «[...] for whatever cause it comes from, be it time, climate or the earth, or which originates with, it is no less real: nature, I confess, is in a perpetual movement [...]» (Buffon, *Animaux communs aux deux continents*, p. 38. Cited in Roger, *Les sciences de la vie dans la pensée française du XVIIIe siècle*, p. 574). And he also stated that: «The change of the species themselves [...] seems to occur

The temporalization of multiple processes of a nature¹⁹ that was thought to be essentially static made possible an ever-increasing variety of timeframes and durations within which human beings, non-human animal species, plants as well as the Earth itself, could be located and understood²⁰.

The birth of Geology necessitated the admission that the Earth is an entity stratified in layers of time²¹ and not a mass of eternal matter, safe from transformations and cataclysms²². Thanks to the works of Steno in the 17th century, or Lyell, more than a century later, Geology created a new type of temporality that made it impossible to ignore the fact that the Earth as a whole is a temporal being²³.

in each family, or in each genus» (Buffon, *De la dégénération des animaux*, p. 401. Cited in Roger, *Les sciences de la vie*, p. 575).

¹⁹ See P. Matussek (ed.), *Goethe und die Verzeitlichung der Natur*, München, Beck, 1998.

²⁰ See Ekström and Bergwik, *Times of History, Times of Nature*, p. 4.

²¹ See Jordheim, *Stratigraphies of Time and History*, p. 26.

²² Not long before Geology was born as a science, some theories would explain the origin of the shape of Earth as involving an oceanic or a volcanic (fire) cataclysm; both theories were called neptunism and plutonism, respectively. Goethe still discusses these theories in his early geological writings, suggesting his own conception of inner temporality in granite formations. It is fair to assume that we will find important concepts that will later appear more clearly in his botanical studies See, U. Pörksen, *Raumzeit. Goethes Zeitbegriff aufgrund seiner sprachlichen Darstellung geologischer Ideen und ihrer Visualisierung*, in *Goethe und die Verzeitlichung der Natur*, ed. by P. Matussek, München, Beck, 1998, pp. 101-127. Furthermore, in Goethe's time the geological eras were not yet established, but he suggested the idea of different periods of time in which the surface of the earth was different from now. Wolf von Engelhardt even suggests that Goethe was already thinking about the Ice Age, an idea that came later with the Swiss naturalist Louis Agassiz. See W. von Engelhardt, *Goethe im Gespräch mit der Erde, Landschaft, Gesteine, Mineralien und Erdgeschichte in seinem Leben und Werk*, Stuttgart-Weimar, Metzler, 2003, pp. 111, 330.

²³ See Jordheim, *Stratigraphies of Time and History*. However, as the author remarks, even if Steno largely contributed to the emergence of the idea of deep time,

Earth's new temporality, deep time, orders its moments in layers; it was not a linear sequence of points, but rather, a stratified accumulation of periods.

Authors such as Herder or Wilhelm von Humboldt introduced several categories belonging to the physiological discussions of the 18th century²⁴, and discussed the relationship between geography and history²⁵. Furthermore Earth's temporality was, for some, associated with human temporality. Alexander von Humboldt and Cuvier thought human history should be studied in the light of Geology²⁶. This methodological standpoint would have promoted a deflationary understanding of human history within the spatialized time of Earth²⁷. However, in contrast to the idea that a temporality

and to the idea of Strata as spaces of time, he remained interested in classifying and describing, not in explaining or narrating, natural events (pp. 29-30).

²⁴ See Reill, *Vitalizing nature in the Enlightenment*.

²⁵ C. Strub, *Von der großen ‚Kette der Wesen‘ zur ‚Kette der Cultur‘? Eine Frage zur Verbindbarkeit von Traditionsgehalten*, in *Begriffsgeschichte der Naturwissenschaften: «Zur historischen und kulturellen Dimension Naturwissenschaftlicher Konzepte»*, ed. by E. Müller and F. Schmieder, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2008, pp. 117-128.

²⁶ According to Adam Wickberg: «[...] the period coinciding with Humboldt's scientific career and the revolutions in Europe gave birth to the conceptual framework of geochronology, in which earth came to be understood as having its own deep history, in which humans were but a recent inhabitant. Still, these synchronistic efforts of merging human and geological time by Humboldt, [...] Cuvier, and others have been largely overshadowed by the dominant narrative of linear and teleological historicism». A. Wickberg, *Temporal poetics of planetary transformations: Alexander von Humboldt and the geo-anthropological history of the Americas*, in *Times of history, times of nature: temporalization and the limits of modern knowledge*, ed. by A. Ekström and S. Bergwik, New York, Berghahn, 2022, p. 189.

²⁷ This is the reading of Stephen Jay Gould, who also maintains that geology should be counted among the fields of knowledge that produced the limitation of the idea of humanity – such as Darwin's evolutionary theory or psychoanalysis. S.J. Gould, *Arrow time, circle time. Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1989. In relation to this, Helge

distant from ours would have made human temporality seem insignificant, Geology and Geography were for others to be considered rather, as a kind of deep foundation or ground of Spirit.

