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Incongruent Counterparts

Four Possible Ways of Interaction between Geography and
Philosophy

by

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Incongruent Counterparts

Four Possible Ways of Interaction between Geography and Philosophy

Marcello Tanca *

Geography and Philosophy, like the right hand and the left hand according to Kant, are a typical case of 'incongruent counterparts': similar to each other, they can never completely overlap; their asymmetry and complementarity make the attempts at trying to find some prolific joints between them interesting.

This contribution explores therefore four ways of interacting between these two 'discursive fields': Geography of Philosophy, Philosophy of Geography, Geography in Philosophy and Philosophy in Geography. These four categories, however, are not to be taken too rigidly: they suggest a possible classification, i.e. indicative frameworks which are useful to give an order to such a chaotic and complex subject. They do not mark the goal, but just one of the roads.

The analysis of these categories is preceded by a critical examination of the 'wild' Geography in the works of acclaimed authors such as Robert Kaplan, Tim Marshall and Parag Khanna (who ignore the geographical literature and the debate within the academic geography). The text concludes with an open question: will Geography be able to translate its own research experience in order to finally become a philosophy of territorial engagement?



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Never show yourself as too experienced in immoral customs,
and never speak about other people's vices with too much abuse
or too much zeal, otherwise people will think you fall for this, too
(Cardinal Mazarin, *Breviary for Politicians*)

1. The realm of geography

According to Gilles Deleuze “The encounter between two disciplines doesn't take place when one begins to reflect on the other, but when one discipline realizes that it has to resolve, for itself and by its own means, a problem similar to one confronted by the other” (Deleuze, 1986). This remark seems to be the perfect starting point for a reflection upon the links between geography and philosophy. Before proceeding in this direction, it is nevertheless necessary to free the research field from two misunderstandings which might influence the reasoning that we want to develop here, thus invalidating its conclusions. In my opinion, the first misinterpretation comes from the ambivalent quality of the word ‘geography’, which might be used at least in two ways. While we have two different terms, ‘History’ and ‘historiography’ to distinguish the object of study (the series of events) from the discourse about them (the narration and interpretation of these facts), we only have one word to indicate both the geographic reality as commonly known (*the geography of Italy*), made of ‘things’ on the Earth and of the processes going on between them, and the discourse, together with the related knowledge (*Italian geography*). This explains why the undeniable interest in geography which originated from the ‘spatial turn’ has not necessarily implied an interest in the ‘geography of geographers’ as well—that is to say for theoretical, methodological, paradigmatic, epistemic matters, discussed within the academic world.

Let us be clear: “geographical knowledge [...] in no sense [is] a monopoly of geographers”, as John Wright (1947, p. 13) wrote seventy years ago. Geographers have by no means the first place, because the lexical and semantic field defined by their discourses is necessarily more restricted and selective than the broader scope of everything that can be said about geographic reality as we know it:

The realm of geography—geography in the sense of all that has been written and depicted and conceived on the subject—consists of a relatively small core area (...) and a much broader peripheral zone. The core comprises formal studies in geography as such; the periphery includes all of the informal geography contained in non-scientific work—in books of travel, in magazines and newspapers, in many a page of fiction and poetry, and on many a canvas. Although much of this informal geography offers little of value to us, some of it shows an insight deep into the heart of the matters with which we are most closely concerned. (Wright, 1947, p. 10)

More than once, due to the geographers' lack of interest or fear of going beyond the limits of their disciplinary field, the most stimulating contributions to geography have come from the outside, that is to say from those 'informal geographies' that have filled up a hole left by the 'formal geographies'. So geography is what geographers do, but it is still reasonable to admit that there exists a 'geography outside geography', which can be more curious, independent, unbiased, than the one practiced by professional geographers.

The other side of the coin of this reasoning is that, due to this ambiguity, we often witness a separation, a lack of synchrony—I could not say it in any other way—between what happens 'inside' and 'outside' geography, i.e. the community of scholars who acknowledge certain theories and scientific archetypes and the research tools linked to them. Very often, those who deal with 'geographic' themes do not waste their time by reading what we geographers write, and therefore do not know about the most recent developments within the discipline. To the eyes of a critic, geography as it is practised outside geography appears to be occasionally burdened by anachronisms, by statements that we can easily deem naïve or obsolete, by subject matters which are presented as they were brand new but have actually been discussed and rediscussed for twenty or thirty years in periodicals and conventions. When I take part in conferences where there also are colleagues from other disciplinary fields, and they literally discover that geography does not simply end with remembering the height of mountains, the length of rivers and the name of the capital city of this or that country—which are still to be considered important notions, of course—I see that their reaction is of sincere amazement: 'I did not know that geographers dealt with such things!' (music, cinema, sexuality, mafias and terrorism, work, sentiment analysis, sport, etc.). This happens partly because of geogra-

phers themselves, partly because of the rigid division created at the end of the 19th century with the sectorialization of university into scientific disciplines, making scholars much like the lodgers of a same block of flats who do not know anything about each other. And thus we get to the second misunderstanding, which requires a longer explanation: before discussing the possible ways in which we can interpret the link geography-philosophy, it is necessary to clarify what geography is *not*, and this will be the topic of the next paragraph, in which I will show some improper (distorted, mislead) uses of the term geography.



2. Oh dear, poor geography!

In order to clarify what I mean with ‘improper use of the term geography’—a fundamental passage in my discourse—I chose several examples which, in my opinion, represent particularly well a certain way of thinking. These are world-wide known books (very often real bestsellers which get a translation into each main language), whose authors—we should acknowledge this to them!—express incredibly clearly their ideas. I will take into consideration the contents of these works without delving into a too detailed or meticulous description, but only so that I will be able to focus on their implicit and immanent philosophical structure. I will start by saying that they are for the most part contributions whose thesis is not banal, since they aim at re-discovering geography, putting it back to the core of the studies, enhancing it because, so they claim, the world we live in badly needs geography. “Oh dear, poor Geography, someone thinks they have rediscovered you again!”, as Juliet Fall (2013) ironically comments.

The first of these texts is *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate* by Robert Kaplan (2013), a journalist and war correspondent from Iraq, Afghanistan and the Balkans,

Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security and consultant to the U.S. military forces. The main idea of this text is anticipated right from the title: blinded by technological development, we have neglected and forgotten about the role of geography, we have underplayed its importance in order to pursue idealistic chimeras and this heavily affects our ability to understand the world we are living in. Therefore, we should take a step back in order to “recover our sense of geography” (Kaplan, 2013, p. 16).

First of all: in Kaplan’s reasoning, the form of ‘geography’ has the meaning of an invitation to concreteness, to realism, to lines of thought which are not improvised but which are based on how the world actually works: “realism is about the recognition of the most blunt, uncomfortable, and deterministic of truths: those of geography” (p. 29). The truth the author puts forward aims at being very concrete and pragmatic, I would say rude, material and direct, evident and free from more than one meaning: geography is true because it is not vague and it is not vague because it is based not on enigmatic discordant ideals, but on the causal efficiency of such undeniable physical realities as a mountain chain or a sand storm in the middle of the desert. At this point the author cites some words, which he evidently shares, uttered by American strategist of the 1940s, Nicholas John Spikman, according to whom “geography does not argue. It simply is” (p. 30). *Geography does not argue*, got it? So, from the pharaohs’ Egypt to the Arab springs of 2011, geographical conditions have been the key factor to the destinies of the world: ‘man’s actions are limited by the physical parameters imposed by geography’ (p. 29). This statement, which was rightly charged with simplism (Lacoste, 2011), should therefore bring back to life the idea that the physical factors (position, climate, elevations, features of the soil, etc.), play *a fundamental role* in human choices and events, especially those deemed strategical by the Councils of the nations. Kaplan wonders why China has a different international importance than Brasil. It is a good question, but the answer is as follows: “Because of geographical location: even supposing the same level of economic growth as China and a population of equal size, Brazil does not command the main sea lines of communication connecting oceans and continents as China does; nor does it mainly lie in the temperate zone like China, with a more disease-free and invigorating climate” (Kaplan, 2013, p. 29). The realism which is so flaunted in the end consists in treating the geographical location as an interpretive principle—or, better: a destiny—which is able to

make sense of the world and its historical-cultural variables: “Truly, the Russian climate and landscape are miserably rugged, and as such hold the keys to the Russians’ character and to their history” (p. 99).

