

# THE MEDIATED GEOGRAPHY OF HEGEL

## A GEOGRAFIA MEDIATIZADA DE HEGEL

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**RESUMO:** Ainda é grandemente ignorado que a obra de Hegel pode ser de grande ajuda para compreender a produção e a contestação do espaço. O sistema hegeliano não é apenas uma das conquistas mais significativas da filosofia moderna, mas pode ser de grande ajuda para enriquecer os estudos geográficos, embora Hegel-o-geógrafo ainda esteja por ser descoberto e devidamente reconhecido. Considerando o metabolismo da razão, a articulação entre o particular e o universal e a função da alteridade na produção do espaço, dentre outros processos socioespaciais, este artigo oferece uma breve análise comparativa entre a geografia menor de Hegel (a mais explícita e imediata considerações de espaço, dimensões espaciais e geometria) e sua geografia maior, que é imanente ao corpo principal do seu sistema filosófico. A grande realização geográfica de Hegel – a sua principal contribuição para a disciplina – é provavelmente a investigação detalhada sobre a busca da razão superior e sobre o que constitui o absoluto.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** produção do espaço; natureza; conflitos; capitalismo; agência

**ABSTRACT:** It is still largely ignored that the world of Hegel can be of great assistance to comprehend the production and contestation of space. The Hegelian system is not only one of the most significant achievements of modern philosophy but it can help to enrich geographical scholarship, although Hegel-the-geographer is yet to be discovered and properly recognised. Considering the metabolism of reason, the articulation between the particular and the universal, and the function of otherness in the production of space, among other socio-spatial processes, this article offers a brief comparative analysis between Hegel's minor geography (the more explicit and immediate considerations of space, spatial dimensions and geometry) and the more substantial, major geography, that is immanent in the main body of his philosophical system. The great geographical accomplishment of Hegel – his major contribution to the discipline – is probably the detailed investigation into the pursuit of higher reason and on what constitutes the absolute.

**KEYWORDS:** production of space; nature; conflicts; capitalism; agency

### *1. Hegel's geographical reason and his reasons for geography*

Hegel is certainly one of the most important and intriguing philosophers in the history of Western thought. Hegel belonged to that very special group of so-called German Idealists, whose contribution had a major and lasting impact on the discipline and on the socio-political sphere.<sup>1</sup> Later in life he became a celebrated professor and even rector of Berlin University,

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<sup>1</sup>PÖGGELER, O. **Hegel: Einführung in Seine Philosophie**. Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 1977.



having lived through the turbulent years of the French Revolution, the occupation of (what would later become unified) Germany and the growing hegemony of modern, industrial Europe. As a monumental, but also very controversial scholar, Hegel has been equally celebrated and criticised since his lifetime. His work is frequently mentioned, but rarely debated outside specialised academic circles. One main reason to resist his philosophy and often treat it as something almost incomprehensible is the extremely ambitious task Hegel set for himself, who was basically an attempt to revisit the whole philosophical edifice since before the Greeks and to develop an innovative method to critically inquire the human existence and world knowledge. It is no exaggeration to claim that all philosophers who came afterwards, including Marx, Adorno, Heidegger, Derrida, Nancy and Badiou, were all deeply challenged and influenced by Hegel. It is undeniable that the Hegelian dialectic and his systematic method are a turning point in the evolution of philosophy and we are still beginning to understand its full potential. Hegel remains a key intellectual reference, especially because late (neoliberal) modernity still hasn't tackled the problems of early modernity/liberalism (i.e. expansionism, risks, privatisation, reification, individualism) and new rounds of contradiction steadily accumulate (e.g. post-political modes of governance). We could even speculate that, had Hegel been better understood, Europe and the whole world could have perhaps spared two centuries of massive mistakes and great confusion.

Our starting point here is that Hegelian philosophy is also permeated and helps to enrich geographical scholarship. Nonetheless, Hegel-the-geographer is still to be discovered and properly recognised. It has to do with the shrewdness of his interpretative work, as much as with his method. Hegelian philosophy did not come 'only' from his obstinate study of Greek, German and other European schools of thought, but also from the creative reflection on the historical developments and the spatial transformations unfolding before his very eyes. Having been born in Württemberg, he lived in Bavaria, Prussia and Switzerland, and travelled to Austria, Holland, Belgium and France. Those various residences and journeys certainly had an impact on Hegel's thinking, as noted by Kojève, "*L'homme qui contemple est 'absorbé' par ce qu'il contemple.*"<sup>2</sup> Hegel's lived and visited spaces constituted a geography of high voltage, as he witnessed the attacks by Napoleon on German soil, the stubborn resistance of the aristocracy and the strengthening of bourgeois institutions, which informed his thinking

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<sup>2</sup> KOJEVE, A. *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel: Leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit*. Paris: Gallimard, 1947, p. 11.

and writing. Hegel observed that the “rise of philosophy is due to these cravings of thought. Its point of departure is Experience; including under that name both our immediate consciousness and the inductions from it.”<sup>3</sup> Another notable Hegelian contention was that one self-consciousness expects recognition from another self-consciousness, that is, an individual externalises and through the other becomes more itself. There exist two convergent propositions in the dynamics of spirit: “substance alienates itself from itself and becomes self-consciousness” and, at the same time, “self-consciousness alienates itself from itself and gives itself the nature of a Thing, or makes itself a universal Self.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, human civilisation is a journey towards higher levels of reason and morality: *esse qua esse* (that is, being as being) depends on the spirit that is itself conscious of itself as spirit [*Geist*].

Those forces certainly have profound geographical repercussions and play a central role in the collective production of space out of social relations and political disputes.<sup>5</sup> For Hegel, knowledge is real only when comes out of a system of science employed to question the human condition and the necessary interactions. The Hegelian philosophical programme can therefore be of great assistance to comprehend the politics of scale because, according to him, truth is the entirety of relations (the whole formed by individual circumstances). Considering the metabolism of reason, the articulation between the particular and the universal, and the function of otherness in the production of space, among other socio-spatial processes<sup>6</sup>, this article offers a brief comparative analysis between Hegel’s minor geography (the more explicit and immediate considerations of space, spatial dimensions and geometry) and the more substantial, major geography, that is immanent in the main body of his philosophical system. It follows a call made by Pohl for a ‘geographical turn’ to Hegel.<sup>7</sup> The main argument in this article evolves around the key question of the totality of relations and how space encapsulates the unfinished struggles for change and for self-consciousness.

## 2. Hegel’s minor (immediate) geography: Subordinate spatial settings

<sup>3</sup>HEGEL, G.W.F. **The Logic of Hegel: The First Part of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline**. Trans. W. Wallace. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>HEGEL, G.W.F. **Phenomenology of Spirit**. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 457.