Kant's role in this transformation is also of great interest. As several commentators have already pointed out, there is a complex intertwining of temporalities throughout his philosophical production. These temporalities – of the earth, of organisms, of races – are related to one, superior to all others: the temporality of systematic reason²⁸.

Rooted in a series of assumptions that relegated the 'Earth' to a 'deep' and slow temporality, a peculiar image emerged in opposition to it: that of the 'World'²⁹. The World emerged as a concept that attends to the political activity of human beings in geographical space.

Earth serves as a kind of cardboard staging before which the *grand drama of the world* unfolds. In the case of Hegel's philosophy, the effects of a geography dominated by political time are observed in the construction of a space dominated by the narrative codification of the Spirit of the World. Through this, Spirit acquired a particular

Jordheim observes that Geology did not produce the same destabilizing effects for humanity that Stephen Jay Gould talks about. Geology did not imply a diminished image of the human being, rather, humanity is simply excluded from the outset. That is why she acknowledged the lack of anthropology in geology. It thus never intended let alone succeeded in minimizing or including humans' temporality within the depths of Earth's time. See Jordheim, *Stratigraphies of Time and History*, p. 25.

²⁸ See F. Kaulbauch, *Der Zusammenhang zwischen Naturphilosophie und Geschichtsphilosophie bei Kant*, «Kant-Studien», LVI (3), 1965, pp. 430-451 and S. Sandford, *Kant, race, and natural history*, «Philosophy and Social Criticism», XL (9), 2018, pp. 950-977.

²⁹ I thank Christophe Bouton for indicating to me that Dipesh Chakrabarty also stresses the importance of a similar distinction (Planet = Earth system and World and Globe) in his book *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2021. Chakrabarty also offers an insightful reading of the historicist tradition, dating it back to Vico and presenting it as a genealogy of the intellectual attitude that has characterized Western understanding of the relations between human history and natural history or the history of the environment.

directionality, which itself explains its passage from east to west. The *World* appears as the timeless landscape of a natural spatiality to which certain peoples remain rooted is progressively left behind or 'negated'. Spirit detaches from this spiritless background.

In the next section we will concentrate on this point by referring to Hegel's Philosophy of World History as *anti-thanatropic*. *Thanatropism* is a term Oriane Petteni uses to refer to the death of individual organisms brought about by the pull of the environment. According to Petteni, success in the struggle against space is the criteria supporting the hierarchical order of organisms in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*³⁰. Vegetative and animal organisms are organized according to their ability to individualize themselves by distancing from their milieu. Without this distance a unification would occur and result in the disappearance of the individualized form of the organism³¹. Following Petteni's observations in relation to organisms and to Spirit, it is possible to stress that World history has engaged in a process of progressive dematerialization against the thanatropic threat of geological and geographical conditions.

3. *World History as a Process of Detachment... The Problematic Case of the American Continent*

For a man like me, as fascinated as an insect by the Earth and its natural diversity, such an abstract assertion of completely false information and opinions about America and the indigenous world is at the same time oppressive and disturbing.
Alexander von Humboldt³²

As a result of the study of fossils and the increasingly pressing doubt about the true age of the Earth, the accepted idea that our

³⁰ Petteni, *Breaking Free*, p. 233.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² Letter 1st of July, 1837 to Varnhagen von Ense. Lettres de Humboldt à Varnhagen von Ense. Taken from A. Gerbi, *The dispute of the new word, The history of a Polemic, 1750-1900*, trans. by J. Moyle, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973. Humboldt refers to the Hegelian vision of the American Continent.

planet was only 6 thousand years old was modified. In the 1800s, theories such as volcanism and neptunism contributed to the understanding of the creation of continental masses from volcanic eruptions or marine sedimentation³³.

Now, although it was beginning to be admitted that the Earth was older than previously believed, it was not common to suggest that the Earth *was still in the process* of active transformation. The transformational processes of the Earth were relegated to 'deep time' – a sort of temporality lacking teleology or any other incarnation of a futural time.

Hegel was aware of the geological theories of his epoch. He admits that the earth *has had* a history, but he also insists that its development has stalled. He states:

That the Earth has had a history, that is, that its state is the result of successive changes, is immediately demonstrated by the state of the Earth itself. This state accounts for a series of tremendous revolutions that belong to a distant past and to a cosmic connection as the place of the Earth in relation to the angle formed by the axis and its orbit could have changed. [...] That which corresponds to what is historical must be considered a fact. It is not the concern of philosophy [...] History came to the Earth before, but now it has come to rest: a life that has fermented in itself, that has time in itself: the spirit of the Earth, which has not yet reached its opposite, – the movement of a sleeper's dream..., until it awakens and acquires its consciousness in the human being. The Earth has emerged as what is in contrast [*gegenübergetreten ist*] to it, it appears as this calm and resting form³⁴.

