

THE NEXT MODERNITY: EVOLUTIONARY STAGES OF ECONOMIC ACTION – TERRESTRIAL, MARITIME, AND SPATIAL ECONOMIES

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Abstract

The social organisation within which we live is becoming increasingly complex. It is therefore important to acknowledge that, throughout its economic history, the world has not always been as it is today. Humanity has experienced various stages of economic activity, depending on the degree—more or less limited—to which people perceived the world around them. Culture and the specific representations of reality have shaped and conditioned economic action. By understanding our past, we can better comprehend our future. The present study seeks to highlight the main stages that have led to the contemporary spatial perception of the economy and civilisational development. Founded upon the surrounding natural environment, culture is the force that dominates and guides us. Nothing within the social sphere exists outside the reverberations of culture—that is, outside the way in which a particular human system perceives its world. In turn, culture is shaped by the specific geographical space in which it develops. Hence, there exists a general dimension of capitalism, a shared foundation of values without which a given social organisation cannot rightfully be called capitalist.

Keywords: capitalism, economic history, geography, culture, human action, maritime economy, terrestrial economy, space economy

JEL Classification: Z10, Z13, B10, P10, P50, A12, A13, I25

1.From Geography and Culture to Social Structure and Economic-Civilizational Outcomes: A Deterministic Perspective”

Why, when discussing capitalism and social organisation, must we first address the cultural dimension of the world in question? For a very simple reason: **culture determines everything** [8]. Beyond this shared foundation, there are multiple particularities from one state to another, defined by the culture of each space. For example, capitalism in Northern Europe will never resemble that which operates in Asian states. Thus, South Korea is markedly different from the Netherlands, even though both are capitalist states. Culture, in turn, is determined by the geography of the respective space, as well as by its specific environment and climate. The basis of human existence is precisely this environment, where cultural differentiation arises and manifests itself. To summarise, we may speak of a form of determinism structured as follows: **geography** (relief, climate) → **culture** (thought, the mode of representing the world, *being*) → **social organisation** (the level of human cooperation, *living*) → **human civilisation** (the tool, technological level, *having*).

The *tool* is therefore the final element in this chain of determinations, while geography (or climate) represents the first. Within this context, cultures, in correlation with geography, may be classified as **terrestrial, maritime, or spatial**. Hegel was the thinker who devoted significant analytical space to the issue of the determinism linking geography and human personality. The central idea is that people are different and possess distinct representations of the external world, depending on the place of their birth. Hence, the **cultural space fundamentally determines human representations of the world and their mode of being**.

Culture displays a remarkable constancy over time. People do not change by decree; rather, they inherit an enduring cultural resilience. This deep current carries peoples and nations through history — they exist and survive through culture. **Stephen Young** draws a distinction between the foundational principles of the capitalist world, shared by all states adopting this form of organisation, and the particular elements that account for differences among them [14]. The culture

underpinning capitalism constitutes the essential element and the factor that distinguishes societies of success from those of failure. There exists a decisive factor that enables civilisation and culture to arise and develop — namely, the **conditions of climate and environment**. At the same time, this very factor may, in the long term, irrevocably determine the **disappearance of civilisation** from a given geographical space. It is evident that our world, today's Western civilisation, could only have emerged within a particular climatic and geographical context — and that it could also vanish if this context were to change.

Possible **climatic transformations** may lead either to irreversible changes driving civilisation to new heights of development or to its very disappearance. If we analyse the geographical zones in which civilisations have historically developed, we observe that the vast majority have arisen and flourished **north of the equator, between the 20th and 40th parallels**. Within this range are found the civilisations of **Ancient Egypt, Sumer, the South American civilisations, Ancient Greece, Babylon, Ancient Rome, and contemporary Western civilisation**. When addressing the conditions of climate and environment, we shall not do so in the manner of **Arnold Toynbee** in his *A Study of History* [12]. The cited author errs in rejecting both theories; while we may agree with him in dismissing the racial theory, we cannot accept his rejection of the environmental one. We consider geography and climate to be essential elements in the differentiation of the civilisations that human beings construct. Yes, people are biologically the same wherever they live and work; however, their **chances of achieving civilisation** also depend on the surrounding environment. Even though the road towards civilisation is long and depends on a complex of factors that must converge at a given moment, **climate and environment retain their significance**.