<sup>5</sup>IORIS, A.A.R. **The Political Ecology of the State: The Basis and the Evolution of Environmental Statehood**. London: Routledge, 2014.

<sup>6</sup>IORIS, A.A.R. Indigenous peoples, land-based disputes and strategies of socio-spatial resistance at agricultural frontiers. **Ethnopolitics**, n. 21, p. 278-298, 2022.

<sup>7</sup>POHL, L. Hegel and the shadow of materialist geographies. **ACME: An International Journal of Critical Geographies**, n. 18, p. 285-307, 2019.

If the contribution of Hegel to philosophy and other sciences is regularly acknowledged in academic texts, his work is still surrounded by many ambiguities and misconstructions. That leads Bourgeois to claim that “*aucune autre philosophie n’a été l’objet d’interprétations aussi diverses et conflictuelles comme Hegel.*”<sup>8</sup> By and large, this has less to do with the complexity of his writing and more with the sophistication and originality of Hegel’s ideas. Very few other philosophes, since Plato and Aristotle, have offered such ground-breaking reflection on existence, knowledge and social interaction, among many other topics of crucial philosophical and more-than-philosophical importance. Even so, almost two centuries since Hegel’s death in 1831, what prevails today are reductionist interpretations that wrongly connect Hegel with totalitarianism, European supremacy and historical determinism. As an unfortunate consequence of these misconceptions, the discipline of geography has so far benefited only marginally from the Hegelian dialectic. Most references in this field, since the 1970s, have been provided by the so-called ‘radical [neo-Marxist] geographers.’ This group, primarily inspired by the meta-philosophy of Lefebvre<sup>9</sup> and the spatiality of capitalism studied by Harvey<sup>10</sup>, has attempted to extend dialectical logic to encompass the contingencies of space, particularly the politics of scale and urban development<sup>11</sup>, but rarely engage with the Hegelian categories more directly (most only on the ‘master-slave dialectic’, which was certainly a great influence on Marx’s work). It is more common to see references to secondary bibliography and comments on Hegel, instead of confronting his main texts, such as the *Science of Logic* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Interestingly, if some geographers have tried, even indirectly, to engage with Hegelian categories, several philosophers have also tried to systematise the Hegelian treatment of space, nature and worldness. For instance, Heidegger affirms that time and space are primarily problems of the Hegelian philosophy of nature, as movement requires that “space goes over time, and vice versa.”<sup>12</sup> The search for a more geographical Hegelianism and, at the same time, for a clear Hegelian geography is wide open.

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<sup>8</sup> BOURGEOIS, B. Commenter Hegel: Un destin et une tâche (postface). In: Caron, M. (Org.). **Les Cahiers d’Histoire de la Philosophie: Hegel**. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2007, p. 649.

<sup>9</sup> LEFEBVRE, H. **The Production of Space**. Trans. D. Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

<sup>10</sup> HARVEY, D. **The Limits to Capital**. Oxford: Blackwell, 1982.

<sup>11</sup> COLLINGE, C. Positions without negations? Dialectical reason and the contingencies of space. **Environment and Planning A**, n. 40, p. 2613-2622, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> HEIDEGGER, M. **Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit**. Trans. P. Emad and K. Maly. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998, p. 122.

It is definitely worthwhile to revisit how Hegel dealt with space in the development of his logico-dialectical system. Already in the early academic years, at Jena in 1801-1802, Hegel's notebooks recorded a comparison between the positive and objective pole represented by space with a subjective and negative pole represented by time.<sup>13</sup> Subsequent notes, written during this formative period in 1803-1804, considered matter 'in' or 'as' motion, with periodic motion characterised as the temporalisation of space and the spatialisation of time. For that reason, "Time is [thus] the moment of 'infinity' (i.e. of endless succession, transience, othering) and space the moment of self-identity (since any point can be regarded as fixed once and for all)."<sup>14</sup> The main concept of the 1807 Jena's Phenomenology of Spirit is supreme self-consciousness, which has a complex, multifaceted explanation but can be also understood as the union of space and time. These are the two parts of force and operate as an outward image of the notion.<sup>15</sup> It observes an ontological symmetry in that spirit is present in space and time, while space and time are differences in the universal medium.<sup>16</sup> Most of Hegel's elaboration on space and geometry is really found on the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline, Science of Logic [*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*] initially published in 1817 with a second edition in 1827 and a third edition in 1830.<sup>17</sup> A parallel work, normally called the Greater Logic<sup>18</sup>, published between 1812 and 1816 and later revised, also deal with the relations and conceptualisations space, geometry, time, reason and matter. For Hegel, "these are continuous magnitudes in that they are repulsions from themselves, each a flowing forth out of itself which is not, however, a going over, or a relating, to a qualitatively other. They possess the absolute possibility that the one may be posited in them anywhere."<sup>19</sup> Hegel's direct treatment of space clearly echoes Euclidian synthetic geometry, which was already under attack during Hegel's time and later criticised by Einstein as only a good approximation for short distances or small magnitudes. According to the geometrical perspective, the line is the negation of space because it limits the continuity of space; but there is a negation of the negation: the totality of space (3D) is the sublation of the plane (2D) which is the sublation of the line (1D). Space for Hegel, at this

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<sup>13</sup> HARRIS, H.S. **Hegel's Development: Night Thoughts (Jena 1801-1806)**. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.

<sup>14</sup> HARRIS. **Hegel's Development**, p. 244.

<sup>15</sup> HEGEL. **Phenomenology of Spirit**, p. 94.

<sup>16</sup> HEGEL. **Phenomenology of Spirit**, p. 106.

<sup>17</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part I: Science of Logic**. Trans. K. Brinkmann and D.O. Dahlstrom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **The Science of Logic**. Trans. Di Giovanni, G. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **The Science of Logic**, p. 166.

stage, is a multiplicity [*Vielheit*] of different ‘heres’, where each here is an instance of the same universal space (there is thus space and more space). Space is taken as continuity, with no gaps, and its logical structure is not just that of externality but that of self-externality (being contradictory continuous and external-to-itself).