The temporality of the Earth is confined to processes that have ceased. Earth's time is *petrified*. The Earth undoubtedly contains

³³ See C. Bouton, *Dealing with deep time: The issue of ancestry from Kant to Hegel*, «Anthropology and Aesthetics», LXX, 2018, *Writing Prehistory*, Special Issue ed. by M. Stavrinaki and S. Geroulanos, pp. 38-51.

³⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. by K.M. Michel and E. Moldenhauer, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1970, (henceforth cited as TW, followed by the number of the respective volume), 9, § 339, pp. 345-347.

life but it is not life itself. Life as the projection or teleological movement that is proper to the living is only proper to a history that is animated by Spirit. Only the human being, in opposition to Earth, is animated and awake; only human spirit is projected through time.

Moreover, although the Earth is the result of an organic process of development, the conspicuous organicity of the Earth radically differs from the organic character of an animal body, even a vegetative one³⁵. The reason for this difference is that for Hegel the parts that constitute the Earthly body are not *organized*. According to the concept of organism, and especially of animal organisms, parts *produce the whole* as they are in a reciprocal relation³⁶. By contrast, the presence of the elements that constitute the Earth do not come together in a process of permanent production (there is no reciprocity). Rather, they are disjointed and therefore cannot be considered a productive- lively- organism. The Earth is a dead organism (*totliegende Organismus*)³⁷ that calmly (*ruhig*) brings together the parts that constitute it; it is a corpse³⁸.

Nonetheless, while it does not possess the possibility of self-production or self-maintenance through the causal relation of its parts, its disposition, according to Hegel, does *conform to the Idea*³⁹. Referring to the disposition of the continental masses, he suggests that the fact that the Earth contracts in the south and expands in the north is the effect of magnetism and that the difference of size, pyramidal shape of continents, and different distribution of flora in, for instance, the American continent, are, from a philosophical perspective, necessary determinations⁴⁰.

³⁵ Although, Hegel tends to compare the earth (as land) in contraposition to the sea, as more vegetable while the sea is more 'animal' (*Tierish*) (TW 9, § 339, p. 360). This categorization will be relevant once we enter Hegel's considerations of the American continent.

³⁶ TW 6, pp. 476-77.

³⁷ TW 9, § 341, p. 360.

³⁸ Ivi, § 339, p. 349.

³⁹ Ivi, § 339.

⁴⁰ Ivi, § 339, pp. 349-350; Id., *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*. Manuscripts from Karl G.J. von Griesheim, H.G. Hotho and F.C.H.V. von Kehler

On this inert geological ground Hegel draws a strange map that divides the Earth into north and south, as we have seen, but he also draws a distinction between east and west and conceives these parts in a specific sequential order. What matters philosophically to Hegel is not the fact that on the one hand there are oceans and on the other, land. The Earth's surface is not philosophically divided between the sea and dry land but into two halves: the old world and the new⁴¹.

It is important to emphasize that Hegel's map presupposes Herderian anthropology. Like Herder, Hegel also attributes essentiality to the *spirit of the people*, which is determined by the geographical and climatic conditions in which those people live⁴². To a certain extent, geographical grounds have a determinate relationship to the peoples distributed over the continents of the Earth. Following this line of thought, Hegel states: «[...] the invariability of the climate, of the natural constitution of the whole country in which a nation resides permanently, contributes to the invariability of its character»⁴³. However, the Hegelian map, unlike Herder's conception of history, draws a line that divides those nations that are suitable for freedom, *given the geographical space out of which they emerge*, from those which are not⁴⁴. Let us look at this more closely.

1822/1823, ed by K.-H. Ilting, K. Brehmer, H.N. Seelmann, Hamburg, Meiner, 1996 (henceforth cited as VPWG), pp. 78-79.

⁴¹ TW 9, § 339, Z., p. 350. See also G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungsmanuskripte II (1816-1831)*, ed. by W. Jaeschke, Hamburg, Meiner, 1995 and id., *Vorlesungen: ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, vol. 12, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte 1822-1823*, ed. by K. Ilting, K. Brehmer, H.-N. Seelman, Hamburg, Meiner, 1996 (henceforth cited as VPhWG), pp. 180-181, p. 231; trans. by R. F. Brown and P. C. Hodgson, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Vol. 1. Manuscripts from the Introduction and the Lectures 1822-1823*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2011 (henceforth cited PWH), p. 201.

⁴² VPhWG, pp. 180-181, 231; PWH, p. 202.

⁴³ TW 10 § 394, Z., pp. 63-70.

⁴⁴ See R. Zambrana, *Hegel, History and Race*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, ed. by N. Zack, Oxford, Oxford Handbooks, 2017, pp. 251-260, p. 254.