We engage in a separate discussion of the **environment as a factor of civilisation** purely for what might be called **didactic reasons**. In reality, all the conditions set out in this chapter have together contributed to the development of contemporary Western civilisation. Each of the factors discussed — and those yet to be discussed — plays its role, of greater or lesser importance [12]. Furthermore, the cited author believes that there is a link between **civilisation and the surrounding environment**, in the sense that powerful civilisations have emerged and developed in adverse environments. In the context of this debate, it is crucial to avoid equating *climate* with the *environment*. Toynbee may rightly be credited here, since only a diverse and challenging environment can give rise to a strong civilisation.

It is difficult to imagine that a robust human civilisation could ever have developed at the **North Pole** or in the **Equatorial zone**. Indeed, Hegel excludes such geographical and climatic regions from the very outset, as those that could not, in any sense, lead to the flourishing of human civilisation. Hegel states:

“First of all, certain natural conditions must be mentioned which should once and for all be excluded from the movement of universal history: in the Arctic and in the Torrid zones no peoples can arise who play a historical role. This is because consciousness, when it first awakens, is only within nature, and every development of this consciousness is the reflection of spirit upon itself in relation to the immediacy of nature” [6].

These **extreme geographical zones** are too harsh, and “man cannot attain any freedom of movement”[6]. In such places, the human spirit cannot “build a world for itself”[6]. We cannot conceive of a refined human existence, concerned with the life of the spirit, in a context where **primary human needs** remain unmet.

If we carefully examine a map of human civilisation, we shall notice that the flourishing areas are generally located around the 35° north parallel, which once again reminds us of the significance of climate, geography, and the potential of natural resources in human development [6]. Geography is of paramount importance for communication and synthesis among civilisations and cultures. Claude Lévi-Strauss emphasised that no culture or civilisation can exist entirely by itself, and that exchanges, syntheses, and borrowings are essential. What is at stake here is

communication among peoples belonging to different spaces—communication which, historically, could occur most easily by land. The earth, the terrestrial route, regardless of distance, has always been more accessible compared with the vast expanses of seas and oceans. Perhaps for this reason, North Africa and Eurasia represent the geographical area in which the evolved human being appeared and where human civilisation developed. This is also due to the richness of agriculture and other economic branches, to the fertile harvests the land provided, as well as to the more convenient possibility of trade and economic exchange [11]. The countries within this area have been favoured by nature in comparison with other regions of the planet [3].

Hegel considers that the connection between spirit and nature represents a “foundation” [6]. The basis of what we construct in spirit or in the material world is inherently linked to nature and depends fundamentally upon it. One cannot build anything enduring except where nature allows it, and in everything that is built, energy is required—energy that humankind finds only in nature. Not all corners of the planet permit or encourage durable human construction [2]. Civilisation implies economy, and economy, in turn, implies environmental factors and natural wealth optimally set into motion. Energy, and the capacity to use the surplus of energy, are essential for the development and sustainability of civilisation. Georges Bataille argues that life and economy on Earth depend on the level of terrestrial energy, which is distributed unevenly across the planet’s surface [4]. Ultimately, this is precisely what we discuss when we address climatic and environmental conditions and their relationship to civilisation. It is about energy, surplus, and the way in which this surplus is expended and reintroduced into circulation. Civilisation cannot be conceived outside the framework of accumulation, for it is, in essence, the result of accumulation.

