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World, Earth, Globe: Geophilosophy in Hegel, Nietzsche, and Rosenzweig

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World, Earth, Globe

Geophilosophy in Hegel, Nietzsche, and Rosenzweig

In an interview given a few weeks after the attacks of September 11, 2001, Jacques Derrida interrogates the nature of what is popularly called globalization.¹ He directs critical attention to the naïve assumption that rapid transportation, expanded commerce, and instantaneous communication are leading to a condition of homogenization and world community. Derrida rejects the end-of-history scenario advanced by writers such as Francis Fukuyama, in *The End of History and the Last Man*, according to which liberal democracy and benevolent capitalism will establish a happy cosmopolitan world. He prefers to use the French term *mondialisation* to preserve a sense of the human world, as opposed to the reductive scientific notions of the planet or the cosmos. In doing so he retains some of the force of Husserl's *Lebenswelt* or of Heidegger's concept of the world as the ineluctable horizon of human life.

In his critique of current concepts of globalization, Derrida points out that the very processes of trade, communication, and transport are producing greater inequalities around the earth, and that these inequalities are *spectacular*, that is, that the very media essential to the process we call globalization make these inequalities vividly clear. The interview is a rich conspectus of the themes of Derrida's political thought, perhaps most penetrating in his thinking the concepts of the event, as that which arrives, and of futurity, the *Zu-kunft* or *l'avenir*, that which is to come. I will not discuss this theme directly, but I hope readers will hear resonances of Derrida's questions in this exploration of three thinkers who embody distinct and competing approaches to understanding what it might be for the world, earth, or globe

¹ Jacques Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides," in Giovanni Borradori, ed., *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

to move toward the condition of being a meaningful whole. I deliberately use three different terms here, both to respect the usage of the three thinkers I want to discuss – Hegel, Nietzsche, and Rosenzweig – and to maintain a certain contact with Derrida’s insistence on the importance of the names and language that we use – or better, that uses us – as we try to make sense of things. One of the provocative suggestions in Derrida’s “Autoimmunity” interview is that there is more than a punning connection between “territory” and “terror.” In both French and English the etymological dictionaries note that territory may not derive from the Latin *terra*, as we could easily assume, but from *terreur* (cf. Oxford English Dictionary). That is, those who would make an illegitimate incursion into a territory, owned by another, ought to feel some terror. Derrida also suggested that territoriality loses much of its political force in the era of globalization or *mondialisation*, characterized as it is by mobility, flexibility, and transferability (with the important exception of strategic resources like oil, which provide continuing reasons for states and corporate powers to occupy or fight for territory).

With Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy (in *The Creation of the World*), I think one of the crucial tasks in thinking about what we call globalization and the many concepts related to it is to understand the language, the discourse, in which we speak or might speak. I turn to three thinkers who have begun to develop such concepts. The most recent text that I will begin to explore, Franz Rosenzweig’s essay, “Globus,” was written about one hundred years ago. Yet it offers a philosophical account of boundaries and what Nietzsche called the direction of the earth. It has a special interest, I think, because it gives voice to a moment of indeterminacy, written as it was by a German soldier on the Balkan front in 1916 when the war’s outcome was uncertain. Even the question of whether it should be called a world war was unanswerable. Such turning points in the history of the earth or world or globe can be instructive as we attempt to comprehend the crisis of the earth.

What does it mean to live on the bounded, inscribed earth, an earth of borders and boundaries? Is the creation of boundaries the work of the artist or the devil – or both? I cite two texts that help to problematize this question. In his essay on “Walking” Henry David Thoreau fantasizes about “a people who would begin by burning the fences and let the forest stand!” And he goes on to recount a vision: “I saw the fences half consumed, their ends lost in the middle of the prairie, and some worldly miser with a surveyor looking after his bounds, while heaven had taken place around him, and he did not

see the angels going to and fro, but was looking for an old post-hole in the middle of paradise. I looked again, and saw him in the middle of a boggy, stygian fen, surrounded by devils, and he had found his bounds without a doubt, three little stones, where a stake had been driven, and looking nearer, I saw that the Prince of Darkness was his surveyor.”² To this I will add two lapidary statements by Deleuze and Guattari: “Thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth”; “[the artist is] the first person to set out a boundary stone, or to make a mark.”³ I should mention that Thoreau occasionally made his living as a land surveyor, so perhaps he qualifies as both devil and artist.