As Hegel states in the *Philosophy of nature*, human beings are not the result of the evolution of animal organisms other than our own species⁴⁵, even less so of plants. To be sure, the human being is a spiritual *organism* and there are compelling passages in the Anthropology suggesting a complex relation between body and soul, following an Aristotelian perspective. Hegel even indicates that Spirit «[...] is the truth and the final goal of Nature and the genuine actuality of the Idea» suggesting a sort of continuity⁴⁶.

However, as the driving force of history, that is, in relation to our intelligence and will, and in relation to our ‘freedom’, we cannot be considered as an emergent phenomenon of nature. He considers it important to stress that «What [spirit] is, is just this movement of liberating itself from nature»⁴⁷. Unlike the rest of the species, the human being has the ability to detach, to differing extents, from what Hegel understands as external determinations.

Several scholars have discussed the meaning of our *negative* relation to nature in the light of passages like the above mentioned⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ TW 9, § 339 Z, p. 349. Hegel also forms a part of the old tradition of the fixity of species and the equally old thesis of *human exception*.

⁴⁶ Ivi, § 251. Cited in Petteni, *Breaking Free*, p. 236.

⁴⁷ G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Spirit* 1822, Frag. 528. Cited and translated in J. Peters, *On Naturalism in Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit*, «British Journal for the History of Philosophy», XXIV (1), 2015, pp. 111-131, online version, p. 5.

⁴⁸ See T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life*, New York, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012. See also Peters, *On Naturalism*, or I. Testa, *How does Recognition Emerge from Nature? The Genesis of Consciousness in Hegel's Jena Writings*, «Critical Horizons», XIII, 2012, pp. 176-196. Testa's position is worth mentioning here since he focuses on Hegel's Jena writings. In my view, Hegel shifted from a naturalist-continuity position to a more dualistic one. One way to decipher this shift has to do with the way Hegel refers to the relations humans have to Land. Jorge Eduardo Fernández has developed the problem of a ‘natural’ genesis of ethical life in Hegel's Jena *System of Ethical life*. However, Fernández rejects the label naturalism. See the introduction *Sistema de la eticidad, su gestación, su contenido* to his translation. G.W.F. Hegel, *Sistema de la eticidad*, Buenos Aires, Las cuarenta, forthcoming.

I believe that in order to understand the ramifications of the implications of this negative relation, we need to ask what negative relation to nature means in each case⁴⁹. Besides the body-mind problem, Hegel also considered space, or spatial determinations, as determinations we need to be independent from in order to be free.

Consider passages from the *Philosophy of nature* in which he develops the difference between types of organisms. As mentioned earlier, Petteni has rightly indicated that there is an axiological hierarchy in which organisms can be distributed⁵⁰. One of the most important criteria is an organism's 'independence' from external objectivity or its milieu⁵¹.

In the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel describes the organic in light of the organism's logical structure as described in the *Science of logic*. In that text, we can see that the particularization of organisms has to do with their relation to external objectivity. The living being has to negate objectivity through what Julia Peters refers to as appropriation⁵². In the *Philosophy of nature*, Hegel draws important conclusions from this moment, for if it is true that the organic relates to its externality, the degrees in which it is dependent of those objective determinations decide its proximity to spiritual beings. Here, an (animal) organism can break free from its spatial determinations and liberate itself from the 'universal substance of the Earth'⁵³.

It is possible to establish a parallel movement in the case of human beings. External determinations are the geographical conditions that frame the appearance of political organizations. These are superior entities whose primary spiritual characteristic is

⁴⁹ Julia Peters goes in this direction when she establishes an important difference between the negative sense in which we liberated ourselves from nature and the appropriative sense of liberating oneself from nature. The later would mean appropriating the external while the former would mean overcoming it. Peters, *On Naturalism in Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit*, p. 6. In the case of spatial external determination such as the geographical, I believe it is said in both senses, as we will see later.

⁵⁰ Petteni, *Breaking Free*, p. 241.

⁵¹ TW 9, § 344.

⁵² See note 48 and Hegel, TW 6, p. 482-487.

⁵³ TW 9, § 351. Cited in Petteni, *Breaking Free*, p. 242.

to have detached themselves from said geographical conditions, to have lost their connection to the slow or otherwise ‘cyclical’ temporality of nature⁵⁴.

While a *natural history* of the human being can be undertaken by physical geography, only a *Philosophy of History* can ‘narrate’ the detachment of humanity from its spatial constraints⁵⁵. For Hegel, while the first focuses on *describing*

[...] the national character, the physical configuration, the type of life, the occupation as well as the particular orientations of the intelligence and will of nations [...], the philosophy of history [for its part, Z.O.] has as its object the import that peoples have had for world history, that is to say – if we take world history in the most comprehensive sense of the term - the highest development to which the original disposition of the national character has reached⁵⁶.

Natural history deals with those characteristics linked to the geographical determinations of a community; it is rooted to the lifeless earthly ground, to the *environment*⁵⁷.