2.The Economic Mode of Being: Human Economic Action as a Result of the Terrestrial Representation of the World

Within the sphere of social philosophy, there exists an idea advanced by Hegel [1]—namely, that the human being develops a certain type of culture and subsequently a specific form of society and civilisation according to the space he inhabits, and depending on the degree of his attachment to that space. Geography and the manner in which humankind relates to it, play an essential role in shaping human horizons. Following this line of reasoning, we may speak of several cultural types or models, for humankind originates from somewhere and moves towards somewhere. The first representation of the human being is connected to the land on which he is born, lives, and from which he draws the necessities of existence. This is the *terrestrial culture*—the culture rooted in the earth. Labouring the land bound man to the land. Cultural representations reflected the limits of human action. The cultivation of the earth created a man with particular traits: limited by his very nature; dependent upon nature; dependent upon the land; deeply religious, for his life depended upon natural manifestations whose meaning he could not comprehend; uncooperative in relation to others; the family being the fundamental basis of interpersonal relations and cooperation.

The terrestrial man was a man of fears—because, quite literally, he suffered from hunger and cold. His level of cooperation being minimal, living within the narrow universe of the family, it is assumed that he was inclined towards conflict in relation to the stranger. The man of terrestrial culture, or the man of the earth, lived in a state of semi-animality. He discovered economic exchange and money only much later. The terrestrial economy was an economy of subsistence, of self-consumption rather than exchange. Even until late historical periods, in some countries of Europe itself, the rural economy retained this character. The concept of wealth did not exist, for everything was static, ancestral. The land remained the same; the working tools were the same; people’s representations of the world were the same. We can therefore speak of a world *outside of time*—an ahistorical world.

To continue our demonstration, we shall bring into discussion the cultural anthropology textbook authored by Achim Mișu. The Romanian scholar reminds us, by citing a British scientist,

of a fact well known to us: **terrestrial communities** exhibit in their culture behaviours that reflect a limited perception of the world. Indelibly tied to the land, these people, when called upon to construct social structures—that is, to settle into larger or smaller human communities—organised the world according to the principles of their own geography. In other words, they possessed what is referred to as a perception of **limited wealth**. They cannot be reproached for this. These communities held land that could not be expanded in any way; the land produced approximately the same harvest each year; the yield was required to feed a number of people that could not increase significantly. The life of these agricultural communities was stable, operating within fixed coordinates that could not be altered. No one could guarantee more or better sustenance, because their wealth was grounded in land, which was not something that could expand. The perception of limited wealth had been acquired over thousands of years. Everything was organised according to these frameworks.

As a consequence of this perception, these communities developed **defensive mechanisms**. These include **fatalism, discord, and individualism**. If the world was understood as a given, then any change had to be rejected—and was indeed rejected—because it could endanger their way of life, or even life itself. Since everything was hard-won, **poverty and backwardness** were the major afflictions of these communities. Achim Mihiu describes the situation we are discussing [8].

In the work cited, **Achim Mihiu** discusses the attitude of the communities under consideration towards wealth [8]: if a member of the community increases their wealth by bringing in resources from outside, that wealth is accepted. It is important that this person does not diminish, through their enrichment, the **collective wealth** of the group. If wealth arises as a result of luck, this situation is also accepted. However, if wealth is acquired from **local resources**, “then the forces of public opinion come into play, operating through mechanisms of equalisation. Prosperous individuals may be compelled to sponsor ceremonies held within the commune, which reduces differential wealth while leaving only prestige, which is not considered dangerous. Additionally, prosperous peasants may become targets of rumours, envy, ostracism, and even physical violence. In view of such reactions, peasants seek to conceal the fortune of their enrichment” [8]. Furthermore, those who have not been fortunate and have fallen below the collective average are viewed with suspicion by the community, as it is assumed that they may be envious or resentful of others’ possessions. The **envious poor** are the figures behind the proverb: “if your goat dies, let your neighbour’s goat die too.” This represents a form of retaliation by those powerless in relation to their own fate and the ancestral endowment of poverty.