Secondly (and this leads us to the second part of the title of the book): Kaplan’s discourse is totally imbued with what Franco Farinelli (2009) calls the *cartographic reason*; the only difference is that while Farinelli thinks that this reason is undergoing a period of crisis and is being washed away by globalization (which nullifies space and time), Kaplan claims that it is the way of thinking what we have to take back control of: “Times of global upheaval, testing as they do our assumptions about the permanence of the political map, lead to a renaissance in thinking about geography (Kaplan, 2013, p. 48). In spite of Korzybsky and Bateson, the word *is* the thing, the map *is* the territory: if geography identifies itself in the series of the shape of the Earth, and if, again, the cartographic representation is not an interpretation of reality, more or less agreed upon, but is its faithful and objective double, then *geography is the map, and map is geography*. Kaplan does not even try to tackle the epistemological debate on the accuracy of the maps, on their persuasive (rhetorical and ideological) charge or at least the fact that, as one can read in every cartography manual, the map is a downsized, approximate and symbolic representation of Earth (a classical book on the matter: Monmonier, 1996). He just briefly comments that “Maps don’t always tell the truth” (Kaplan, 2013, p. 27)—which is not that much, and this acknowledgement is not accompanied by any attempt to reflect upon the cartographic logic which permeates its discourses.

In spite of cartographic distortions, it can be as revealing about a government’s long-range intentions as its secret councils. A state’s position on the map is the first thing that defines it, more than its governing philosophy even. A map, as Halford Mackinder explains, conveys “at one glance a whole series of generalizations”¹. Geography, he goes on, bridges the gap between arts and sciences, connecting the study of history and culture with environmental factors, which specialists in the humanities sometimes neglect. While studying the map, any map, can be endlessly absorbing and fascinating in its own right, geography, like realism itself, is hard to accept. For maps are a rebuke to the very notions of the equality and unity of humankind, since they remind us of all the differ-

¹ With reference to Mackinder, 1895, p. 376.

ent environments of the earth that make men profoundly unequal and disunited in so many ways, leading to conflict, on which realism almost exclusively dwells. (Kaplan, 2013, p. 28)

Or, better: “a realist would look to Iraq’s own history, explained through its cartography and constellations of ethnic groups, rather than to moral precepts of Western democracy, to see what kind of future Iraq would be immediately capable of following the toppling of a totalitarian regime” (Kaplan, 2013, p. 27). Though maps do not show us the moral precepts of Western democracy, they are still useful in order to make predictions based on the physical shapes and the position of a country: “Thus, in times of upheaval maps rise in importance. With the political ground shifting rapidly under one’s feet, the map, though not deterministic, is the beginning of discerning a historical logic about what might come next” (p. 11). In particular—and the subtitle of the book is explicit about this—maps enlighten us about the ‘historical logic about what might come next’ and more precisely on the ‘coming conflicts’.

Third statement: after determinism and the reduction of the world to cartographic terms, Kaplan’s discourse is characterised by a very strong ideological charge. When I talk about ‘ideological charge’ I refer to the fact that he claims to deceptively convince us that the qualities that he attributes to geographical objects are natural and not social—something very similar to what Marx referred to as ‘the fetish character of commodity’. In other words, the perspective of the *imago mundi* does not lie outside of the representation at all, but it is entirely placed inside it. What rather dominates is what we might call *magical thought*: the balance of power is the extension of the conditions of the natural environment (and thus they can be changed only to a certain extent); the people’s choices and history are dictated by geography and geography itself is identified with the being which might be mapped; with such a foreword as this I can thus explain (and justify) everything: prosperity and poverty, isolation and interventionism, democracy and tyranny. Therefore the supposed realism is turned into a defence of the *status quo*, of the being. Let’s take into consideration two exemplary passages:

Why is Africa so poor? Though Africa is the second largest continent, with an area five times that of Europe, its coastline south of the Sahara is little more than a quarter as long. Moreover, this coastline lacks many good natural harbors, with the East African

ports that traded vigorously with Arabia and India constituting the exception. Few of tropical Africa's rivers are navigable from the sea, dropping as they do from interior tableland to coastal plains by a series of falls and rapids, so that inland Africa is particularly isolated from the coast. Moreover, the Sahara Desert hindered human contact from the north for too many centuries, so that Africa was little exposed to the great Mediterranean civilizations of antiquity and afterward. Then there are the great, thick forests thrown up on either side of the equator, from the Gulf of Guinea to the Congo basin, under the influence of heavy rains and intense heat. These forests are no friends to civilization, nor are they conducive to natural borders, and so the borders erected by European colonialists were, perforce, artificial ones. The natural world has given Africa much to labor against in its path to modernity. (Kaplan, 2013, p. 31)

Let me mention the example of the United States. For it is geography that has helped sustain American prosperity and which may be ultimately responsible for America's pan-humanistic altruism. (...) The militarism and pragmatism of continental Europe through the mid-twentieth century, to which the Americans always felt superior, was the result of geography, not character. Competing states and empires adjoined one another on a crowded continent. European nations could never withdraw across an ocean in the event of a military miscalculation. Thus, their foreign policies could not be grounded by a universalist morality, and they remained well armed against one another until dominated by an American hegemon after World War II. It wasn't only two oceans that gave Americans the luxury of their idealism, it was also that these two oceans gave America direct access to the two principal arteries of politics and commerce in the world: Europe across the Atlantic and East Asia across the Pacific, with the riches of the American continent lying between them. And yet these same oceans, by separating America by thousands of miles from other continents, have given America a virulent strain of isolationism that has persisted to this day. (Kaplan, 2013, pp. 76-77)

Geographical factors are the ones who have made Africa so poor and the very same geographical factors have helped sustain American prosperity and the 'panhumanistic altruism' of the United States. These features are, in the end, the extension of specific geographical conditions, inscribed *in rebus*. Obviously Kaplan did not invent this way of reading reality; he simply revived it, since we find it also in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Compared to the German philosopher, Kaplan's glance is not eurocentric, but rather

centred on America. *Revenge of Geography* is a behaviour manual for a Machiavellian Prince who, incidentally, is in charge of the greatest military power in the world. In this way the book is part of a literary genre with a long-standing tradition, that of political treatises, containing advice on the priority of things and the ways politics has to follow in order to make sure the country has welfare and stability. This aim—which we are presented with since the very first pages of the book—can be achieved, in the author’s opinion, only by blocking a pressing threat on the United States, that is, the Hispanicisation of American society. Along with Huntington, Kaplan observes directly that the first Anglo-Protestant settlers were actually the ones to lay the foundations of “the philosophical and cultural backbone of the society. For only by adopting Anglo-Protestant culture do immigrants become American” (Kaplan, 2013, p. 192). Now, while the East Coast elites appear to be more interested in the wider world and America’s place in it, Mexico could affect America’s destiny more than China, Israel or India. The reason for this is very simple: since 1940 until nowadays, the Mexican population has grown more than five times and now it represents 1/3 of the American one—a true threat for American identity. “Mexican Americans [...] are for the first time in America’s history amending our historical memory” (pp. 192-193). After reminding his readers about the roles of the Barbarians in the events that lead to the fall of the Roman Empire, Kaplan finally jibes (rhetorically): “Alas, we are in frighteningly familiar territory (...) Arnold Toynbee writes, in reference to the barbarians and Rome, that when a frontier between a highly and less highly developed society ‘ceases to advance, the balance does not settle down to a stable equilibrium but inclines, with the passage of time, in the more backward society’s favor’ ” (pp. 189-190). Geography is at the forefront of all these arguments: Mexico is a crucial point in which, with a little bit of emphasis, the destinies of the world are played, a sort of new geographical pivot of World-History: it is here, in Central America, that the United States need to concentrate their efforts, instead of scatter elsewhere. By looking at the map, the lesson that we should learn is the following:

Think of the future world as roughly resembling the millet system of the old Ottoman Empire: a ‘network of geographically intermingled communities,’ in Toynbee’s words, rather than a ‘patchwork of (...) segregated parochial states’. Each relationship will affect the others as never before. As we have seen, future decades will see rail, road, and

pipelines connecting all of Eurasia through a Central Asian and particularly an Afghan hub. An organic and united Eurasia will demand as a balancer an organic and united North America, from the Canadian Arctic to the Central American jungles. Not to continue to deepen links with Mexico and Central America, whose combined populations account for half the population of that of the United States, would be to see Mexico and perhaps some of its southern neighbors slip into a hostile diplomatic and political orbit in a world where Eurasia will be closer than ever before. The way to guard against a pro-Iranian Venezuela and other radical states that may emerge from time to time in the Western Hemisphere is to wrap the Greater Caribbean into a zone of free trade and human migration that, perforce, would be American dominated, as Mexico's and Central America's younger populations supply the labor force for America's aging one. Of course, this is happening already, but the intensity of the human exchange will, and should, increase. (Kaplan, 2013, p. 196)

In the future that Kaplan reserves them, Mexicans are the young working class serving the old, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants; this is how he sees the philosophical and cultural backbone of American society, and maps obviously confirm that this will be 'what might come next'!