As understood here by Hegel, the natural history of the human being reproduces the old idea of *natural history* as a ‘description’ of features, or a mere list of characteristics. Therefore, we can say that it is not only thematically bound to the spatial dimension of the life of the human being, but that this theme is also articulated in line with the rules of the descriptive regime that operates according to spatial criteria (simultaneity and juxtaposition of parts). In natural history, there is no narrative, and there is no rationality. The philosophy of world history (*Weltgeschichte*), on the contrary, would

⁵⁴ VPWG, p. 38.

⁵⁵ TW 10, § 394.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁷ Petteni pertinently recalls that historically, the concept of the environment has been linked to formless spatiality, a receptive spatiality that does not correspond to any center; a homogeneous continuity that does not impose any connectivity but rather allows things to be in a minimal relation, that of contiguity. Petteni, *Breaking Free*, p. 232.

begin from the point where the progressive detachment of the spirit from its earthly grounds is perceived. As we have seen above, the effect that the geographical conditions to which humanity is subject have on human populations is relative. However, there are geographical areas where these conditions are *negated* more effectively. The clearest example of this is, according to Hegel himself, Europe⁵⁸. For example, Hegel affirms:

Asia represents [...] under both the spiritual and physical dimension, the moment of opposition, unmediated opposition, the unmediated coincidence of opposite determinations. Here spirit, on the one hand, detaches itself from nature and, on the other, however, relapses back into naturalness [...]. It is only with the Caucasian race that spirit comes to absolute unity with itself – here, only, spirit enters *into a complete opposition to nature*, apprehends itself in its absolute subsistence, escapes the alternating oscillation from one extreme to another, accesses self-determination, the development of itself and thus gives rise to world history⁵⁹.

Statements like these can help us conclude that world history is not simply the demonstration of the highest development reached by nations. This is, without a doubt, an important theme and refers, again, to its Herderian heritage. But, for Hegel, the movement of spirit is also characterized by a tendency to struggle against space, that is, to overcome the opposing tendency to merge with space (thanatropism).

Also significant is the underlying idea of the relative impossibility of certain peoples to *detach themselves* from their geographical spaces. According to this narrative, there would be populations that have not been able to *uproot themselves* and enter into the great race of freedom and history. In Hegel's view, the peoples *outside of history* have not won the struggle against the pull of space.

In relation to this last point, the case of America is paradigmatic. While in Europe, according to Hegel, human beings have been able to acquire relative independence from the apparently

⁵⁸ TW 10, § 392.

⁵⁹ TW 10, § 394 Z.

more lenient geographical conditions and, therefore, have been able to differentiate themselves to a greater extent from the determinism imposed by the environment, in America, where *nature* is so persevering, that has not been able to happen⁶⁰.

America poses a problem within the philosophy of history because although the logic of the progress of Spirit implies that it will have to set foot on this part of the world, this seems almost impossible as America embodies nature, and worse still, as we will see, embodies vegetative nature.

This set of assumptions is not originally Hegelian. The link between America and the Western idea of nature dates back to the colonial period³⁶ and continues up to the American transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau.

What characterized the discourse around America was its tendency to hierarchize geographical areas based on a criterion of the age of the human being. That discourse runs from Montaigne to Buffon, through Rousseau, until it reaches Herder. And while there are some variations, all the authors involved in the discussion concede that while Asia and Africa represent youth, the American continent constitutes the childhood of the Earth and humanity, while the European continent embodies maturity.

According to Hegel, the American continent was formed at the same time as the rest of the continental masses. Still, America, or the 'new world', is a novelty. This is not only because it was *discovered* late (*späteren Entdeckung*), but it is also a novelty in physical terms, in relation to its flora and fauna, including the human species. This novelty, as is explained by Buffon, for instance, lies in the fact that everything concerning it is childish, which is also to say, uncultured (*unausgebildet*). Building upon the acceptance of this premise, which has a disturbing family resemblance to the thought of authors who promoted racist views of the indigenous populations of America⁶¹, Hegel will problematically affirm that America is an impotent

⁶⁰ TW 9, § 339 Z; PWH, p. 192.

⁶¹ Gerbi placed Hegelian philosophy within this discourse concerning the American continent and has demonstrated Hegel's affiliation with ideas such as those presented by Buffon or de Pauw, for whom the inferiority of the American continent

continent. This impotence relates, as Buffon assumes, to the fact that the continent was considered a geographical space physically dominated by the imperfect organic structure of vegetation. Hegel states: «[In the new world] the animals are weaker since there is monstrous vegetation [*ungeheure*]»⁶².

The idea underlying this series of surprising arguments is that for Hegel, following Goethe, vegetative organisms have a lesser perfection than animals because the latter, despite having very disparate members, reach a correspondence to a certain form, while the organisms of the vegetative kingdom tend to grow in a much more chaotic manner⁶³ as the vegetative organism is incapable of submitting to the universality of form⁶⁴.