Nicholas Georgescu Roegen helps us understand this mechanism through his essay, *Institutional Aspects of the Peasant Community: An Analytical Perspective* [5]. The first aspect to grasp is that humans were **primarily tied to their land**. Agriculture has existed in all human cultures and at all times because it provided the necessities of life, with food being a fundamental good throughout all stages of human history. Being tied to the land, people developed the tendency to use the surplus asymmetrically in the market, for exchange. For long periods, such surplus either did not exist or was simply **ritually destroyed** from one year to the next [5]. Indifference towards profit, the market, the exploitation of surplus, and modernity in general is still a normal attitude even in present-day isolated rural communities. Roegen shows that private entrepreneurs, as well as government experts, have consistently considered peasants to be **exasperatingly indifferent** regarding the acquisition and utilisation of surplus.

They are even considered to be “**economically inert**” [5]. In fact, this can only be regarded as a defect by those who are unfamiliar with the specifics of agrarian economies [5]. The apathy in question therefore arises from a philosophy of the margins, of limitation, dictated by the finite character of the land and the relative technological stability of agricultural tools. The man of the earth did not develop capacities for exchange because he had no need for them, and in any case, such capacities were in contradiction with his philosophy. This occurred among Romanians, but also among any other nation that evolved within the same frameworks. The primitive agrarian

economy shared characteristics with the natural economy: everything was taken from an unchanging, eternal nature, and everything was used for immediate consumption. Time stood still, and nothing foreshadowed the capitalist revolution of exchange after 1500.

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The Economic Mode of Being: Economic Action Resulting from a Maritime Representation of the World

The sea is boundless. Nothing stands in the way of the courageous individual who lives on the shore of a sea or an ocean. The **courage to escape from limitation** is an expression, not widely known, which Hegel uses to refer to the capacity of peoples born on the seashores to step beyond their terrestrial borders and explore new worlds and experiences. It is the expression that links terrestrial space as the basis of a people’s culture with the open sea as a similar foundation. The **man of the seas** is profoundly different from the **man of the land**. This distinction, which we consider necessary from the outset, is at the very essence of our current discussion. The man of the seas differs from the man of the land, and consequently, the city of the man of the seas will differ from that built by the man of the land.

Hegel even refers to the New World as one **exposed to ruin**: “In the pursuit of gain (...), industry (...), changes the fixation and attachment to the soil and the limited circles of civil life (...), with the element of fluidity (...) and exposure to ruin” [9]. The fixed world of the pre-modern era transforms into the agitated world of modernity. Man regains his dignity, but the price is that of unrest and risk. This is capitalism. The possession of money and prosperity ushers us into a new era of human valuation, yet the cost soon becomes apparent. The pursuit of profit places us in a state of new dependence. Capitalism shines, yet it must not be approached like a butterfly drawn to the burning light of a lamp. Hegel takes the decisive step and provides an ultimate explanation of the differentiation of peoples and cultures. He considers and elaborates on the role of territoriality and geography in shaping a certain type of culture and thus a social construction. His vision is historical and planetary. He observed how humans develop different attitudes towards life depending on the geographical space in which they are formed. People are different because they are the creation of differing environmental and geographical conditions. This may appear unexpected in explaining a people’s culture, and not all social philosophers agree with him. Hegel masterfully analysed the connection between peoples’ culture and their territoriality [6]. According to Hegel, the connection of the spirit with nature is essentially and necessarily a **foundation**; the natural type of environment coincides with the type and character of the people “whom the land has brought into being” [6]; this character represents “the manner in which peoples appear in universal history” [6]; not all natural conditions can lead to the “awakening” and “development” of consciousness [6]; geography

permits or prevents the fulfilment of “necessary needs,” thereby allowing humans to progress universally, “towards the higher” [6].

From the analysis of Hegel’s text, one can conclude that humans, depending on the geographical space in which they live, develop either a **“limited” or terrestrial culture** and an **“unlimited” or maritime culture of openness**. Terrestrial cultures can be described, in mirror to Hegel’s discussion, as: well-determined geographically; limited in scope and representation; cultures in which individuals are profoundly interdependent; proximity is determinant; cooperation among people is difficult because survival can be ensured through selfishness; economically conservative, since the land remains the same, seasons repeat, and harvests are approximately the same; stable (frozen) cultures, in which people are much less daring and courageous. Above all, these are cultures in which neighbours may exist in a “back-to-back” relationship, as is the case among Romanians, and not only. This aspect is particularly relevant for understanding the social fabric of such cultures. To exist back-to-back is possible on land, but not at sea. At sea, circumstances are profoundly different. As Hegel emphasises, the sea brings people together and fosters solidarity. It teaches that survival depends on mutual cooperation. On a ship, there can be no partners who betray or act selfishly; the selfishness of one may be paid for with the lives of all others. The sea, as described by Hegel, is unforgiving. Cooperation and generosity, altruism, are basic conditions for survival. By contrast, land allows manifestations of selfishness and malice.