The Hegelian system gave mathematics a better connection between material reality and a clear consideration of the genesis of quantity as the result of the dialectic of quality.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, the Hegelian interpretation of space according to Houlgate, is a “self-determining reason existing in the form of externality.”<sup>21</sup> Space becomes the lack of difference but is likewise negated by spatial difference. Such ingenious, but scant treatment of space is what we might call Hegel’s minor geography, that is, a very immediate (non-mediated, in Hegelian terms) consideration of spatiality as the natural basis of social agency. There is tendency here to present space as a pure abstraction, the very first determination first moment of logic. Space as such is often conceptualised by Hegel as a simple form or an abstraction (the form of immediate externality). It is taken as the universal indeterminate, a distance from bodies, a general idea, as “there is no deduction here.”<sup>22</sup> The minor geography is best demonstrated in his over-schematic text on the philosophy of history, where in the introduction Hegel presents a simplistic classification of world regions and peoples, countries and landscapes, in the last case the differences between arid elevated land, valley plains and coastal regions.<sup>23</sup> There is a great deal of Eurocentrism and environmental determinism in this particular text, which was meant to be used in the lecture room. The main chapters of the book provide a strange categorisation of world history, starting with the Oriental world and then moving to the Greek and Roman worlds, with the German world as the culmination of civilisation. It is not difficult to agree that the Hegelian historical and geographical accounts in this book are not among his best works (perhaps it constitutes, as provocatively suggested by an anonymous reviewer, an even ‘smaller, minuscule geography of Hegel’). Those shortcomings are also expressed in the more explicit mathematical and geometrical Hegelian texts, which contain an implicit incompleteness because it is a journey towards the genuine totality at the expense of space, which is regarded to the lesser realm of immediacy and self-

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<sup>20</sup> KOL’MAN, E.; YANOVSKAYA, S. Hegel and mathematics. In: **Mathematical Manuscripts of Karl Marx**. New York: New Park Publications, 1983, p. 235-255.

<sup>21</sup> HOULGATE, S. **An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History**. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, p. 123.

<sup>22</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-6. Volume III. Medieval and Modern Philosophy**. Trans. R.F. Brown and J.M. Stewart. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009, p. 138.

<sup>23</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **The Philosophy of History**. Trans. J. Sibree. Mineola: Dover Publications, 1956, p. 88.

certainty. Time becomes the truth of space because it is the self-transcendence of space (space that transcends its own spatiality, as the basic being); it is the active pole and the negation or overcoming of space. Spatiality turns into a perpetual collapsing to infinite ‘heres’ that are negated and reinstated indefinitely in an undifferentiated continuous.<sup>24</sup>

Pure space is here considered equivalent to pure being, which is the first category of logic but it is still empty; needless to remember that the final category of logic is the Absolute Idea, which transcends space. Hegel defines space within itself as “the contradiction of indifferent asunderness and differenceless continuity, the pure negativity of itself, and the transition, first of all, into time.”<sup>25</sup> Likewise, place becomes the “posited identity of space and time”; place is “spatial and therefore indifferent, singularity”; there is a “vanishing and self-regeneration of space in time and time in space, a process in which time posits itself spatially as place, but in which place, too, as indifferent spatiality, is immediately posited as temporal: this is Motion.”<sup>26</sup> Related to Hegel’s comments on place and space, there are references to climate, race, landscapes and continents, that is, to physical geography<sup>27</sup>, which betrays the influence of this Berlin colleague and geography professor Karl Ritter (as registered on his letters).<sup>28</sup> The ontological basis of nature, according to Hegel, is space, which is its immediate determination (that is, not yet mediated or transformed). Because of this immediacy, space is “the abstract universality of Nature ‘s self-externality.”<sup>29</sup> Notably, the Philosophy of Nature opens with a section on mechanics that posits space (nature) as the first category and the idea of externality as such: “The first or immediate determination of Nature is Space: the abstract universality of Nature’s self-externality, self-externality’s mediationless indifference.”<sup>30</sup> Because to be in space is external, this concept is deemed primitive and only explains the physical world in an immediate, largely unreflexive fashion (time, on the other hand, is the negativity, the negation of the negation of the indifferent self-externality of space; even so, it is an exaggeration to say that for Hegel “nature is constituted by externality all the way

<sup>24</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-6. Volume III. Medieval and Modern Philosophy**. Trans. R.F. Brown and J.M. Stewart. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part II: Philosophy of Nature**. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 40.

<sup>26</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline**, p. 41.

<sup>27</sup> BOND, D.W. Hegel’s Geographical thought. **Environment and Planning D**, n. 32, p. 179-198, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Hegel: The Letters**. Trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

<sup>29</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline**, p. 28.

<sup>30</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline**, p. 28.

down.”<sup>31</sup> A related concept is the notion of a ‘bad infinite’ developed by Hegel in relation to mathematical calculus.<sup>32</sup> The bad or spurious infinity is open-ended, whereas a true infinity is a totality, it has no essential nature and is not even properly an infinite but delimited by negating something else. The ‘bad infinity’ is merely quantitative as it results from the process of addition, contrasting with the genuine infinity is a qualitative, dynamic self-relation of the interminable process of surpassing (sublation).

These are clear indications in his explicit dealings with space that Hegel’s geography was left rather implicit and did not constitute for him a top priority. In regard to the philosophy of nature, his contemporary Schelling went further and presented a complex evolution from inorganic forces to organic sensibility and speculative physics.<sup>33</sup> Hegel’s minor geography had direct consequences for his geopolitical and civilisational thinking and, although Hegel’s history culminates in Protestant Germany above the rest of the world, it was also a political stand against German fragmentation and in favour of a new geographical totality. There are also elements of Eurocentrism and Judeo-Christian theology permeating his dealings with nature and matter as the opposite of mind and society.<sup>34</sup> The historical account of Hegel, reflected in his system of logic, is a progression from the universalist world of the Orient (from China to Egypt) to the particularism of Judaism, Hellenism and Rome, which culminates in the Western civilisation (the Occident, basically the Germanic nations) that apprehends the absolute as singularity. According to this mega-historical framework, Africa represents the pre-historical absolute that corresponds to the immediate singularity (what is somehow paradoxical because it presupposes a differentiation that it takes up in itself). Hegel has been time and again criticised (with good justification) for such linear and strict interpretation of historic change, something that was uncritically absorbed by Marx (who referred to “the riddle of the unchangeability of Asiatic societies” and “their never-ceasing changes of dynasty”).<sup>35</sup> Hegel proposed a curious, but original geographical explanation: the German Reformation was considered the single key event since Roman times and the entire period from the fall of the Roman Empire up to modern times as “The Germanic World.”<sup>36</sup> It

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<sup>31</sup> FURLOTTE, W. **The Problem of Nature in Hegel’s Final System**. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2018, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline**, p. 149.

<sup>33</sup> SCHELLING, F.W.J. **First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature**. Trans. K.R. Peterson. Albany: SUNY Press, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> COLLETTI, L. **Il Marxismo e Hegel**. Bari: Editora Laterza, 1969.