Tim Marshall's point of view, in his book *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need To Know About Global Politics* (2015), does not seem to go far beyond Kaplan's¹. Right from the title, he proposes again two strongholds of Kaplan's discourse: (i) the decisive role of geography; (ii) the use of cartography as a tool used to explain and predict (10 maps are more than enough in order to understand how the world works). This is the basic idea of the book:

The landscape imprisons their leaders, giving them fewer choices and less room to manoeuvre than you might think. This was true of the Athenian Empire, the Persians, the Babylonians and before; it was true of every leader seeking high ground from which to protect their tribe. The land on which we live has always shaped us. It has shaped the

¹ Marshall is a British journalist, guest commentator on world events for the BBC, Sky News and a guest presenter on LBC. He reported from Europe, the United States and Asia, as well as from the field in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia during the Balkan wars of the 1990s, from the front line during the invasion of Afghanistan and spent time in Iraq, reporting on the country's transition to democracy. He reported from Libya, Egypt, Syria and Tunisia during the uprisings across the Arab World.

wars, the power, politics and social development of the peoples that now inhabit nearly every part of the earth. Technology may seem to overcome the distances between us in both mental and physical space, but it is easy to forget that the land where we live, work and raise our children is hugely important, and that the choices of those who lead the seven billion inhabitants of this planet will to some degree always be shaped by the rivers, mountains, deserts, lakes and seas that constrain us all—as they always have. Overall there is no one geographical factor that is more important than any other. Mountains are no more important than deserts, nor rivers than jungles. In different parts of the planet, different geographical features are among the dominant factors in determining what people can and cannot do. (Marshall, 2015, p. 9)

Marshall, too, like Kaplan, thinks that the extraordinary importance of geographical factors should be saved from the oblivion into which this is supposed to have been put by associations of intellectuals (he evidently does not consider as interesting what the geographers write about this topic): “The physical realities that underpin national and international politics are too often disregarded both in writing about history and in contemporary reporting of world affairs”. Nature is more powerful than man, and geography is clearly a key factor in determining ‘why’ and ‘what’. Marshall admits what follows: “It might not be *the* determining factor, but it is certainly the most overlooked” (Marshall, 2015, p. 10). A while later, he deals with the ‘iron rules of geography’ as ‘rules that nature, or God, handed down’. For example? The source of the conflicts in Iraq and Syria needs to be found in the mistaken interpretation (or deliberate negligence) by the colonial powers of the geography of these countries; European rivers, unlike the African ones, “are long, flat, navigable and made for trade” (p. 109); Latin America proves the theory according to which “if geography is against you, then you will have limited success, especially if you get the politics wrong” (p. 255).

Let’s now take a look at a text that turns Kaplan and Marshall’s discourse around; unfortunately for us, this leads to a vision of geography that is not less problematic than the one presented by these authors. I am referring here to *Connectography: Mapping the Future of Global Civilization*, by Parag Khanna (2016). First of all, I would like to highlight the fact that, apart from the remarkable differences, Khanna¹ also thinks that maps have a predictive power and thus

¹ Parag Khanna is an Indian American international relations expert, a CNN Global Contributor

a formidable ability to mirror the world and anticipate its possible future scenarios: “Whatever shape the world takes in the coming decades, there is still no substitute for a good map” (Khanna, 2016, p. 14). Cartography can do this because, just as in Kaplan and Marshall, there is, as a matter of principle, addition and coincidence between reality and its representation, so that looking at a map is (like) looking at reality. Take notice of the following passage:

Human society is undergoing a fundamental transformation by which functional infrastructure tells us more about how the world works than political borders. The true map of the world should feature not just states but megacities, highways, railways, pipelines, Internet cables, and other symbols of our emerging global network civilization. (Khanna, 2016, p. 13)

In the end the choice is between a definite, selective and partial representation of the world, and another representation which is just as selective and partial. Both present a certain point of view on reality, but only one of them is ‘the true map of the world’. Why? The answer lies in the fact that the first map, which does not limit itself to the representation of the States, is closer to the new paradigm of the world and thus to the picture of what the future world order will be: *connectivity*. This word evokes the condition we all will live in, thanks to transport lines with no interruptions, energetical and communication infrastructures that will link every inhabitant and every resource of the planet together. Thus connectivity marks an epic passage from a disconnected world to one entirely connected, from geography to connectography, from political space to functional space. In these three couples, the first terms (disconnected world/geography/political space) are essentially synonyms, just like the second ones (connected world/connectography/functional space). Therefore a world dominated by factors of separation and division—of which States are, with their borders and closures, a typical example—is juxtaposed with a world which is not organized on the basis of political divisions and separations, but on everyone’s functional connection with everyone: “Our ancestors awoke not knowing the world is round. Today we wake up knowing we are connected to a global grid with only a few degrees of separation between any two people”

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(Khanna, 2016, p. 248). Khanna suggests that in the future world order geography as a way of representation is doomed to disappear, in order to be substituted (or maybe ‘overtaken’, as Hegel would say) by a new science, *connectography*, which focuses on global network civilization: “Connectivity is thus about not detaching from geography but making the most of it” (p. 28). Therefore, a disposal of geography and the coming of a *Nova Scientia*, connectography, which is actually just a new name to refer to something which is not entirely new, that is to say the ‘geography of power’: “Connectivity is thus intensely geopolitical even as it changes the role of borders. When we map functional geography—transportation routes, energy grids, forward operating bases, financial networks, and Internet servers—we are also mapping the pathways by which power is projected and leverage exercised” (p. 29).

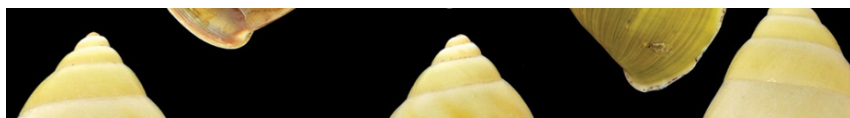
Ultimately, which advantages will the new world order bring? Living in a hyper-connected world actually means *evading from the prison of geography*. It is a paradox, but beyond this paradox Khanna ends up just attributing to the terrestrial forms and spaces the same abstract role they had in Kaplan and Marshall’s thought. If humans have fewer things in common than they might have, it is the fault of geography (for example, the distance between two points of Earth surface); there are places which are intrinsically underprivileged because of climate or soil conditions; geography is a destiny: “A country cannot change where it is, but connectivity offers an alternative to the destiny of geography” (Khanna, 2016, p. 34). In the hyper-connected world, what really counts will not be localizations, with the topical qualities that make territories unique, but connections, transactions, exchanges and linking infrastructures from a territory to another. The world that awaits us will definitely be more complex and freer because it will be organized not on geography, but on *supply chains*, that is to say on those ecosystems made up of producers, distributors and vendors that by transforming resources and ideas into services will thus create unprecedented economical opportunities. We can now understand why the author confers on connectivity a redeeming, even providential quality: it is “our path to collective salvation” (p. 23), a destiny as well as a precious opportunity to sail towards a new global Renaissance. In the end, what awaits us is *an efficient and competitive* world, without social conflicts and entirely mapped because it is considered so, thus with no more grey areas, the functioning mechanisms of which will be completely known (but, we should wonder, known to every-

one?). It is a utopia—Western cartographic utopia, that is, the one told in one of Borges' famous tales: to produce a 1:1 map, so faithful that it could overlap, point by point, with reality, thus making the latter useless. As Umberto Eco observed, at the moment this map is realized, the world becomes unreproducible and unperceivable (that is to say unintelligible) to itself (Eco, 1998, 106).