I propose to consider three experiments in geophilosophy. I borrow this term from Deleuze and Guattari (DG), who thought of Nietzsche as its inventor. They distinguish it from three other approaches to philosophy. DG suggest that thought has largely been conceived either by its orientation to the object, the subject, or the other subject. If Plato and Aristotle embody a philosophy of the object, Descartes and Kant are philosophers of the subject, and Levinas and Habermas are philosophers of the other subject. Each of these pairs is famously different, but they coincide according to DG’s surprisingly apt categories. Geophilosophy, then, would differ from these in that it conceives thinking as taking place in the relationship of territory and earth.

Now we ask, what is the ground, which I have just tentatively called the earth, on which the devils or artists do their work? There is no simple answer to this question; here, as elsewhere, we need to recall Derrida’s injunction: we are always dealing with “more than one language.” If Kant could construct a philosophical architecture, do we know what the ground was on which he claimed to build? Is history concerned with a *world* of hierarchically ordered nation-states that establish themselves on an otherwise contingent geographical basis, as Hegel has it? Should we rather be suspicious, as Nietzsche was, about whether “peoples and fatherlands” might be obstacles to the transformation of a humanity that would truly become loyal to the *earth*? Or must we, with Rosenzweig, acknowledge that the finite *globe* itself

² *Collected Essays and Poems* (Library of America, 2001), 230.

³ *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) p. 85; *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 316.

has from the beginning called for a teleological development, the reverse perhaps of Hegel's, in which the goal of history, with all its wars, is to become geo-graphia, the final and inclusive inscription of a common territory?



For Hegel, geography is only the condition of history. It does not determine the story of freedom, but merely lays out the ground on which that story emerges. Mere ground is *aufgehoben* in the concrete universality realized in the development of states. *World-history* is the highest development of objective spirit, a realm in which the state actualizes human freedom. The world, then, is something that *emerges from* human life on the earth; it presupposes a certain geography to which it is not reducible. Only with *states* is world-history possible and world-history is *exclusively* concerned with states. Hegel's restrictive conception of world-history has been obscured by many Anglophone commentators and translators; some of the latter blur the issues by translating *Weltgeschichte* as "universal history." But Hegel is clear: The state is the divine Idea as it exists on earth. In this sense the state is the precise object of world-history in general. (*I* 42)

In world-history, however, we are concerned with "individuals" that are nations, with wholes that are states. (*I* 16)

For Hegel the concepts "world" and "world-history" are highly singular, unifying, and exclusive. In his most systematic account of the place of world-history in the *Encyclopedia* he describes the movement of spirit as realizing "the absolute final aim of the world" where spirit "becomes to the outward eye a universal spirit – a world-spirit" (*E* 549). World-history is the totality of states, and the succession of world-historical states is the homeground of Absolute Spirit – art, religion, and philosophy. Hegel famously compares the Oriental, Classical, and Germanic worlds in which one, some, or all are free – varying realizations of freedom all achieved through states. The life of states is contrasted with the existence of a "people" or "folk" (*Volk*), or, speaking more precisely, the state is the *telos* of a people, one sometimes achieved and sometimes not. For Hegel the mere *Volk* is not a subject of history: "A *Volk* with no state formation (a mere nation/*Nation*) has, strictly speaking, no history – like the *Völker* which existed before the rise of states and others which still exist as wild nations [*als wilde Nationen*]" (*E* 549; Hegel makes similar claims in the lectures, see *I* 16, 42, 50).