<sup>35</sup> MARX, K. **Capital, Volume 1**. Trans. B. Fowkes. London: New Left Review/Penguin, 1990, p. 479.

<sup>36</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **The Philosophy of History**.



should be noted that this scheme makes sense from the perspective of Spirit, the great Greek/Roman period and the obscure, scholastic scholarship of the Middle Ages; Hegel certainly exaggerated but it coherent with his central argument that it is *Geist* that guides history and geography; for him, what happens is happening necessarily.

It will be demonstrated in the next section that, despite these cracks, Hegel provided enough ammunition in his main logical and ethical system for dealing with space and inform critical geography today. Hegel admits an identity between space and its negation (time) through the positivity of motion. Through ‘mechanic’ phases, logic returns to its beginnings (nature) and becomes the sheer being of space. More significantly, Hegel’s apparent ‘dualisms’ are always elements of the dialectic and destined to transform themselves into opposites to be reconciled at a higher level and through their very diversification. Hegel went beyond Idealism and Realism and “is astonishingly up-to-date” and “both his conception of Nature and the dialectical pattern of his reasoning and of this philosophical schema are precisely suited to contemporary physics.”<sup>37</sup> In addition, “Hegel is emphatically realist in his conception of Nature, out of which, he teaches, spirit is dialectically generated... [and] Nature becomes aware of itself.”<sup>38</sup> It is reassuring that in his lectures we can detect his deeper geographical (ontological) sensibilities on space-time; inner sensations are subjective but these have a universal sensible element, which is space time. For Hegel, “Space and time therefore are something, universal, the universal of the sensible itself, or what Kant calls the a priori forms of sensible nature.”<sup>39</sup> Hegel mobilised a good deal of Spinozism to bridge the Kantian dualism between known phenomena and things-in-themselves; he claims that nature is an expression of the Idea (which is ‘God in himself’ and related to the ‘true infinity’). It is significant the spatio-time connection between reason and ontology, as stated by Hegel, “... things are in truth themselves spatial and temporal... [however] space and time are extremely meagre and superficial determinations, consequently, that things obtain very little from these forms... Cognitive thinking does not halt at these forms: it apprehends things in their Notion in which space and time are contained as ideal moments... free intelligence is the self-existent

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<sup>37</sup> HARRIS, E.E. **The Spirit of Hegel**. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993, p. 247.

<sup>38</sup> HARRIS, E.E. **The Spirit of Hegel**. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993, p. 256.

<sup>39</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-6. Volume III. Medieval and Modern Philosophy**, p. 174.

dialectic of these forms of immediate asunderness.”<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, Hegel’s minor geography was never otiose, but paved the way for his major, transformative geography.

### 3. Hegel’s major (mediated) geography: Immanent geographical forces

The readily understood treatment of nature, world history and geometry, briefly mentioned above, is often taken as all Hegel had to say about space and geography, as attested in the various Hegelian dictionaries and suchlike commentaries published over the last decades. Despite its obvious philosophical and historical importance, this most apparent and immediate spatial elaboration constitutes no more than Hegel’s minor geographical contribution. It has persisted in most intellectual circles the unhelpful disconnection between Hegel’s vast discussion on ethics and reason and the lesser work on space and nature, which has resulted in a conceptual impasse and is the main reason why Hegelian philosophy is seldom mobilised by geographers or philosophers to scrutinise the social production and contestation of space. In one of the most notorious examples of a narrow rendering of Hegel’s rich philosophy, Kojève suggests that later in life Hegel abandoned the parallelism between philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit and expressed an opposition (“negation”) between nature, as existence, and essence, as logic, which stands as a tension between being and notion.<sup>41</sup> According to Kojève’s reading of the Hegelian texts, nature is inconcrete because it is an abstraction of the spirit, whereas the essence of the absolute is only fully realised and concretely revealed in the synthesis between logic and existence. On the one hand, Kojève is right to affirm that Hegel seeks the totality of existence, which is not independent of essence (although Kojève mistakenly equates Hegelian phenomenology to Heideggerian existentialism). In his words, “*l’homme n’existe-t-il pas en dehors de l’histoire.*”<sup>42</sup> On the other, however, Kojève seems to attribute to Hegel an over-optimistic destiny and sees the culmination of human history as a predetermined, consummate state beyond specific times and spaces. “*Le but de l’Histoire, son terme final, - c’est ‘le Concept absolu’, c’est-à-dire la ‘Science.’ Dans cette Science, dit Hegel, l’Homme supprime-*

<sup>40</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part III: Philosophy of Mind.** Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 198.

<sup>41</sup> KOJEVE, A. **Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel: Leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l’Esprit**, p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> KOJEVE, A. **Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel: Leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l’Esprit**, p. 39.

*dialectiquement son existence temporelle ou ‘ponctuelle’, c’est-à-dire vraiment humaine, par opposition à la Nature, es il devient lui-même Étendue (Ausdehnung) ou Espace.”*<sup>43</sup>

As it is well known, Kojève’s public conferences were hugely influential in France in the middle of the last century, but at the expense of a reducing Hegel’s phenomenology to an esoteric and teleological theory of evolution. It can be conceded that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is an intricate text and its publication faced many personal and editorial challenges (i.e. Hegel’s precarious university job and the Napoleonic invasion of Thuringia), as demonstrated in his letters of 1806 and 1807.<sup>44</sup> However, the structure and the argument of the book render very clear the *arrière pensée* of Hegel, particularly the interminable trajectory of spirit [*Geist*], from one shape of consciousness [*Gestalt*] to another but in a way that maintains a cumulative interconnection between the various stages. Instead of a vulgar idealism, Hegel adopts an atheistic and quasi-materialistic stance that it can be even considered a precursor of Marxism, something that was respectively demonstrated by Feuerbach and Lukács, among other authors.<sup>45</sup> The ‘march’ of the Hegelian world-spirit (converted by Marx into the mundane materiality of the world, cf. Harvey<sup>46</sup>) is really the continuation and realisation of the dialectic of nature. Spirit grasps the totality of the real, which is its own essence, in an endless process in which humanity (the finite spirit) flourishes. Whereas for Heidegger the essence of being is time, for Hegel the essence of being is the essence of time (considering that time “has the pure shape of space”, in Heidegger<sup>47</sup>). Hence the Hegelian insistence on actuality [*Wirklichkeit*], whose tensions are reconciled through reason and according to mutually dependent subjects and objects. This Hegelian being is the object transformed and expanded by the actualisation of the nation, that is, social space. Space is produced through the strive for self-consciousness (the trajectory of reason, as ethics) and by the immanence of recognition (as the general intersubjective structure and pattern of Hegel’s concept of spirit, according to Williams<sup>48</sup>). These are all collective and deeply politicised geographical phenomena as, for example, the agrarian question in the United Kingdom, which since the time of King John is a perennial attempt to resist the privatisation of land and regulate access to resources (including the right to move around in the landscape).