The vegetative world represents, without a doubt, a movement of formation (*Bildung*); nonetheless, this is its least realized manifestation of life, as the vegetative world does not appear to grow

is determined primarily by the analysis of its physical geography. See Gerbi, *The dispute of the new world*, pp. 282, 418. Gerbi establishes the connections between the discourse on America and what Hegel affirms in several places in his work, both in the philosophy of nature and in the philosophy of history.

⁶² TW 9, § 339 Z, p. 350.

⁶³ According to Gerbi, Hegel would have stated: «There are abortions in the human race too. There are hybrid and monstrous creatures among the animals, and yet all these are as ‘natural’ as the indefinable type from which they deviate. Nature, incapable of realizing logical forms, falls prey to incoherence and dislocation. Everything material is so recalcitrant [so *widerspenstig*] to the unity of the concept. The animal still has a certain organic unity because its organs and limbs cannot exist separately, but one cannot even say that much for the plant. Its parts are independent. The plant is thus even more impotent than the animal. This independence of the parts is the impotence of the plant!» (TW 10 § 376 Z, quoted in Gerbi, *The dispute*, p. 423).

⁶⁴ See TW 9, §§ 345-348, and Gerbi, *The dispute*, pp. 419, 423. For Hegel, plants do not reach perfect individuality because they have not managed to detach themselves from the space that pulls them to the earth. Furthermore, for Hegel, the animal moves. As Petteni observes, this is the reproduction of the old prejudice (which dates back to Aristotle) that makes plants inferior beings. Petteni, *Breaking Free*, p. 242.

according to any plan and lacks precision. We must also take into account the fact that, following the general lines of Buffon and de Pauw's thought, Hegel makes statements such as the following:

The fauna [of America] includes lions, tigers, crocodiles, etc.; but these beasts, although they bear a remarkable resemblance to the forms of the old world, are, nevertheless, in every way smaller, weaker, more impotent. They assure that edible animals in the new world are not as nutritious as those of the old. There are large herds of cattle in America; but European beef is considered there as an exquisite treat⁶⁵.

Statements like this are what prompted Alexander von Humboldt's ironic comments about the ignorance of Hegel⁶⁶, and they testify to the influence of racist writers in Hegel's philosophy.

A primary line of argumentation that illustrates the problematic portrayal of America in the narrative of the progress of Spirit is consistent with this trajectory (although it is not the only one): by virtue of the alleged fact that plants dominate the physical space of America, the development of large animals is obstructed. America embodies the impotence of nature because it is too rooted into the Earth.

Alongside this argument, we also find the supposed spiritual inferiority of the Native Americans. According to this line of thought, in America, beings are endowed with little to no ability of self-determination. Hegel goes as far as to make statements as extraordinarily contemptuous as the following:

⁶⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Weltgeschichte, Manuscripts from taken by Heinrich Gustav Hotho 1822/1823*, ed. by B. Collenberg-Plotnikov, Hamburg, Meiner, 2015 (henceforth cited as GW 27,1), p. 79.

⁶⁶ In a letter, Humboldt writes: «I have organized my life too badly and I will soon end up losing my senses. I would be willing to give up that piece of meat that Hegel says is so superior to the American one, and I would love to splash around with those weak, harmless crocodiles of yours, which, unfortunately, are 25 feet long». Letter to Varnhagen von Ense. , July 1, 1837, in *Lettres de Humboldt to Varnhagen von Ense*. Taken from Gerbi, *The dispute*, p. 417. We must remember here the fragment of the same letter with which we began this section.

The new world is new not only relatively [in regard to its relationship to the old world Z. O.]; it is [also] new in regard to its physical and spiritual properties. Without speaking disparagingly of the new world, its geological age is not our concern, it being of comparable origin with the so-called creation [...]. Nothing can and should be said about whether America had been in contact with Europe nor does it matter that Mexico and Peru did indeed have significant civilizations, since they were of a feebler stock and are long gone. The new world has shown itself to be much feebler than the old world, and it lacks two resources, iron and horses. America is a new feeble, powerless world. Lions, tigers, and crocodiles are feebler there than in Africa, and the same is true of human beings. The original inhabitants of the West Indies have died out. Some of the tribes of North America have disappeared and some have retreated and generally declined, so that we see that the latter lack the strength to join the North Americans in the Free States. The same is more or less the case with Mexico and South America. Those who assert themselves there and sense the need for independence are Creoles⁶⁷.

Hegelian racism is not biological as such, as has already been specified in the concerning literature, that is, phenotypic factors do not determine it. Rather, it is a form of racism defined by other characteristics that it conceives as internal to the populations that it judges as inferior, namely, their place of origin. In this sense, Teshale Tibebu has proposed calling it geocultural racism⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ GW 27, 1, p. 79; PWH, p. 192.