Here we can observe a clear determinism: **geography–culture–social capital–economic action**. Of course, we should not absolutise this explanation, assuming that all nations with access to the sea become great powers according to the formula outlined above. Other advantages, beyond the scope of this study, are also required [6]. Nonetheless, we are merely validating Hegel’s position, which places geography at the foundation of cultural determinism and at the base of the character profile of an individual and a culture. Consequently, it is no coincidence that the free world, classical capitalism, emerged based on this culture of openness and cooperation—the world of the seas. Capitalism arose on the coast, in states located there. Trade is the primary activity in these states, as agriculture is not feasible on such terrain. Capitalism is a world of exchange and commerce, enabled by this open maritime culture.

Thus, following Hegel’s analysis, humans, depending on their geographical space, develop a **“limited” or terrestrial culture** and an **“unlimited” or maritime culture of openness**. Terrestrial cultures, as described in mirror to Hegel, are: geographically well-determined; limited in scope and representation; composed of deeply interdependent people; proximity is determinant; cooperation is difficult since survival can occur through selfishness; economically conservative due to stable land, seasons, and harvests; stable (frozen) cultures in which people are less daring and courageous; cultures in which neighbours may exist “back-to-back,” as observed in Romania and elsewhere.

In maritime cultures, the sign of wealth is **money derived from trade**. H.R. Patapievic notes: “Only exchange can generate the type of wealth unanimously desired by moderns, which is almost the opposite of the wealth derived from land ownership” [9]. The liquidity of wealth and the economy emerges. Everything flows, is malleable, and accessible to humans. Money as a symbol of wealth brings what we now call **capitalism**. Patapievic continues: “Through liquidity, duration becomes instantaneous, time can be dominated as an instant, and goods can be allocated on command according to their use. Through liquidity, the world can be disposed of at will” [9]. Utility dominates this world. Goods are useful, necessary. Speed governs existence. The world is no longer static or fixed. Wealth is no longer limited. Profit can be realised at both ends of the exchange process. Time becomes the principal value. Humanity moves from a limited spatial framework to unlimited temporal experience. Existence extends into time. The world becomes fluid, flowing. Everything flows and transforms rapidly. Money and trade separate humans from the spatial development model and orient them towards a temporal development model. **Change becomes the guiding principle**. The temporal model radically modifies the relationship between

land and humans. Humans are distanced from the land, which becomes a mere means of production, while humans become producers and consumers. Man transitions from land ownership to financial ownership [9]. Industry will be the queen of occupations [7].

3.Spatial, Non-Geographical, and Post-Temporal Economy: The Final Form of Modernity

Through this type of relationship and knowledge, humanity emerges from the age of finitude. In the stage in which we now find ourselves, beginning at the end of the 20th century, everything can be imagined, and any dream can become reality. We live in a world of networks, total contact, and communication, achieved in extremely short times and at minimal cost. Our world no longer has borders in the traditional geographical sense. Gradually but surely, we are moving beyond the constraints of limited resources. We can hope for a new economy in which the eternal problem of distribution and access to prosperity acquires new meanings—not in the direction dreamed of by the communists, but in the direction envisioned by liberals, namely through respect for human beings rather than reducing them to zero.