<sup>43</sup> KOJEVE, A. *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel: Leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l’Esprit*, p. 440.

<sup>44</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *Hegel: The Letters*.

<sup>45</sup> HARRIS, E.E. *The Spirit of Hegel*.

<sup>46</sup> HARVEY, D. The spatial fix – Hegel, von Thunen, and Marx. *Antipode*, n. 13, p. 1-12, 1981.

<sup>47</sup> HEIDEGGER, M. *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 145.

<sup>48</sup> WILLIAMS, R.R. *Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1997.

Because of Hegel's complex elaboration on being and on actuality, there is no justification to maintain nature as a steppingstone to the fulfilment of a higher ontological condition (the supreme realm of reason), as interpreted by several commentators. Concrete existence does not emerge out of abstract nature or with the advent of history, but it is present throughout the unfolding of contingent socio-spatial relations. Loewenberg insists that "Hegel is not concerned with actual genesis. His Phenomenology is not history" but a 'journey' from the immediacy of self-certainty to a wiser vision of ourselves and the world.<sup>49</sup> There is no golden essence to be unveiled at the expense or in relation to nature, but essence depends on the existence and interdependencies between humans and non-humans. Dealing with nature, for Hegel, "should at least have the significance of a universal, not of a sensuous particular."<sup>50</sup> As demonstrated by Marx in his more Hegelian phase, there is no nature-out-there to be transformed by conscious humans, but humans become conscious of themselves and of their condition through the active engagement with the more-than-human elements of reality.<sup>51</sup> Or, as later articulated by Stirling, "Here is the secret of Hegel, or rather a schema to a key to it: Quantity – Time and Space – Empirical Realities."<sup>52</sup> That is quite different than Kojève's use of a meta-Hegelian approach (early post-modern?) to formulate an idiosyncratic interpretation of Hegelian dialectic, concluding that the various stages of reason and notion act separately and not necessarily connected all the way through. On that account, one needs to mobilise the entire dialectical system proposed by Hegel in order to grasp its full geographical potential. It echoes the claim of Massey that space and nature are not the substrate of human activity but what comes out of clashes and interaction which is a dynamic, unfinished process.<sup>53</sup>

Although the Hegelian system, which includes this immanent geographical 'blueprint', has been frequently attacked for being teleological and authoritarian, distorting a philosophy aimed at opening infinite possibilities through the pursuit of reason through, basically, otherness and ethical life. All that was best theorised by Hegel precisely on his magnum opus, the Phenomenology where an arduous towards higher self-consciousness is contrived out of concrete social exchanges. The announced potentiality of freedom through reason and moral

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<sup>49</sup> LOEWENBERG, J. The comedy of immediacy in Hegel's 'Phenomenology'. **Cross Currents**, n. 6, p. 345-357, 1956, p. 346.

<sup>50</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Phenomenology of Spirit**, p. 147.

<sup>51</sup> MARX, K. **Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844**. Trans. M. Milligan. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1988.

<sup>52</sup> STIRLING, J.H. **The Secret of Hegel: Being the Hegelian System in Origin, Principle, Form and Matter**. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1898, p. 84.

<sup>53</sup> MASSEY, D. **For Space**. London: SAGE, 2005.

practices, as formulated by Hegel, permeates the politics of space production and the struggle for socio-spatial inclusion. The entire Hegelian system – which progresses from early texts into the *Logic* and the *Encyclopedia* should be actually understood in the light of the original plan contained and announced in the *Phenomenology*, and not the other way around, that is, first came the conceptualisation of spirit and later the logic of the world and nature<sup>54</sup> – is fundamentally about the production of more inclusive realities (in other words, more inclusive spaces) through the interconnected dynamics of reason, freedom and recognition. That does not unfold in a linear, teleological progression, but as the outcome of totalising agency, described as the production of a good, qualitative infinite that connects the abstract specific with the concrete universal (different than argued by some, Hegel's totality leaves open its supplement or difference, leading to potential transformation). The abstract and the illogical are not in nature but in human agency divested of a conscious and collective engagement with the transformation of nature (and ultimately, the production of space out of socionatural interaction). Spirit becomes an 'other' to itself, enters into existence as being-for-another and "creates a world."<sup>55</sup> The Hegelian dialectic is, therefore, not just a sophisticated elaboration of concepts and categories, but an ontological proposition that seeks the reconciliation between *Logos* (thinking) and *Sein* (existence) beyond old and new dualisms between nature and society, body and mind, north and south, etc. (needless to observe that those sterile dualisms have permeated European language, religion and politics, and also paved the way for the European conquest of the world and the advance of capitalist modernity).

The overcoming of those many dualisms is a major step towards the pursuit of reason and moral progress. It is the first, crucial moment for the production of equitable spaces, as the best hope for a genuine synthesis and the possibility of the conscious transgression of obstacles on the way. Reconciliation between conscious agents, who can only seek completion through their externalisation and recognition in the other (a self-fulfilling otherness) is another definition of the social production of space. For Hegel, motion is split into "time and space", or "space and velocity", and in themselves these are independent parts or essences, but are then united through the Understanding.<sup>56</sup> Our consciousness passes "over from the inner being as object to the other side, into the Understanding, and it experiences

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<sup>54</sup> LOEWENBERG, J. The exoteric approach to Hegel's 'Phenomenology'. *Mind*, n. 43, p. 424-445, 1934.

<sup>55</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 467.