⁶⁸ T. Tibebu, *Hegel and the Third World*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 2011. The author highlights a series of similar judgments regarding human groups on the sub-Saharan African continent: «The African is like a child, lacking rationality but having ‘the real capability of becoming rational’. Hegel was not a *biological* racist; he did not believe that some people were born biologically inferior to others. He was instead a *geocultural* racist – that is, one who believed that the African environment and the African existence conditioned by it were inferior to the environment and peoples of Europe. Hegel was an environmental racist of a different sort» (p. 181).

To be sure, there is no biological difference between the members of humanity, since for Hegel there is no naturalistic determination of the concept of race⁶⁹.

All members of the human genus (*Gattung*) spiritual beings⁷⁰. We could also take into account the importance of the modern conception of legal equality referred to in the *Philosophy of Right*⁷¹. However, there is no doubt that for Hegel certain human beings are more spiritual than others, and that other human beings are more 'natural' since they are determined by geographical conditions so

⁶⁹ This is the crux of Joseph McCarney's argument in *Hegel's Racism? A Response to Bernasconi*, «Radical Philosophy», CIX, 2003, pp. 32-35. See the instructive state of affairs in the dispute between Bernasconi and McCarthy provided by Patricia Purtschert: «Racism, McCarney claims, is incompatible with Hegel's concept of history because it is not the natural category of the nation, tribe, caste, or race that constitutes the subject of history, but rather the people, *Volk*, as a specific manifestation of spirit. This notion of spirit as detached from nature provides an 'unrivalled theoretical basis' for a theory of human equality» (Purtschert, *On the limit of spirit: Hegel's racism revisited*, p. 1042). Recently, Bernasconi has developed his argument against McCarney by arguing that his starting point for talking about racism – including Hegelian racism – is not naturalistic (that is, it does not follow Franz Boas' premises for the definition of racism), but rather materialist. Bernasconi maintains that racism must also be understood through cultural factors. Here he admits that he is following Frantz Fanon and that we must talk about cultural, institutional, and systemic racism. For Bernasconi, the philosophies of history of the 19th century are the secular substitute for the exclusionary grounds of religion, colonialism and slavery. See R. Bernasconi, *Philosophical histories as sites of racism*, communication presented in relation to the activities organized by the research group of Professor Franz Knappik: *Hegel (anti) colonial*, delivered in Berlin, September 30th, 2022. <https://hegelantikolonial.wordpress.com>

⁷⁰ TW 10, § 396.

⁷¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 14,1, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. by K. Grotzsch and E. Weisser-Lohmann, Dusseldorf, Meiner, 2009 (henceforth GW 14, 1), Anmerkung § 209, p. 175; trad. by T.M. Knox, revised by S. Houlgate, *Outlines of the philosophy of right*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.

monstrous that they cannot be detached from, *uproot* and situate themselves on the overlaid map that traces the progress of Spirit across the world. These considerations have no rational foundation.

The case of North America not only reaffirms the already questionable idea of the progress of Spirit (in a westward direction) but also the necessity of the violence of political time on the Earth.

3. *Dematerialization and the Uprooting of History*

The exclusion of the human being from the discourse of Geology reinforces the prejudice of the exceptional character of the species, since it is saved from the disastrous consequences that would be produced – and currently are produced – by the idea and the fact that the geological era in which the human being lives is the result of a contingent series of events resulting in the development of the species and also that this geological era is temporary⁷². The deep time that has already passed does not dwarf the temporality of the human being, nor does it make them insignificant⁷³. On the contrary, it opens the time of the human being to the future. But the geographical direction in which that future points in the Hegelian philosophy of history (namely, the direction of America), raises the issue of being impotent or being *too natural*. In order for the future to be accomplished, the historical narrative imposes the condition that is imposed on everything conceptual and spiritual, namely, that of its dematerialization. The natural conditions of the continent must, therefore, be altered until they become a space socialized in accordance with the Western perspective.

Therefore, in relation to North America, the only obstacle that Hegel observes in this enterprise of the conquest of history over geography is the fact that North America still possessed large areas of unpopulated land (or areas that he believed to be unpopulated).

Hegel assumes that logging, land clearing, a sedentary lifestyle and urbanization are the only ways to promote the establishment of

⁷² See note 26.

⁷³ See Gould, *Arrow time*.

Spirit. Through these actions the author seems to assume that the population will be prevented from dispersing into the bush and that they will remain concentrated in urban centers⁷⁴.

Just as, according to Hegel, the French Revolution would not have taken place if large areas of forest had still existed in Europe, that is, a considerable 'uncultivated' space to which the population could have emigrated and made possible a continuation of agricultural communities, America has to dematerialize its large expanses of 'depopulated' land before it can proclaim itself the site of Spirit. The more the 'natural' border is pushed, the further Spirit will advance and the more real it will be, thereby instantiating the ideology of the border. Hegel states:

North America is still in the process of clearing the land. Only when, as in Europe, the number of farmers can no longer be increased at will, will the inhabitants, instead of expanding in search of new land, have to condense into industry and urban traffic, forming a compact system of civil society, and they will come to experience the needs of an organic State. It is, therefore, impossible to compare the free North American States with the European countries; because in Europe there is no such natural outlet for the population. If the forests of Germany had still existed, the French Revolution would not have occurred. North America can only be compared with Europe when the immense space it offers is full and society has concentrated on itself⁷⁵.