In this type of planetary society, human interaction occurs rapidly, facilitated by the internet. Cooperation among people is immediate and multidimensional. Business transactions are conducted with a simple click of a button. Everything is open and instantaneous. There are no geographical or other boundaries. The 21st-century human lives a particular form of modernity, markedly different from previous ones. This world offers the potential to be non-conflictual—provided that future conflicts are not fuelled by religion or other causes. Future wars, if they occur, will not arise from scarcity. Contemporary humans have transcended family, nation, country, and continent. They perceive the planet in real-time terms.

The third stage is situated in contemporaneity. Beginning around 1970, with the widespread emergence of computers, human possibilities entered a new phase. We may call the present post-modernity or the third modernity; the label is secondary. What matters is that we are already in a different phase. Humanity has transitioned toward **spatiality**, surpassing land and sea as civilizational and cultural reference points. The contemporary human is the **human of space**, looking upward rather than moving merely on land or water. Humans of the present century fly—through terrestrial or extraterrestrial space. The 21st century will be defined by flight and elevation. Knowledge has reached seemingly infinite possibilities through the advent of the internet, computing, and artificial intelligence. Only now can we say that we are slowly opening the gates to true knowledge. Tremendous advances in medicine, chemistry, and physics are already becoming apparent.

Social organisation is now based on a perception of humanity's **planetary destiny**. The 21st-century human will be a planetary being with a planetary perspective on life and destiny. Of course, other forms of association, such as family, city, region, or nation, will persist, but the ultimate expression will be planetary. The spatial human of the present is independent of hunger and cold. Current and emerging technologies sever humans definitively from the former deities to whom they once prayed for rain or sun. The post-modern human is no longer an anxious being; a form of freedom previously unimaginable places them squarely before themselves, without support or followers.

The 21st-century economy centres on **innovation** as never before in human history. Peoples that innovate are truly wealthy, as knowledge is the most precious asset. The quantity of gold or oil a country possesses no longer determines its standing. The battle for the future is the battle for innovation and knowledge. This final stage, however, will itself not be the ultimate one. The speed at which subsequent stages approach is accelerating. Whereas humanity spent 7,000 years on the first stage, we have only spent 500 years on the second, and far less on this third.

What will the world look like in 100 years? It will certainly no longer concern itself with the neighbour's goat. Humanity will be definitively freed from the pressures of hunger and cold. Consequently, economic science and the humans of the future will appear entirely transformed.

Institutions will become planetary, because business and cooperation are planetary. This does not mean that the nation will disappear from history, but beyond the nation lies something greater: the world. Contemporary and future humans are increasingly aware of this. We will be liberated from fears, and only then can we aspire to the **eternal peace** envisaged by Kant centuries ago. Flexibility in relation to the material world is total in this future. Some states are already experimenting with offering citizens a basic income to stay home and do nothing. Thus, money will no longer be the central concern of the future. The modernity of the 21st century lays the foundations for a new world: free from fear, hunger, and cold. Humanity is already approaching new thresholds of becoming. The capacity to generate wealth is tending toward the unlimited. Boundaries and limitations are disappearing. Human imagination remains the sole natural limit to development and prosperity.

4. Conclusion

The present and future of economic and civilisational life are defined by the universal. There are no longer borders in human economic and cultural cooperation. Even traditions and culture will be profoundly and clearly impacted by new technologies. This is the world and economy of extensive and multiple networks. Everything is just a click away. The entire planet Earth is in constant connection. The speed of business is enormous, and profits can be measured. The planetary entrepreneur emerges, whose wealth is no longer measured in money. Money remains merely a means of quantification. Human life is no longer dependent on geography or environment. Scientific progress is being felt in every corner of the world. Historical limitations are coming to an end. Humans will learn to live together as beings of the same Planet Earth. Contemporary, universal modernity will be the last. For today, we can only speculate that beyond our world, other worlds may exist. And if they do, we can imagine new stages of human becoming.