<sup>56</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 93.

change there.”<sup>57</sup> The object is reflected into itself and “has become Life” (p. 106 of the *Phenomenology*) through the pursuit of reason, given that thought “is charged with otherness” (p. 468). These are crucial elements of the production of new spatial realities and the simultaneous enlivening of the (inherently socio-natural) world. As demonstrated by Lefebvre, space is not the backdrop or the leftover of history but it is through the politicised production of space that social asymmetries and commonalities are materialised and contested. Lefebvre gives a political perspective on the tradition of the philosophical treatment of the concept of space.<sup>58</sup> Departing from Kant and Hegel, Lefebvre shows in what manner is the role and place of those two philosophers distinguished, regarding their understanding of the notion of space and its relation to subjectivity. This relation is not exclusively an epistemological problem, but more importantly, it is tied to the thematising the agency in the sense of social practice and political character of knowledge within social reality (“there is a politics of space because space is political”<sup>59</sup>). The object has to be posited as difference of itself and ultimately in itself for the attainment of truth: the ‘I’ holds and interacts, in a transformative manner, with the ‘non-I.’ In that way, being or the immediacy, which is “the content-less object of sensuous consciousness”, “externalizes itself and becomes the ‘I’ for consciousness.”<sup>60</sup>

The dynamics of space ultimately reflect the essence and lived manifestation of spirit, as the movement of reason unfolding through differentiation and shared struggle for unity, not as the end, but always new beginnings. Space is not simply the realm of matter and energy exchange but is the outcome of the notion [*Begriff*] grasping and comprehending the object. Full existence is realised in interaction (become more itself through the other), which is the basis of the production of space. Socio-spatial differences are consequences of self-estrangement and externalisation of the self, of its incompleteness and the need to be actualised in the other, or in the preface of the *Phenomenology*, the subject developed into the predicate (the other). Space qua socially produced space is not only intrinsically dialectic and dynamic but it is the endless accumulation of experiences and knowledge by people who are interdependent of each other and of the more-than-human elements of reality. It is the totality of relations that Lukács<sup>61</sup> describes as the territory of the dialectic, whilst Santos<sup>62</sup> asserts the

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<sup>57</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 95.

<sup>58</sup> LEFEBVRE, H. *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*. Trans. G. Moore, N. Brenner and S. Elden. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> LEFEBVRE, H. *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, p. 174.

<sup>60</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 458.

<sup>61</sup> LUKÁCS, G. *Tactics and Ethics: Political Writings 1919-1929*. Trans. M. McColgan. London: Verso, 1972.

importance of the totality to build a critical spatial theory. Interestingly, here the contribution of Derrida and other post-structuralist authors, often associated with a militant anti-Hegelianism, can be particularly helpful: the need to go beyond the more pedestrian, impoverished Hegel and understand that there is no ‘peak of reason’ but a continuous material and more-than-material journey. The *Phenomenology* is a crescendo of an intricate exploration of human potentiality and no single sentence can be taken to represent the full argument, it is revealing that Hegel resorts to spatialisation to accomplish the evolution of spirit. Space is used here not to mark the end of history, but to emphasise the possibilities and the challenges that Hegel envisaged at the onset of industrial modernisation. Because the progress of Geist is not linear nor pre-given, the production of space is wide open, the power of the negative lies in this openness, in contingency as necessity. Hegel saw the production and the challenges of the new world through the tension between externality and inwardness changes. As mentioned above, his conceptual model was informed by the contrast between developments in France and Germany, already very clear for him at the time of Napoleon’s invasion of Jena (expresses in his letters and in his Berlin lectures<sup>63</sup>). Hegel argued that France had a revolution in 1789 (‘externality’) without a reformation (‘inwardness’), whilst Germany had a protestant reformation without a revolution; both were incomplete national processes and Germany could only surpass France with its own external revolutionary action (what happened later, with Otto von Bismarck, in a very controlled, top-down way).

Even if he did not provide direct references of what we call nowadays ‘the production of space’ or on ‘social space’, Hegel’s mediation between ontology and phenomenology provides the logical elements for interrogating how the world is and should be produced by conscious individuals acting collectively. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a lengthy call for a shared understanding of a reality in permanent transformation and, more importantly, that needs to change to secure higher levels of reason and freedom. This is at the centre of the geographical perspective of Hegel, quite relevant in the contemporary world with great uncertainties and mounting individual and global challenges. It is remarkable that Hegel aptly indicated an appropriate way to reconcile socio-spatial tensions with a concept that is evocative of the social production of space: the notion of ground. Although not primarily in relation to spatiality, ground refers to the totality of relations that produce space, the “unity of

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<sup>62</sup> SANTOS, M. **The Nature of Space**. Trans. B. Baletti. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.

<sup>63</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Hegel: The Letters**.

identity and difference, the truth of what the difference and the identity have turned out to be... the essence posited as totality.”<sup>64</sup> The relation between ground and freedom was important for German idealists, and it was mentioned by Hegel in relation to the logic of being to inform the analysis of the basis of existence, with the argument that ground connotes freedom, reason, mediations, tendencies and what is reasonable. Ground refers to the conditions that allow something to come into existence or appear. It materialises and historicises the conditions and circumstances of existence in the contingent transition to actuality.<sup>65</sup> Discovering the ground of something in an ‘other’ is part of the movement towards the dialectic of form-and-content, cause-and-effect, inner-and-outer, that is such a defining trait in this philosophical system. For Hegel, “a concrete existence merely emerges from the ground.”<sup>66</sup>

The Hegelian interpretive system offers, therefore, invaluable assistance to understanding different scales and intensities of socio-spatial interaction.<sup>67</sup> Hegel’s depiction of how reality is and can be produced evolves around the crucial notion of the whole (the total; totality), which is already present in each constitutive part and individual action. It means that even situations of acute spatial inequality and politico-economic asymmetries contain the germ of their modification and the possibility (potentiality) of alternative spatial configurations because of the intervention of the whole and the ensuing historicised, grounded possibilities. As argued by Mann, a properly political and transformative geography is a negative geography of necessity that “captures the dialectic in this ‘real movement’.”<sup>68</sup> Hegel repeatedly insisted on the power of the negative and on the importance of necessity. “The necessity of the action consists in the fact that purpose is related simply to actuality, and this unity is the Notion of action.”<sup>69</sup> Yet, necessity is not a straitjacket of human agency, but it is only revealed (actualised) at the end of the process as the confirmation of what was implicit and likely to happen because of a range of converging forces and how it is understood. There is a direct interdependency between existence and truth, as for Hegel “what ought to be, in fact also is, and what only ought to be without being, has no truth.”<sup>70</sup> Hegel organised the

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<sup>64</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline**, p. 186.

<sup>65</sup> MARCUSE, H. **Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory**. Actuel Editions, 2020.

<sup>66</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline**, p. 190.

<sup>67</sup> IORIS, A.A.R. World out of difference: Relations and consequences. **Philosophy and Social Criticism**, n. 49, p. 1220-1243, 2023.

<sup>68</sup> MANN, G. A negative geography of necessity. **Antipode**, n. 40, p. 930.

<sup>69</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Phenomenology of Spirit**, p. 245.

<sup>70</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Phenomenology of Spirit**, p. 151.



progression of spirit as a collective mediation between our consciousness and the ‘thing’ (rejecting the impenetrable Kantian thing-in-itself), which helps to describe how space is produced of social interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and nations. More important, if the production of space is dynamic and permeated by an increasingly social interaction and the conscious pursuit of a more inclusive unity – that is, the production of inclusive space as reason in action and agents becoming increasingly more conscious of themselves – it still remains to be discussed the unfolding directions and the end point of such exchanges.