If we look at them from the point of view of human geography, the proposals made by Kaplan, Marshall and Khann are, to use a terminology dear to Hegel, imbued with *Einseitigkeit*, i.e. one-sidedness. 'One-sided' means abstract, partial and subjective, and it indicates an intellectual attitude which artificially elevates a finite content (the truth value of which is but partial and subjective), by attributing to it a total yet subjective value (even though it does not have it). This is a conceptual synecdoche: a part is traded for a whole. Neither Kaplan nor Marshall take into account the fact that geography—as a science of territory—is composed by two orders of relationships, none of which is replaceable, none of which can do without the other: 'horizontal' relationships, the social ones, those that link humans together and that are expressed by the flows of people, goods, information, decisions etc., and the 'vertical' relationships, the environmental ones, that link humans to certain natural and historical pre-existent conditions, which are specific of every place (Dematteis, 1995, pp. 52 ff.). If we acknowledge that our relationship with the physical forms of the Earth surface is always socially (historically, culturally) mediated, and that our relationship with other humans is always geographically mediated, that is to say localized in a given local context, then every standpoint that does not take into consideration *both* axes is destined to offer a partial, even caricatural image of geography. The object of this discipline are the different ways, variable in space and time, in which the vertical relationships meet the horizontal ones. Kaplan and Marshall only look at vertical relationships, the physical forms of Earth surface, their positions, distance etc.—their geography forgets about the social, historical and cultural variable that actively intertwines these relationships. Parag Khanna declares the obsolescence of vertical relations in order to concentrate exclusively on connectivity, that is, on horizontal relationships which are, according to him, totally unbound to the integral properties of places; this is a mistake symmetrical to the former one, and is born from the desire to finally set oneself free from the diversity of the places (seen as a hindrance), and to treat the territory as a 'blank space' about which one might write anything. Thus we are

presented with a vision of the territory where we only find the distinctive role of the physical space, while the relationships among the actors fade away, a vision that is contrasted against another vision of the territory where we only find the relationships among actors and the concrete space fades away. Such explanations need to exaggerate or underplay the importance of geography, precisely because they take into consideration just one side of it. Between a night in which all cows are black and a night in which no cow is black, there exists, by the way, being halfway.

The examples presented in these pages help us understand that the work of the geographer is complex, because the phenomena she or he deals with are complex. The knowledge of the integral moulds of the representations is the best antidote to turning geography into a magical thinking, and therefore into a comforting and simplistic discourse.



3. Geography and philosophy: four ways of interacting

We can now deal with the real intent of this contribution, that is, to present a concise overview of the relationships which have existed and can exist between geography and philosophy. First of all, this entails rejecting right from the start the idea of an absolute convergence between them, where there is rather divergence. In both cases, yet, there is no place for the point of view that I would like to propose in these pages. In the first case, geography and philosophy perfectly coincide, they are actually the same thing, therefore it is superfluous to try and understand whether a common ground exists between them; in the second case, there is an insuperable abyss which makes any comparison useless or impossible. Complete coincidence on the one hand and radical unrelatedness on the other make the possible contact points meaningless.

I personally think that, as in the famous Kantian example regarding the right hand and the left hand (Kant, 1992), geography and philosophy typically constitute a case of *incongruent counterparts*: though they are similar, they can never completely overlap; they attract each other but not up to the point when they blend into a single entity, they reject each other but not up to the point when they become complete strangers. Their asymmetry and complementarity make attempts at trying to find some prolific joints between them interesting. I will now proceed by presenting four ways of reflection. The first two ways play with the use of the genitive and the preposition ‘of’: ‘geography of philosophy’, therefore, and ‘philosophy of geography’. In this view, it is all a matter of demonstrating how they can be useful to each other, by lighting some properties that might remain otherwise in the shadows: the geographical properties of philosophy, the philosophical ones of geography.

The two other ways are based instead on the use of the inclusive preposition ‘in’: ‘geography in philosophy’ and ‘philosophy in geography’. We are dealing here with the possibility to include (and delimitate) a semantic field in the other, that is to say with the way each area of interest receives and is received, enrich and is enriched by the other one, thus becoming a potential element for further elaborations: the presence of geographical elements in philosophy, the presence of philosophical elements in geography (incidentally, these two research directions are closer to Deleuze’s thought, from which I started).

These four ways are not to be taken too rigidly, as they were closed and impenetrable. They need to be taken for what they are: indicative frameworks which are useful to give order to such a chaotic and complex subject. The reflections presented here will allow us to get in touch with four different ways of interaction which, although they do not exhaust the possibilities offered by an interdisciplinary comparison, open the way to other potential—and hopefully productive—considerations. They do not mark the goal, but just one of the roads.

3.1. Geography of Philosophy

The ‘geography of philosophy’ is based not just on the identification of a time dimension, but of a space dimension of the philosophical activity, too. In

other words, with this expression we should mean an overview of the places, the contexts and the paths in which trends, authors and theories have moved and worked. This means acknowledging the cultural imprint of specific places: Königsberg for Kant, London for Marx, Berlin for Benjamin, etc.; Plato's voyages to Sicily and Voltaire's English exile; the peculiar, 'local' character of certain trends, from the French existentialism to the American pragmatism, from the English empiricism to 'continental' philosophy, and so on and so forth. This inquiry lends itself to misunderstandings on the one hand, while on the other hand it might also appear as paradoxical or bizarre. In the first instance we can be very tempted to absorb philosophy into geography, thus transforming philosophy into an exclusive product of specific places, climates and latitudes (and thus denying the contribution of other places, climates and latitudes). Deleuze and Guattari had already warned about this risk in *What Is Philosophy?* when—after declaring that any claim of a necessary link between the origin of philosophy and Greece (common to Hegel and Heidegger alike) is unfounded—they highlight the commercial quality of Greek towns, independent and distinct but linked among them, the presence of foreigners in them, the Greeks' love for conversation and exchange of opinions:

What we deny is that there is any internal necessity to philosophy, whether in itself or in the Greeks (and the idea of a Greek miracle would only be another aspect of this pseudonecessity). Nevertheless, philosophy was something Greek—although brought by immigrants. (...) Why philosophy in Greece at that moment? It is the same for capitalism, according to Braudel: why capitalism in these places and at these moments? Why not in China at some other moment, since so many of its components were already present there? Geography is not confined to providing historical form with a substance and variable places. It is not merely physical and human but mental, like the landscape. Geography wrests history from the cult of necessity in order to stress the irreducibility of contingency. It wrests it from the cult of origins in order to affirm the power of a 'milieu' (what philosophy finds in the Greeks, said Nietzsche, is not an origin but a milieu, an ambiance, an ambient atmosphere: the philosopher ceases to be a comet). (...) Philosophy appears in Greece as a result of contingency rather than necessity, as a result of an ambiance or milieu rather than an origin, of a becoming rather than a history, of a geography rather than a historiography, of a grace rather than a nature. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, pp. 93, 95-97)

On the other hand, looking at philosophy through the lenses of geography might seem naively disarming: why giving a local or national connotation to theories and reflections that are true, on the contrary, for everybody? What can be added to what we already know—that Vico came from Naples, Rousseau was Swiss, Plotinus was Egyptian and Al-Farabi was a Persian—if their message has gone beyond the geographical (and temporal) limits in which they have lived, in order to be received by men and women living in completely different eras and places? Elmar Holenstein tells an enlightening episode on this matter: when in 1654 Pierre de Fermat in Toulouse and Blaise Pascal in Paris solved at the same time a problem in probability, Pascal wrote to his older colleague: “Je vois bien que la vérité est la même à Toulouse et à Paris” (Pascal, 1990, p. 1137: “I plainly see that the truth is the same at Toulouse and at Paris”)¹. Holenstein suggests that what really matters in this episode is not so much the final result, the truth to which both Fermat and Pascal come, but the fact that the method they have developed in order to get there is different:

In philosophy, much more than in mathematics, you must expect different methods to have led to the same truth in different places. And yet this is inevitable in philosophy (...) to stumble, right from the ancient times and in different areas of the Earth, upon not only the same truths, but in identical claims to exclude each other’s truth, too. (...) Not only do we find in different areas of the Earth the same basic ideas on the values, but the same conflicts which are impossible to put together into armony, too. (Holenstein, 2004, pp. 8-9)