5. References:

[2] Engels emphasises the role of environmental conditions in the development of civilisation: *“Upon entering barbarism (the second stage between savagery and civilisation) we reached a stage in which the distinction between the natural conditions of the two great continents (Europe and America, ed. note) becomes significant.”*

[3] List notes: *“Countries in the temperate zone are therefore called, before all others, to bring the international division of labour to the highest degree of perfection and to contribute to the division of labour internationally and to the increase of their own wealth.”*

[4] Bataille states: *“In principle, life occupies the Earth’s surface to the extent possible (...). Certain disadvantaged regions, in which the chemical operations that give rise to life cannot occur, are as if they did not exist. However, if we consider the constant ratio between the volume of living matter and the local, climatic, and geological conditions, we can say that life occupies the entire available space. These local conditions determine the intensity of the pressure that life exerts in all directions.”*

[5] Roegen explains this apparent indolence: *“The apparent indolence of the peasant (...) may in reality only be involuntary inactivity imposed by the limited character of soil resources and equipment (...). There are, however, differences regarding the love of work among peasant populations in equally overpopulated countries but with different histories. The explanation for these differences must be sought in history. Where, over long periods, villages were harshly exploited by the state, the peasant struggled to appear poor in front of tax collectors. Continuous exploitation made the peasant truly poor. Eventually, he discovered that working only enough to remain poor was the best strategy to cope with the exploiters. The cumulative inertia of tradition did the rest. Conversely, where fate was less harsh, peasants valued work highly. This represents a long-standing and normal tradition of soil cultivators, as seen in certain primitive communities that*

produced more than needed and destroyed the surplus during ceremonies conducted before the next harvest.”

[6] Hegel notes: “The true scene of history is the temperate zone, namely its northern part, because the land here takes on a continental aspect, with a broad chest, as the Greeks said. In contrast, in the south, the land fragments, separating into distinct tongues of land.”

[6] In his work *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel explains the determinism by which cultures and peoples differ depending on geography: “Leaving the New World (analysis of the American continent, ed. note) and the dreams associated with it, let us turn to the Old World (Europe, ed. note), i.e., the stage of universal history, where we must first draw attention to natural conditions and determinants. (...) The Mediterranean Sea is the heart of the Old World because it shapes and animates it. Without the Mediterranean, universal history could not be imagined. (...) Further important are the geographic differentiations, viewed as essential distinctions rather than accidental realities. Three characteristic types exist: - plateau lacking water, with steppes and plains; - plains of valleys, traversed and irrigated by large rivers; - coastal areas in direct contact with the sea.”

[6] Hegel states: “First of all, certain natural conditions must be mentioned here that should be removed once and for all from the movement of universal history: in the Arctic and torrid zones, peoples cannot arise who would play a role in history. This is because consciousness that awakens is at first only in nature, and each development of this consciousness is a reflection of the spirit in itself in relation to the immediacy of nature. Within this separation lies, therefore, also the moment of nature; it is the first position from which man can conquer freedom in itself, and this liberation should not be hindered by the force of nature.”

[6] Returning to Hegel’s analysis, he details the cultural characteristics imposed by the sea: “The sea offers us the representation of the indeterminate, the unlimited, and the infinite, and man, feeling placed in this infinity, thus gains the courage to escape from the limited. The sea tempts man to conquest, piracy, but equally to profit and the acquisition of goods: the land, the plains, and the valleys bind man to the earth; he becomes caught in an endless chain of dependencies, whereas the sea leads him beyond these enclosed spheres. Those who traverse the seas also aim at profits, at possession, but the means they use are unsuitable in the sense that they expose them to the danger of losing property and even life. The means are therefore opposed to the goal they pursue. But this very fact elevates the merchant’s profit and activity, giving them a character of bravery and nobility. Boldness is inherent in these activities, and bravery is simultaneously linked to prudence. Indeed, courage before the sea must also be cunning, because it is the most deceitful, inconstant, and treacherous element. This endless expanse is absolutely malleable, for it resists no pressure, not even the slightest breeze; it seems infinitely innocent, indulgent, friendly, and pliant, but precisely this pliancy makes the sea the most dangerous and violent element. To such deceit and violence, man can oppose only a simple piece of wood, and relying solely on his courage and presence of mind, he steps from a firm element onto something that rests on nothing, carrying with him his artificial support.”