The Hegelian dialectic does lead to an increasing understanding and greater universality of human agency, and it ultimately produces a complete series, or drives, “to completion.”<sup>71</sup> Hegel insists that all concepts and forms of consciousness have to be accounted for their internal relations, perennial interactions and interdependencies to one another. This is not a random process of change but it follows the human endeavour for freedom, enhancement and recognition. The dialectical journey directs socio-spatial relations to what Hegel calls the absolute, which is its final, unconditioned stage because it contains all the other elements that were developed and apprehended earlier on in the dialectic. Perhaps one of the most controversial aspects of this scalar dialectic is whether the absolute necessarily and comprehensively encompasses everything and, in this manner, nothing is left out of the process. In other words, there is a great deal of disagreement on whether the absolute, which is the highest concept or form of universality, means a final whole without anything else to disrupt it and, at the same time, just internal parts in non-antagonistic contact with each other. This has been a preferred theme for Badiou, who argues that there is a fundamental ontological problem if the “multiple of all multiples does not count itself in its own composition” and therefore “it is not the Whole.”<sup>72</sup> For Badiou, Hegel’s ultimate absolute project is the paradoxical de-dialecticisation of the dialectic, that is, the reconciliation of all differences into an ultimate identity, but this completeness cannot be achieved.<sup>73</sup> According to Badiou, Hegel’s absolute becomes a non-reflexive totality that can nurture the end of diversity and, what is worse, the exhaustion of agency. The Hegelian totality, for Badiou, is the immediacy of the result that lies beyond its dialectical construction.

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<sup>71</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 50.

<sup>72</sup> BADIOU, A. *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event*, 2. Trans. A. Toscano. London: Continuum, 2009, p. 109.

<sup>73</sup> TROTT, A.M. Badiou contra Hegel: The materialist dialectic against the myth of the whole. In: Vernon, J.; Calcagno, A. (Orgs.). *Badiou and Hegel: Infinity, Dialectics, Subjectivity*. Lanham: Lexington, 2015, p. 59-75.

Inspired by the ‘Russell’s antinomy’ of coterminous inclusion and exclusion, Badiou argued that the whole becomes non-reflexive if it does not include the multiple in its composition (Badiou’s example is that a set of five pears is a multiple but not a (somehow Platonic) ‘pear’ and it is, thus, out of the composition). If the whole has no being, it is therefore inconsistent, because it turns out contradictorily to be and not be reflexive.

A fundamental question is the meaning of this totality and its role in the affirmation of reflexivity and reason. Badiou insists that the being is non contradictory but the effort to speak of wholes results in contradictions. For Badiou, the being belongs to the world and to the place of its operation, but this is a condition where there is no whole and only immanent truths (i.e. truths that emerge in a particular world at the break between the realm of being and the realm of the order of being).<sup>74</sup> The incompatibility between the truth and the whole, for Badiou, is the decisive tenet of modernity and its humongous impacts around the planet.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, Badiou, despite his reservation with Hegel’s idealist inclinations, recognises the critical and significant amount of materialism in his system.<sup>76</sup> The French philosopher actually tries to expand Hegel’s materialistic dialectic when insists on the importance of scission or division to set apart idealist biases. A multiple world (or multiple logics of worlds), for Badiou, is possible if it is divided by two, separating the reflexive from the non-reflexive multiples. This controversy is also articulated as the antagonism between ‘Two merging into One’ (manifestation of idealism) and the ‘One splitting into Two’ (expression of materialism).<sup>77</sup> It starts with repetition, the same thing posited twice: there is ‘A’ and ‘Ap’ (the latter is ‘A in another place’), that is, ‘A’ twice placed (A is itself but also its power of repetition). There is pure identity and place identity, or identity and the space in which it is marked. Badiou affirms that “A presents itself (it is always placed) and refuses itself (because, as placed, it is never only itself, but also its place, Ap).”<sup>78</sup> As a result, the site of placement is the site of any possible reduplication (both spatial and temporal), however “the true but camouflaged contrary of A is [really] the space of placement P.” It means that

<sup>74</sup> BADIOU, A. **The Immanence of Truths: Being and Event**, 3. Trans. S. Spitzer and K. Reinhard. London: Bloomsbury, 2022.

<sup>75</sup> HALLWARD, P. **Badiou: A Subject to Truth**. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

<sup>76</sup> RUDA, F. Badiou with Hegel: Preliminary remarks on a(ny) contemporary reading of Hegel. In: Vernon, J.; Calcagno, A. (Orgs.). **Badiou and Hegel: Infinity, Dialectics, Subjectivity**. Lanham Lexington, 2015, p. 105-121.

<sup>77</sup> BADIOU, A. **Logics of Worlds: Being and Event**, 2.

<sup>78</sup> BADIOU, A. **Logics of Worlds: Being and Event**, 2, p. 7.

the space of placement is constitutive of the thing (that is pure being and also it being-placed), beyond idealist mysticism.

Hegel is often criticised for failing to reach the whole because of his idealist search for the absolute. It cannot be denied that sometimes Hegel clearly betrays his theological education, as when claims that “Nature separated from the divine Being is simply nothing.”<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, the progression towards the whole, and the struggle for totalisation, is depicted as a dialectic of negation between the individual, the collective and the universal. The whole and the absolute may have a supranatural dimension, but their dynamic pole is the materiality of those relations given that the Hegelian logical doctrine has three sides: abstract (understanding), dialectic (negative reason), speculation (positive reason).<sup>80</sup> The whole is absolute, not as the end but as a new beginning. There is a ‘clash of totalities’ that basically express the inherent politics of space production. The whole is basically the product of infinite relations of finite beings (elements and subjects), which means that the being is always pushed beyond itself. The being is itself and it is more (or has the potential to be more, it is and it is not yet). For Hegel, essence is being “coming into mediation with self through the negativity of self” and through its self-relatedness with an other. “The Absolute is the Essence” but it exists through self-relation and “negation of the negative, as immanent self-mediation.”<sup>81</sup> In addition, on the same page, “The Notion is the principle of freedom, the power of substance self-realised. It is a systematic whole, in which each of its constituent functions is the very total which the notion is, and is put as indissolubly one with it.” Badiou may be a thinker of ontological multiplicities and contingency of events, whilst Hegelian dialectic is centred around the moment of difference which unfolds within the whole and between wholes. A concrete, lived reality is a pluri-totality, that is, the whole is itself and its continuation of equally unstable totalities in other wholes. The reflexivity of the whole comes from the interaction between three moments or functional parts of the notion form the whole: universality (free equality with itself), particularity (the specific character in which the universal continues equal to itself) and individuality (singularity) (meaning the reflection-into-itself of the specific characters of universality and particularity).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 472.