This work of Holenstein’s, by the way, is a perfect example of how one can approach philosophy from a geographical point of view: i.e., by following the trend (induced, or intensified, by the *spatial turn*) that has extended the concept of *atlas* outside geography—from the *Atlas of European Novel* by Franco Moretti in 1997 to the more recent *Atlas of Prejudice* by Yanko Tsvetkov—and has chosen cartographic language as a privileged tool for giving shape to dif-

¹ Years later, in his *Pensées*, the same Pascal would remark more bitterly: “now we see neither justice nor injustice which does not change Its quality upon changing its climate. Three degrees of latitude reverse all jurisprudence, a meridian decides what is truth, fundamental laws change after a few years of possession, right has Its epochs, the entrance of Saturn into the Lion marks for us the origin of such and such a crime. That is droll justice which is bounded by a stream! Truth on this side of the Pyrenees, error on that” (Pascal, 1901, p. 61).

ferent phenomena. Holenstein's is, indeed, a *Philosophie-Atlas* and, in line with its name, it is presented as a collection of maps and diagrams. The author's aim is to offer a helping tool to the study through a spatialized version of thought. The translation into maps of the philosophical trends and of the philosophical and religious models of the history of humanity might make possible, as he says (Holenstein, 2004, p. 14), the visualisation of the "general lines of development" concerning both the relationships and possible analogies between the different areas of the world, and the variety of intellectual developments in each area. The geographical horizon is vast: the *Atlas* does not limit itself to mapping only the Western-European tradition, but it encloses the Earth as a whole, thus including Africa and Asia, too, and the interrelationship networks that link together the philosophical traditions from all the world. So, we have a map that shows us Hegel and Jaspers' philosophies of history, the way Medieval Europe represented the world, the spread of the alphabetical scriptures in the Fertile Crescent, the propagation of Buddhism in Korea, Japan and Vietnam, etc. The single *tabulae* are accompanied by an explanatory comment. The volume is furthermore supplied with a series of appendices (bibliographic and geographic index, bibliography) that enrich its consultation. "Cartographic space", the author writes, "is a precious medium, to be used with rationality. (...) A conveniently elaborated map can correct an image of the world or of history that has become customary, and thus transmit a catchy new one" (Holenstein, 2004, p. 16).

The second way we can approach the geography of philosophy does not limit itself to *localizing*, and thus showing us the position of a phenomenon in a system of spatial coordinates, but it presents that phenomenon in a wider context, where the conditions and the resources of the local *milieu* have a crucial role. If the first modality was cartographic, then this one is territorial: philosophical activity is created, develops, and is practiced, in the presence of specific topical qualities, which are unlikely to be reproduced elsewhere: the presence of traditions and masters, libraries, research centres and intellectual environments organized in a certain way, etc.¹ A possible example of this second train

¹ I will hereby just mention a matter to which more attention should be given, but which falls outside the scope of this contribution: is it possible to have a *geography of geography*, identifying schools, research centres, networks of exchange and of sharing? As far as Italy is concerned, something similar has been attempted (Ruocco, 2001), but it is an unsatisfying and pioneering experiment.

of thought seems to be the volume *Le città filosofiche. Per una geografia della cultura filosofica italiana nel Novecento* [The philosophical cities. For a geography of Italian philosophical culture in the Twentieth century], edited by Pietro Rossi and Carlo Augusto Viano (2004). This is what the editors write as for the intention of the book:

Travelling through a geographical itinerary of the Italian philosophy of the Twentieth century is a way to tell stories, positioned in the places where they have developed, beyond the theoretical contents and the programmatic manifestos of the various philosophies. (...) More than to the philosophers and their speculative itinerary, the attention is focused on the different ‘climate’ of the cities where they have studied and have taught, to the relationships between philosophical thought and intellectual environment, to the conditioning this has practiced. (Rossi & Viano, 2004, pp. 12 and 15)

Apart from two exceptions, the text is divided into chapters, each of which is devoted to a city: philosophy in Turin, Milan (with two chapters on the State University and the Catholic University), Padua, Genoa, Bologna, Pisa and Florence (together), Rome, Naples, during the central decades of the 20th century. The feeling we get by going through the table of contents—a feeling confirmed by reading the book—is that we can actually find ourselves here in a ‘localized story’, where the geography of philosophical culture, rather than placed in the middle of the different urban contexts, is a geography of the university venues, if not of the faculties (proof of it is the double chapter dedicated to Milan). If the polycentric character of this geography of Italian philosophy seems to follow the frame of the Italian territory, the risk of a banal mirroring *sic et simpliciter*, of an *adaequatio loci et philosophiae* (‘give me the city and I’ll give you the philosopher’), is prevented by the internal animation of this geography, which is structured as a network of exchanges and transfers, of radiations and ruptures. The relocation of scholars from one location to another does not always produce harmony. “There is not always an agreement; it is the exact opposite. It is so, undoubtedly, in certain cases”, e.g. in that of Antonio Banfi’s school, that had close relationships with the literary, musical and urban culture of 1950s and ’60s Milan, or in that of Catholic culture in Padua in the aftermath of the Second World War. “Elsewhere things went differently, and the doctrines expressed by philosophers appear in contrast with the urban environment and the ideas prevailing there” (pp. 15-16). Such is the case of Turin, where spiritualist idealism

and existentialism developed side by side with a tradition inspired by Gobetti and Croce, and where, eventually, the development of hermeneutics will clash with the prevailing leftist culture; and the case of Rome, where Gentile's students were at odds with both Christian Democrat power and the Communist opposition.

3.2. Philosophy of Geography

The expression 'philosophy of geography' refers to a debate on the nature of geographical knowledge and reality which is aimed at identifying an overall meaning or plan, a purpose or an immanent principle: something analogous and parallel to the philosophy of history with regards to human events. This identifies a rather broad and heterogeneous field of research, which is thematically centred on the ontological, existential, cultural and mythical-poetical foundations of geography, and includes authors so different as Hegel and Eric Dardel, Barry Smith and Gunnar Olsson, Deleuze and Guattari, Franco Farinelli, Augustin Berque and Jean-Marc Besse, Massimo Cacciari, Luisa Bonesio and Caterina Resta. Many approaches to the philosophy of geography use the term 'geography' not so much to indicate a formalized knowledge based on scientific methods, but rather to evoke the deep link that connects humans to the Earth and to its integral physical traits (continents, islands, the sea, the soil, the wood, the horizon, etc.) so that they are philosophically transformed.

Hegel's philosophy of history is undoubtedly a philosophy of geography as well, insofar as the historical movement implies a spatial movement from East to West, so that to every step in the evolution of the *Weltgeist*, the world-spirit, a different people corresponds and, with it, a specific part of the world. The internal evolution of Hegel's thought gives proof that the geographical dimension is one of the pillars of his view of history: the idea of a geographical foundation of historical events is completely absent from the first edition of his *Enzyklopädie* (1817), while in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1821) it is barely mentioned. It matures in the following years, and is found in the lessons on the *Philosophy of History* (which he held between 1822 and 1831) and in the second edition of the *Enzyklopädie* (1827). In the meantime he had read Carl Ritter's *Erdkunde*, the author having become his colleague in Berlin in 1820. Hegel's

effort of showing that the geographical structure of the world plays an active part in the events of the peoples is apparent when he insists in his *Lectures* on the conjunction between ‘place’ and ‘epoch’, ‘physical homeland’ and ‘spiritual homeland’, ‘geographical substratum’ and ‘people’s character’: America is geographically immature, incomplete, “has always shown itself physically and psychically powerless, and still shows itself so” (Hegel, 2001, p. 98). Africa, “wrapped in the dark mantle of night”, is a continent by itself, alien: “Its isolated character originates, not merely in its tropical nature, but essentially in its geographical condition” (p. 109). In Europe, humans are naturally free; this is where the centre of the Earth lies, i.e. the Mediterranean Sea, and it is here, in Greece, that philosophy was born: “the submersion in Nature no longer exists, and consentaneously the unwieldy character of *geographical* relations has also vanished” (p. 245, italics in the text). History, just as nature for Leibniz, *non facit saltus*: Hegel declares that America is the land of the future, but the Spirit, before being ‘americanized’, needs to be European, just as it had been Asian before blossoming in Europe.