[6] Hegel notes: “The escape into the open sea from the edge of the land is lacking in the monumental structures that constitute Asian states, even though they themselves border the sea, as in the case of China. For these state structures, the sea is merely the point where the land ends, they are not in a positive relation with it.”

[7] Hegel: “In the pursuit of gain (...), industry (...) changes the fixation and adherence to the soil and the limited circles of civil life (...) with the element of fluidity (...) and exposure to ruin.”

[8] “George Foster, following ethnographic studies, found the existence of a worldview characteristic of peasants in non-industrial agricultural communities. He called this cognitive orientation or ideology the ‘limited wealth image.’ According to this, everything is perceived as finite: land, wealth, health, love, friendship, honor, respect, status, power, influence, security. Viewing everything as difficult to obtain, peasants believe that individuals can excel only by taking

more than their fair share of the common good, thereby depriving others. The mentality of this image is characterized by: fatalism, discord, individualism, emphasis on luck rather than on achievements, persistent work, or economy.” According to George Foster, peasants rarely cooperate in the sense of ensuring social prosperity, and when they do, it is explained by the fact that they aim to fulfill certain obligations.

[8] Through this category, culture, we understand: “Culture is the way of life specific to a group of people, in the circumstances of a particular environment, created by humans and composed of material or non-material products transmitted from one generation to the next.”

[9] “Only exchange can produce the type of wealth that is unanimously desired by moderns and that is almost the opposite of the wealth arising from land ownership.”

[9] “The transition from land property, subject to the logic of substance, to financial property, which is under the sign of time, is certainly the crucial process in the establishment of modern times.”

[11] Thomas More describes life in relation to geographic conditions in the 16th century: “After many days of travel, Raphael tells us, they came across towns and cities and very populated lands, which had an order not to be despised. Near the equator and on both sides, across almost all the space encompassed by the sun’s orbit, stretch boundless deserts, eternally scorched by its heat. Everywhere a sight of horror and fear. Everywhere only dreadful and inhospitable places where only beasts, snakes, and some human creatures as wild and cruel as those monsters lived. As we moved away from the equator, everything gradually became milder; the sky was less scorching, the land friendlier through its greenery, the nature of the animals gentler. Further on, there were tribes, towns, and cities constantly engaged in trade by sea and land, not only with their neighbors but also with more distant peoples.”

[12] This time we agree with Toynbee, who states: “...neither race nor environment, taken as independent factors, can constitute the positive element that, over the past 6,000 years, has pulled humanity from its static rest at the level of a primitive society and set it in motion in the hazardous pursuit of civilization.” Furthermore, the cited author says: “We have thus reached a point where we must carry our argument to the end. We emphasized that civilizations find their origins in surroundings that are generally hostile and rarely favorable.”

[12] Discussing civilization and the factors behind its emergence, Toynbee believes: “Racial theory finds the cause of differences in the diversity of the human body. Environmental theory finds it in the particular climatic and geographic conditions in which different societies live.”

[13] “Various forms of distrust protect locals from failures and dangers in cooperation, from plundering or deception, or from other cases of harmful asymmetry of interests. The social equilibrium resulting from this very cautious approach to social interaction remains low, with many forms of inefficiency and missed benefits of cooperation. These failures arise from limits imposed on individuals by external factors such as ecology, technology, history, and national politics, but also from internal causes of the actors, such as low trust, general suspicion, incomplete knowledge, or narrow opportunism.”

[14] “From a certain point of view, capitalism functions similarly in all countries. But from another, more important perspective, it functions differently: different cultural values generate different business outcomes. The central values of a cultural system, such as ‘tai he’ in China, ‘ninjo’ in Japan, or the form of dominion-type authority in Mexico, create a power field similar to the energy field generated by a magnet, which directs the iron filings in its sphere of influence. The power field of values is transmitted at the organizational level, influencing those operating within the system, providing them with direction and purpose. The values of a system uniquely determine organizational behavior, influencing individual decisions in predictable ways. Even in business, higher values are the ones that matter. Our normative choices, the abstract values we believe in, influence our material everyday life.”

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