Without a doubt, Hegel has one of the most lucid philosophical views of the 19th century. As such, he clearly identifies the link between the devastation of habitat and settlement and the triumph of capitalism. However, we must not overlook the fact that this observation is grounded on a narrative that operates under the assumption that the development of Spirit has no impediments and that the time of the cultivated human being unfolds and produces the *World* by destroying the *Earth*.

⁷⁴ TW 12, p. 113.

⁷⁵ Ivi, p. 113.

Contrary to his rather critical standpoint concerning the consequences capitalism entails by creating an unequal society⁷⁶, and contrary to the idea of a State or political-ethical life that can search for the neutralization of the socio-politically devastating consequences of poverty⁷⁷, Hegel fell short in seeing the need to root freedom in our geographical spaces and our attachment to the Earth.

If we read the *Philosophy of History* in the light of the *Philosophy of Right* and think about the features of the modern State – which aims to emancipate citizens – we must also think about the conditions under which this State emerged and the conditions for its existence. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel clearly sees that these conditions for emergence are to be found in a market economy that he sees coming into being, and in the birth of which he observes (in this case rather uneasily) a very problematic internal contradiction: poverty (of rights, of access to opportunities of marginalized populations).

The march of the Spirit of the World on Earth is the march of capitalism. It is not that Hegel wished this (just as he does not seem to wish for the poverty of the ‘mob’ in the modern State). His philosophy of history can be read as a diagnosis. And he was right. The logic of this Philosophy of history presupposes that the triumph of Spirit is the dematerialization of the Earth, which is to say, the history of the world entails its devastation.

4. *Conclusions*

In a famous speech given at the Sorbonne, the poet Aimé Césaire formulated a peremptory demand: «Let the black peoples enter the great scene of history»⁷⁸. I believe this call should not be

⁷⁶GW 14, 1, p. 194; Hegel, *Outlines*, § 244.

⁷⁷ Ivi, § 245; p. 194 and F. Huesca, *Economía política clásica en Hegel. Valor, capital y eticidad*, Buenos Aires, Biblos, 2021.

⁷⁸ A. Césaire, *Premier congrès international des écrivains et artistes noirs qui se tient à la Sorbonne*, 19-21 September 1956: <https://www.ina.fr/ina-eclaire->

taken as a demand that leaves the idea of history intact, rather it must resonate today as the call to dismantle the opposition between history and geography. As such, it is about letting diverse histories enter into that great linear narrative of history only to break it, to fragment it. It is nothing short of the demand to reformulate the concept of freedom, dislocating it from its exclusive conjunction with a dematerialized, empty future.

The criticism of the gulf separating history and geography must demonstrate the *need to root the concept of freedom in the spaces in which we live*. The critique of the violence of history on geography and geology must serve – on the same lines of the Hegelian thought that roots freedom in a collective process – the thinking of this very freedom no longer as equal to the progressive detachment from our geographical grounds, but rather as something inseparably linked to the Earth. The concept of World must change, conceptually and politically, to a larger concept encompassing situated times rooted in the planet.

It is important to acknowledge Hegel's insight into this particular phenomenon to see, through him, thanks to him, but also from a different perspective, what he recognizes as a necessary condition for the development of Spirit in the form of Capital: the destruction of the environment. To contribute to a philosophy of history self-aware of Spirit's logic, but critical towards some of the present features of our political world, it is important to acknowledge that a 'political cosmology'⁷⁹ in Hegelian terms needs a geological turn.

Political cosmology can indeed be achieved only if attention is paid to the fact that the World doesn't include just one aspect of the objective spirit. As Nuzzo stresses, the World is a stratified process. However, this process must take into account what objective spirit tends to leave behind, or outside spirit, that is, the Earth and its temporalities as well as temporalities of other geographies. What is needed, then, is a political geo-cosmology.

actu/audio/phd86081305/congres-international-des-ecrivains-et-artistes-noirs-a-la-sorbonne-du-19.

⁷⁹ See Nuzzo, *Changing the World of Spirit*, p. 283.

If the World remains a 'concept' while the Earth is still considered a dead organism, we will not succeed in bringing philosophy to a present that needs to be rooted in spatial grounds. We need to rethink the Earth from a Hegelian perspective, that is, see it through the light of reason. In other words, we need to 'reconceptualize' the Earth⁸⁰ so it can be fully understood from Nuzzo's appealing reading, as an aspect of the complex process of the realization of freedom.

⁸⁰ Ivi, p. 284.