We find a completely different attitude in Eric Dardel’s *L’Homme et la Terre. Nature de la réalité géographique*, published in 1952 by the Presses Universitaires de France. Dardel’s work did not obtain immediate attention: in the years in which the epistemological canon of quantitative geography asserted itself, it remained more or less unnoticed. It was then discovered and developed during the 1970s by the English and French geographers of the *humanistic turn*. Dardel’s thought is based on a distinction (contrast) between geometric space and geographic spaces. The first one, homogeneous, whole and neutral, is the space of scientific geography, based on measure, calculation and analysis; the geographic spaces, multiple and various, are the object of human *inquiétude* before the still unknown, from which the desire springs to reach what is inaccessible, to explore, to imagine other places, and to be amazed. Getting to know the world on a geographical level is the duty of science, but the spark from which this comprehension is set in motion is the concrete and sentimental relationship which links humans to the Earth: *geographicity*, the destiny and *modus vivendi* of human beings:

Geography is not an indifferent or detached concept; it deals with what I am concerned with or interests me the most; my anxiety, my concern, my personal well-being, my

projects, my relationships. The geographical reality lies for humans firstly right there where they live, the places of their childhood, the environment which calls them to its presence. (...) the Earth space is the condition of any historical reality, it is what creates and assigns to every existing thing their own place. It is the Earth, so we can say, that gives the existence stability. (Dardel, 1952, pp. 46 and 59)

A third line of research deals with the ontological properties of the geographical objects. It is, more precisely, an *application ontology*, finalized to the construction of a classification system and a general theory of spatial representation based on intrinsic properties (form, dimension, borders and limits, types of entities, parts, bonds and relationships among them etc.) and applicable to information technology (Smith, 1994; Smith & Varzi, 1997; Smith & Mark 1998; Smith & Mark, 2001). The taxonomy which is thus derived is mainly a spatial one, just as the properties and criteria with which it deals are also spatial. The theoretical tools of the ontology of geography are *mereology* (the study of relations between a set and its parts), *position* (a general theory of spatial locations), *topology* (the study of the properties of space that are preserved under transformations): “We may broadly characterize a geography G on a region R as way of assigning (via the location relation) geographic objects of given types in parts (subregions) of R” (Casati, Varzi & Smith, 1998, p. 83). Therefore, we obtain a formal or, as Deleuze and Guattari would say, ‘mental’ geography, based on a process of abstraction from which the definitions of classes, relationships, operations, functions and axioms spring: “For example, the class ‘cave’ is an abstraction for all hollow places of natural origin in cliffs or underground” (Mark, Egenhofer, & Goodchild, 2005). Where geography is an idiographic knowledge which describes single entities, the ontology of geography is conversely nomothetic: while the geographer is more interested in the diversity and uniqueness of geographical objects—the variety of climates, environments, and cultures—the ontology developer is mainly interested in the formal properties that make the modelling of phenomena and processes possible.

The ‘critique of cartographic reason’ by the Italian geographer Franco Farinelli can also be considered as a philosophy of geography. The expression ‘cartographic reason’ indicates the tabular character of Western culture, where the principle of cartographic projection presented by Ptolemy during the 2nd century CE, and then resumed by the Florentine humanists in the 15th century, has

imposed itself as an analogic and constitutive model of reality. Therefore, the map is the *machina machinarum*, a methamodel, an archetypical framework, a graphic and ontological device that is able to determine the nature of the object it represents: “reality is the product of its own management, and this one is, because of modernity, the product of the geographic, that is, cartographic, idea” (Farinelli, 2009, p. 30). Rather than a simple tool or principle of classification that passively reflects reality, it is an integral principle and a device of production (and imposition) of reality that allows its configuration:

If Modern means seeing the world as a cartographic representation [with reference to Heidegger’s *Die Zeit des Weltbildes*], then the history of Western culture becomes, as an introduction to the Modern and its realization, the history of its continuous colonisation of the discourse (...) by the cartographic image itself. The goal is the concept of *mapping* itself, currently leading in such hard sciences as biology, that is to say reducing the entire cognitive process to a mere cartography or deciphering of the cartographic image—assuming the map as a single model of knowledge. (Farinelli, 1992, pp. 55-56)

Cartographic logic means several things: the identity of the name and of the thing, the substitution of the thing with its representation, the separation between the known object and the knowing subject, the reduction of the complexity of the world in favour of the two-dimension character of geometry, of the darkness and visibility (what cannot be mapped does not exist), of the unique places which cannot be reduced to simple geometrical points. This logic is, nevertheless, no longer able to control and project what is real: the crisis of cartographic reason follows the advent of globalisation and of networks, all phenomena which are impossible to map and whose functioning contravenes all the rules modernity has obeyed to, from the detachment subject-object to the traditional concept of space and time (Farinelli, 2009).

Finally, to the philosophy of geography we might also ascribe ‘geophilosophy’. The term, as it is well known, is a lexical invention by Deleuze and Guattari, who give this title to a chapter of *What is Philosophy?* These two authors, according to me, ought to be placed in the ‘geography of philosophy’, but I will deal here with the features that geo-philosophical thought has taken in Luisa Bonesio, Caterina Resta and other authors. Geophilosophy is a ‘thought of the land’, here meant as *Heimat*, homeland, and *oikos*, the place we live in. This approach stems from a critique to the cult of Western technoscience and

of the mechanisation of the world that it produced. Humans have made the world and its places meaningless, by pillaging its resources and upsetting its balances, by cancelling its symbolic and sacred values (Resta, 1996; Bonesio, 2000). This diagnosis—clearly inspired by Heidegger—is at the basis of every geo-philosophical debate. Questions of identity, of community, of landscape and memory are at the centre of the geo-philosophical reflection, together with questions concerning living a virtuous experience of places (thus geophilosophy stands for local versus global, the latter being seen as a factor of homogenisation and uprooting). These approaches are extremely aware of the sacred, mythical and symbolic resonances of our relationship with the landscape and the archetypal forms of the *genius loci*: the sea, the wood, the mountain, etc. Hence they look favorably at the bioregional option, since it is seen as a “chance to create forms of *oikonomia* (management of the *oikos*), in harmony and alliance with the balances and the natural abilities of specific geographic zones” (Bonesio, 2010).

3.3. Geography in Philosophy

In some cases, geography has gone so deeply into the philosophical thought that it has become inseparable from it: a good example of this is given to us by Carl Schmitt and Peter Sloterdijk’s work. The research field of ‘geography in philosophy’ leads us to explore an inclusive relationship in which philosophy hosts, feeds and transforms the tracks (notions, examples, problems) of geography. Jocelyn Benoist wondered once to what extent geography can enrich the philosophical activity by adding to its discourse and its reflection-based framework some new questions and wonders, that were not part of it before. In *En quoi la géographie peut-elle importer à la philosophie?* (Benoist, 2001), his answer is that the contribution of geography produces in philosophy a variety of different effects which can be grouped in five categories. First of all, we have *empiricism*, that is to say an invitation to concreteness and to realism against the metaphysical stances, and *positivity*, given by the adoption of a descriptive modality as a privileged way to comprehend reality. There follows the effect of *spatiality*: whether we are dealing with concrete or symbolic spaces, geography deals with a truth which can be localized somewhere (and which can be,

ultimately, mapped). Then comes *politicisation*, that stems from the power relationships of which geography (either implicitly or explicitly) is part of, thus allowing us to grasp, as Foucault would do, the process through which knowledge works as a form of power. Finally *critique*, which exploits the discriminating effect of geography, that derives from its being a discourse about limits (pp. 225-247).