<sup>80</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *The Logic of Hegel: The First Part of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, p. 143.

<sup>81</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *The Logic of Hegel: The First Part of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, p. 207.

<sup>82</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *The Science of Logic*, p. 513.

The whole, as proposed by Hegel, is immanent in the development of consciousness and the advancement towards the absolute that is perennially open to be challenged. The totality has always a residue or a supplement that ends up challenging it (as in the case of the proletariat and indigenous peoples in the capitalist world). Likewise, the nothing of Hegel is not a dead nothing, out of nowhere, but a nothing directly related to the whole (a nothing of the whole). This is why Hegel is the thinker of totalities, not as dead asteroids but erupting volcanoes that encompass Badiou's scission between the One into the Two. Instead of the end of all differences and the eradication of agency, the (perpetually unfinished) journey of the Hegelian absolute is the beginning of yet another phase of human history, which is not without its problems but secured significant gain from accumulated reason and recognition. The absolute is the result of becoming of itself through a self-transforming process that reaffirms the moment of the 'I', its pure negativity acts as force.<sup>83</sup> Different but related to Badiou's system, the reality for Hegel is dialectic and infinite that contains finite things. There is an identity of identity and contradiction, as Hegel tries to reconcile apparent inconsistencies. Badiou sponsors a 'dialectic of subtraction' articulated around the event, that is, it is the outside that disrupts the world, which is not too distant from Hegel's dialectic. Yet, dialectical negation is superior to 'subtraction', because Badiou's subtraction is nothing more than the recognition of difference and supplement (subtraction is the effect of the outside of the whole which disrupts the whole). The Hegelian absolute is multiply differentiated through the self-same whole (the dialectic of identity and difference), as it collects all the moments of history and consciousness in itself. It is a negative self-unity that is the key for unlocking space, because space is the transient unity that remains also permanent, space is the realm of ultimate dialectic. The most evident demonstration is found in the final paragraphs of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the Absolute Knowing section, where being is portrayed as space. After hundreds of pages dealing with civilization, religion and ethics, dwells with a new beginning, which suggestively departs from space and acknowledges human limitations and hardship:

The self-knowing Spirit knows not only itself but also the negative of itself, or its limit: to know one's limit is to know how to sacrifice oneself. This sacrifice is the externalization in which Spirit displays the process of the

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<sup>83</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 19.

becoming Spirit in the form of free contingent happening, intuiting its pure Self as Time outside of it, and equally its Being as Space.<sup>84</sup>

The disagreement between Hegel and Badiou has to be ultimately resolved in space, or at least in the unending production and contestation of spaces out of the interaction between individuals, social groups and nations. More important for the purpose of this discussion, the dynamics of the Hegelian whole presupposes and rationalises space, as much as a reflexive geography has a lot to gain from Hegelian dialectic. There is an ontological triangulation between the whole, its other and the forces that transform the status quo, which is at the core of geography as discipline. Hegel developed his logical system in a moment of great politico-spatial instability both in Europe and around the world (due to the revolution in France and the military campaigns of Napoleon). Hegelianism was not only permeated by historical events, but also by geographical changes. It was not a synchrony or diachrony of totalities, but clash of totalising projects. Hegel's dialectic of identity and contradiction is key, as in the case of class struggle and geopolitics. Today, the contrast between Africa and Western Europe certainly do not form a coherent whole, but at the same time that there is a great logic in capitalist relations of exploitation, trade and oppression. Within each whole there are disputes between groups and regions. Africa is both abandoned by investors and traders and also brutally impacted by neo-colonial rentism. Africa is more than material reality but a category of global reality, in permanent formation and that contains more than 800 million people, but it is "a place-in-the world called Africa."<sup>85</sup> How this place is produced and functions out of preconceptions, legacies and socio-spatial hierarchies; for instance, the derogatory treatment of African nations, governments and populations facilitate normative policies, as in the case of the spread of neoliberalism and its extractivism. Africa is a vast continent where unity and diversity have formed an intricate whole that contrasts and interpenetrates other wholes. Africa space is a synthesis of those multiple forces, the meaning of 'Africaness' is the generalisation of positive and negative feelings without this generalisation necessarily covering all situation (it is not necessary, dialectically, that the whole is always connected with all parts).

#### *4. Conclusions and perspectives*

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<sup>84</sup> HEGEL, G.W.F. **Phenomenology of Spirit**, p. 492.

<sup>85</sup> FERGUSON, J. **Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order**. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, p. 5.

The great geographical achievement of Hegel – his major geographical contribution – is the detailed investigation into the pursuit of higher reason and on what constitutes the absolute. The complex evolution of self-consciousness, via the experience of otherness and the insistence of moral duties, not only takes place in time and space (as obliquely indicated by Hegel in the *Phenomenology*) but it is itself an expression of the production and contestation of space. Space as the outcome of increasingly conscious relations as theorised by Hegel and later associated by Marx with the consciousness is emergent from labour. The Hegelian dialectic is, fundamentally, an anticipated rendering of the contemporary understanding of socially produced space. It leads to the conclusion that there is a rich synergy between crucial geography and Hegelian-inspired philosophy. Geography, as interpretation and critique of lived realities, can be the translation of philosophy into life. But because space is always lived space, geography is the actualisation of philosophy and also its complication. Pohl contends that “critical geographies are not about theories, but about the condition behind theories” and that is the main reason why geography needs Hegel.<sup>86</sup> We all know now that humans, contaminated by the illusion of capitalist rentism, which spreads like a malignant tumour, are increasingly destroying themselves and their ecological condition. The main driving force behind such suicidal collective behaviour is the persistence of cultivated ignorance, a main impact of commodified education and controlled knowledge production that go against the most basic tenets of Hegelian scholarship. Hegel’s edifice of consciousness and interaction, further refined by Marx and other neo-Hegelians, is the best hope to make sense of spatial conflicts, inequalities and unreason. Instead of the irrationality of today’s socio-spatial trends, Hegelian geography and its ability to critically rethink local and global trends is the main toolbox available (has been available for several generations, but not seriously considered) for dealing with cumulative risks and injustices.

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<sup>86</sup> POHL, L. Hegel and the shadow of materialist geographies. *ACME: An International Journal of Critical Geographies*, n. 18, p.287.

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