In an article I wrote several years ago (Tanca, 2012a), I resumed Dematteis' thesis (1985) and suggested that geographical metaphors act in philosophical reflection as mediators between the theory and the world. If 'theory' identifies the whole set of conceptual categories typical of a specific vision of the world, from Aristotle onwards the metaphor has been identified as a form of knowledge which allows to catch sight of similes and analogies among different things, and therefore to find common and unexpected properties common to distant phenomena. In particular, the heuristic and communicative function of geographical metaphors, their 'interpretative tension' (Eco), amounts to the ability to connect the (abstract) level of theories to the (concrete) level of visible facts on the surface of the Earth, by giving to the theories a strength and icastic efficacy which are based on immediate evidence, typical of everyone's day to day experience. The geographic metaphor concentrates the effects stated by Benoist—and, notoriously, philosophers particularly love this type of metaphors. A well-known example is the following, taken from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*:

We have now not only travelled through the land of pure understanding, and carefully inspected each part of it, but we have also surveyed it, and determined the place for each thing in it. This land, however, is an island, and enclosed in unalterable boundaries by nature itself. It is the land of truth (a charming name), surrounded by a broad and stormy ocean, the true seat of illusion, where many a fog bank and rapidly melting iceberg pretend to be new lands and, ceaselessly deceiving with empty hopes the voyager looking around for new discoveries, entwine him in adventures from which he can never escape and yet also never bring to an end. But before we venture out on this sea, to search through all its breadth and become certain of whether there is anything to hope for in it, it will be useful first to cast yet another glance at the map of the land that we would now leave, and to ask, first, whether we could not be satisfied with what it contains, or even must be satisfied with it out of necessity, if there is no other ground on which we

could build; and, second, by what title we occupy even this land, and can hold it securely against all hostile claims. (Kant, 1998, pp. 338-339)

The image of the island is functional to the construction of a “cartography of our cognitive faculties” (Ferrini, 2013, p. 54) and it seems to prove Franco Farinelli’s hypothesis about the “cartographic nature of Kant’s thought” (Farinelli, 2004, p. XXVIII). We should notice the sequence of verbs that are used: to travel, to inspect, to survey—each one refers to specific cognitive operations which are made, respectively, with the body, the eyes, and lastly with measuring tools, thought the final goal is to determine the place for each thing in it in order to draw a map of the land. The metaphor then continues with a warning (which sounds like ‘I told you so’): we will walk on safe land if we keep examining and then mapping the island of Intellect; but when we shall put our feet out of it, we will be met by “the broad stormy ocean” of Reason, seat of *metaphysical* illusions, pretences and deceits. Kant’s metaphor thus suggests a parallel between philosophical activity and the geographer-cartographer’s activity. The idea of philosophy as ‘mental geography’, that is, as a mapping of mind and its operations, has traversed the history of Western thought: we find it in Locke, Berkeley and Hume, up to Wittgenstein, according to whom map-making is the task of the philosopher: “One difficulty in philosophy is that we lack a synoptic view. We encounter the kind of difficulty we should have with the geography of a country for which we had no maps, or else a map of isolated bits” (Wittgenstein, 2001, p. 43).

Kant does not stand alone at all. In *Les territoires des philosophes. Lieu et espace dans la pensée au XX^e siècle* (Paquot & Younès, 2009), a book which is meant to be a general introduction to a philosophy of human beings’ territories, we are presented with the use of geographical metaphors in such authors as Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Lévinas, Gaston Bachelard and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Think, for example, of the island, a circumscribed space that delineates a spatial discontinuity and that seems to bewitch philosophers, from Thomas More to Deleuze; or of the image of the desert and the oasis which, in Hannah Arendt, give shape to the interruption of the shared space and to the retreat to the private space: “the growth of wordlessness, of the withering-away of the in-between. This is the spread of the desert and the desert is the world under whose conditions we move. (...) The danger is that we become truly inhabitants

of the desert and feel at home in it” (Arendt, 1955, p. 1). The desert is an empty space, where there is no one else. Totalitarianism, consubstantial to this space that epitomizes the danger to lose any real contact with the common world and the other humans, is similar to a general and permanent sandstorm that leads people to take shelter in the oasis, a necessary space where one can endure the desert and where it is possible to cultivate those activities—love, friendship, reasoning—that fill our life outside of politics:

The other great danger in the desert is that there exist the possibilities of sandstorms, that is, that the desert is not always the quiet of the cemetery where, after all, everything in still possible, but whips up a movement of its own. These are the totalitarian movements whose danger lies precisely in the fact that they are so extremely well-adjusted to the conditions in the desert. They reckon with nothing else and therefore seem to be the most adequate political forms of desert life. (...) The sandstorms moreover threaten even those oases in the desert without which none of us could endure it. (Arendt, 1955, pp. 1-2)

The greatest risk, according to Arendt, is to get used to the oasis when running away from the world-desert, thus losing our connotation of *homines politici*.

If in Frege’s (*Foundation of Arithmetic*), the Northern Sea and the Equator are used to show the difference between what is ‘real’ and what is ‘objective’, Heidegger’s use of such terms as clearing (*Lichtung*), path (*Weg*), wood (*Holz*), region (*Gegend*) and locality (*Ortschaft*) hints to a need to give a geographical quality to thought (Sferrazza Papa, 2015). For Michel Foucault—who declares that “Geography must indeed necessarily lie at the heart of my concerns” (Foucault, 1980, p. 77)—the notion of *archipelago*, the only one he thinks ‘truly geographical’ (not derived from other kinds of knowledge) is the most appropriate to express the essence of society: “The society is an archipelago of different powers” (Foucault, 2007, p. 156).

We should make something clear: these statements are not true in a literal way (truth is not an island, totalitarianism is not a sandstorm, society is not a cluster of islands, etc.); their truth value is of a different kind. These metaphors can be rightly defined as ‘cognitive’ because they favour the understanding of one (philosophical) idea in geographical terms. We might wonder whether they are an integral component, innate to the thought (for which the geographical metaphor generates or suggests associations of ideas, thus being itself a

thought) or whether it is an expressive tool chosen in retrospect, in order to communicate already formed theories and ideas (see Le Dœuff, 1980).

Finally, we should not underestimate the presence, in such authors as Lévinas, Derrida, Esposito, Deleuze and others of a geography of relocation, that is to say, of a reflection on movement, nomadism, mobility—the crossing of spaces as both a destabilising and generative experience where places, bodies and events intertwine (a very interesting review in Giubilaro, 2016).

3.4. Philosophy in Geography

Looking for ‘philosophy in geography’ equals to exploring the opportunities to host in geographical knowledge theories and concepts that feed and strengthen its analytical-theoretical approach. I am referring with this category to the ideas of authors such as, for example, Marx, Foucault or Heidegger, used to broaden the conceptual framework of the study of territories. A first example might be Kant: first Alfred Hettner (1927), and eventually Richard Hartshorne (1958), made reference to him in order to defend their conception of geography as a chorological analysis of earthly space (i.e. as a science of regional divisions). I tried elsewhere to explain the reasons why, in my opinion, this interpretation of Kant’s geography is misleading, or at least incomplete (Tanca, 2012b, pp. 15-48). David Harvey (1969, p. 72) and Michael Church (2011, pp. 19, 36-38) have remarked that Kant has been summoned more to buttress a particular geographic practice and its authority, than as a real source. The chorological approach actually corresponds, in a general kind of way, to the professional activity of geographers during the 1920s and 1930s, and therefore to the dominant view of geography in the early 20th century. It was, in the end, practiced by scholars who had not necessarily read Kant’s works.

In order to better understand this seizure of concepts and thought categories—a true re-territorialization, as Deleuze and Guattari would say—we have to start from the idea of *immediacy* which has often been associated to ‘doing geography’. We find trace of it in Kaplan (*Geography does not argue*) and in Benoist too, when he holds geographical thought to be an empirical and positive truth regime. The origin of this misunderstanding lies in geography itself or, at least, in a part of its history: I am thinking of the absence, or weakness, so very often

stigmatized, of theoretical debate, which has been joined by a *naïve realism* where the ontological-conceptual questions were avoided or reduced to the minimum, in favour of concrete data, ‘facts’ (about this: Orain, 2009). When Paul Vidal de la Blache, the forefather of the *géographie humaine*, in 1913 defines the discipline as the ‘science of places’ (Vidal, 1913), he is not concerned with what is meant by ‘place’: he takes for granted that the term does not require much explanation. Classical geographers, so to speak, do not build their own knowledge in a theoretical way—or at least this is what they believe: there is no worse prejudice than thinking of having no prejudice—but empirically, by actually getting to know the land, by getting one’s feet covered in mud, and breathing the air of the places one is passing by; the description of the physiognomy of places needs to be as faithful as possible. The geographer is a *talking eye*, to use Foucault’s expression, as it is testified by Jean Brunhes, Vidal’s student: “What is the geographical spirit all about? Geographers can open their eyes and see” (Brunhes, 1912, p. 683). All the limits entailed by this theoretical deficit have made geography an extremely weak and scarcely critical knowledge, if not apologetic. When, as it happened during the 1960s, new problems were presented to the attention of the scholars (underdevelopment, decolonisation, pollution, urban question, etc.), geographers used to practice a knowledge of facts discovered they were lacking the analytical tools needed to unravel the complexity of these new phenomena and look at them in a critical way.

This premise helps us understand the background of the comeback of Marx’s thought in the geographical debate. We should not think that suddenly geography has all become Marxist, but undoubtedly the ‘pros and cons’ discussion which developed during the 1970s actively contributed to bringing many scholars out of a sort of lethargy in relation to social, economic and political problems. It is not accidental, then, that interest for the author of the *Capital* had bloomed in those decades: on the one hand, a geographic materialism had been unthinkable before, and on the other hand Western Marxism had generally proved not to be very interested in systematically developing a material and geographical reading of the capitalistic space. More recently, neo- and post-Marxist trends have represented one of the characters of post-modern geography (together with the trend inspired by Foucault and the deconstructionist one; see Minca, 2001). What is Marx’s contribution to geography all about? First of all, the input of categories and concepts coming from Marxism required re-

thinking the function of science. Geography cannot be limited to the passive description of what exists; it must point to the contradictions, propose itself as a critical, concrete and active tool which contributes to transform reality. Second came the idea that the conditions of the land are not a mere emission of the metrical properties of the Euclidean space, but issue from the social space, which is conflicted and asymmetrical. Third was the need to conjugate social justice and environmental justice, and the refusal to contextualize all the properties of the places, their usage value, under the common denominator of their exchange value and therefore of the market. Finally it allowed a theoretical critique of globalisation (that is to say, of global capitalism), meant as a circular 'moving magnitude' that overlaps with the roundness of Earth and where each moment appearing as a presupposition of production is at the same time its result.

Another example of the contribution of philosophy to geography is represented by Michel Foucault's thought. Analogously to what happened with Marx, owing to the French philosopher's ideas meant re-defining some of the strongholds upon which the conceptual apparatus of geography was based. The text which transfers typical concerns of Foucault's in the field of geography is undoubtedly *Pour une géographie du pouvoir* (1980), by Claude Raffestin. The French-Swiss geographer was not the first to deal with the relationship between geography and power; but surely he was the first to think of power in a new, innovative, relational way. In order to realize this, it is sufficient to compare Raffestin's book with *Espace et pouvoir* (1978) by Paul Claval. The perspective followed by the latter is traditional, pre-Foucaultian: power is simply the ability to do something (*Pouvoir quelque chose, c'est être en mesure de le réaliser*, Claval, 1978, p. 11). Raffestin lays right from the start everything on the table: he opens with the disavowal of the equation 'State = power' asserted by Ratzel and then never questioned, that is, of one the foundations of the French, Italian, English and American geographical schools. 'A critique of classical political geography', the first chapter of *Pour une géographie du pouvoir*, builds down this monolithic, Hobbesian vision of power in order to practice Foucault's invitation to abandon the model of the Leviathan:

the most dangerous [power] is that which is unseen or that which one no longer sees because it is assumed to be disorde through house arrest. It would be too simple if

Power were the Minotaur locked into its labyrinth that Theseus could kill once and for all (...) power is consubstantial to all relations. (Raffestin, 1980, p. 45)

Finally, we cannot comment on the borrowings from and infiltrations of philosophy into geography without mentioning the influence of phenomenology and of Martin Heidegger's thought, particularly apparent in the humanist trend which emerged during the 1970s and gave a central role to human awareness, values and behaviour (Buttimer, 1976; Relph, 1985; Peet, 1998; see also Berque, 1982 and 1993). Humanist geography is phenomenological because it tries to catch the original features of the *everydayness*, the existential condition in which humans are taken by the world and where 'meaning' remains more or less obscure, because it is usually judged irrelevant. Humanist geographers want to make explicit and enhance the *attunement*, the structures of our mood of being-in-the-world, the affective and qualitative relationships that connect us to places and landscapes (Tuan, 1971, p. 191). The basic idea that inspires a new evaluation of the ways in which we do geography, is that behind or before the scientific methods and paradigms recognized by the community of scholars, there might be our geographical experiences of the everyday. The main concepts of geography are parts of our being-in-the-world: the life world is a daily world experience and it is from this foundation—from stupor and fear, from familiarity and otherness—that academic geography must start again. Heidegger is of interest in this theoretical renewal, mainly (but not only) because of the analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time*. His later thinking has also been an important reference point, especially for the essay *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1971).



4. For a philosophy of territorial engagement

Just like any other neighbourhood relationship, the one between geography and philosophy can be established in various ways and produce different results—indifference, curiosity, hospitality, etc. Much of it depends on the attitude with which they meet. A certain mistrust or scepticism can be seen as justifiable, in a way. Even so, every time these two kinds of knowledge have taken something from each other, that has been like the opening of a ‘mental window’: a new, unusual, even unexpected vision on the different things they both have taken advantage of. In the end, this is what Deleuze was hoping for.

Philosophy can be a precious antidote to the trivialization of geography, to the simplification of its complexity: if we were to criticize Kaplan, Marshall and Khanna once again, we might say that they never took into consideration the *thinking dimension of geography*. Apart from the distribution of the phenomena on the surface of the Earth, there is a geographical thought which we just have to take into account.

We now have to take a further step towards ‘a philosophy of territorial engagement’, as Angelo Turco defines it, and a ‘systematic critique to the territorial reason’. What he means by these expressions is explained by the same Turco in words that are worth quoting:

I am referring here to the deeply philosophical nature of a territoriality that lies in the very definition of the human being and of the conditions of deployment of its sociability. (...) Thanks to the very same substance of its interrogations—and, analogously to other social disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, sociology and politology—geography, too, might produce on its own the debate on the philosophical element which it incorporates. Thus, next to the philosophy of philosophers (that tell us extremely interesting things about space, territory, landscape and, agreeing with Kant, on the immanent spatial nature of thought), geographers could capitalize themselves in a philosophical way their research experience. This would mean acknowledging the universalist tenets of empirical problems and develop on this a systematic critique of the territorial reason. (Turco, 2010, pp. 302-303)

Hence, the day might have come to imagine geography as an empirical discipline which is also able to develop on its own a sort of philosophy of action. It would be a philosophy of territorial engagement: a reflection, on the one hand,

on the intimate geographical character of human experience, and, on the other hand, on the problems of value that are raised by a spatial activity which is more based on memory than on everyday things and projects, which is more individual than social.

Will geography be able to translate its own research experience and finally become a philosophy of territorial engagement? It would be, in this case, not just a deviation from the original path, but from the natural resulting presupposition contained in the object. The bud disappears when the blossom breaks through, as Hegel writes in his *Phenomenology*. Without getting so far, this would surely affect the nature itself of the relationships between geography and philosophy, but in a way we cannot foresee now. Only time will tell.

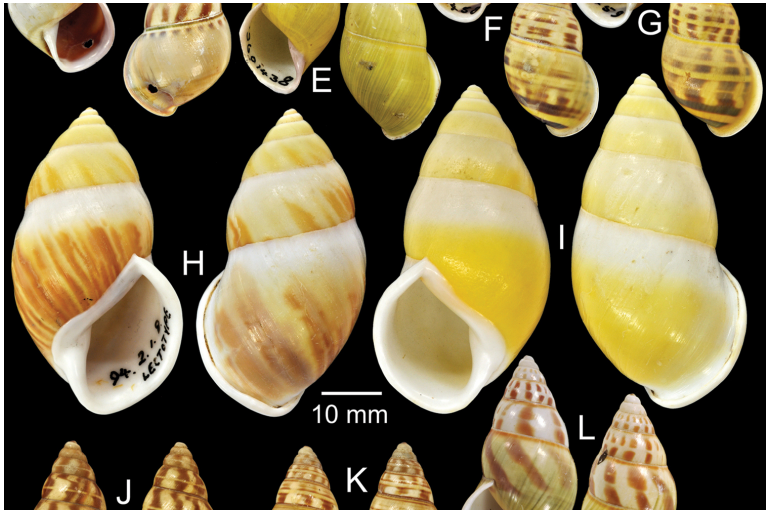
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Enantiomorphic lectotype and paralectotype forms of Amphidromus perversus natunensis (Chirasak Sutcharit, Jonathan Ablett, Piyoros Tongkerd, Fred Naggs, Somsak Panha, "Illustrated type catalogue of Amphidromus Albers, 1850 in the Natural History Museum, London, and descriptions of two new species", ZooKeys, 492/2015: 49-105, Fig. 11, particular, <https://doi.org/10.3897/zookeys.492.8641>).