A word concerning Hegel's reference to "mere nations" and "wild nations"

is in order. *Nation* is an adaptation of a Latin term, whose verbal root is *nascere*, to give birth. Nations *as such* then are nothing but human beings of common ancestry, linked by natality, or genealogical affiliation. Hegel suggests that a nation may become a people, with some cultural coherence and shared values, and so enter a path of realizing and focusing itself as a state.⁴

Why are migrations and wanderings specifically excluded from world-history and *why* do migrants and wanderers tend to remain in the status of mere or wild nations? The root intuition seems to be that a world-historical people must stay in its place. The state must have sovereignty over a given territory, which is the prerequisite for crystallizing the spiritual meaning of its people. Without the state there are simply wild nations living on the earth; *there is as yet no world*. Hegel could say of the “wild nations” what Heidegger, in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, said of animals, that they are *weltarm*, world-poor. When English translations render *Weltgeschichte* as “universal history,” I assume that the aim, as in Carl Friedrich’s introduction to Sibree’s translation of the *Philosophy of History*, is to downplay Hegel’s political theology, his idea that “the state is God’s march [*Gang*] through the world” (I 42).

World-historical existence requires a state which is settled in a territory. So it initially seems strange that Hegel emphasizes how the Germanic world, which enables the full flowering of Spirit and state, begins with barbarous, wandering, predatory peoples – Goths, Visigoths, and so on. Yet Hegel implies that these groups are no different than any others; no *Volk* enters history until engaged in the process of state formation. Hegel makes

⁴ Nietzsche is well aware of the complex textual and linguistic history of *Nation*, *Volk*, and related terms. In *Gay Science* 146 he notes that “the names of *Völker* are usually terms of abuse,” and goes on to remark: “The ‘Germans’: this originally meant ‘heathen’ [*die Heiden*]; that is what the Goths after their conversion named the great mass of their unbaptized kindred tribes [*die grosse Masse ihrer ungetauften Stammverwandten*], in accordance with their translation of the Septuagint in which the heathens were designated with a word that in Greek means ‘the peoples’ [*Völker*]; see Ulfilas.” The original term in the Hebrew scriptures is *goy*, used often in the singular to refer to the Jewish nation or people [e.g., Genesis 12:2], but in the plural *goyim* referring to non-Jews or Gentiles. While the term has a neutral sense, in this context it has taken on a pejorative one in later usage, and Luther typically translates it as “heathens.” The Latin Vulgate uses *gens*, the Septuagint *ethnos*. Revised versions of Luther’s Bible generally substitute *Nationen* for *Heiden*.

German barbarism a virtue, claiming it was the Germans' strength to begin by absorbing and appropriating, unlike earlier historical peoples who begin with an internal development:

The Greeks and Romans had reached maturity within, before they directed their energies outwards. The Germans, on the contrary, began with self-diffusion – deluging the world, and overpowering in their course the inwardly rotten, hollow political fabrics of the civilized nations. Only then did their development begin, kindled by a foreign religion, polity, and legislation. (*H* 341)

The very being of the German people is their transformation through encounters with the other, so they are uniquely suited to confirm Hegel's concept of the true identity as the identity of identity and non-identity. They seize Rome and appropriate Christianity almost thoughtlessly, but – such is the cunning of history – they are transformed in the end by what they have captured. They are predatory *subjects* who will be transformed by their *object*. On Hegel's account, this heritage allows the Germans, through the Reformation and the development of the modern state, to spiritualize the secular. Their wandering, migration, and nomadism become subordinated to the process of state formation in which religion is essential.

Commenting on his contemporary world of the 1820s, Hegel implies that the US is not a genuine state and has only a starkly contractarian and atomistic parody of a real constitution. It must be one of those republics destined for the dustbin of history. Hegel sought to explain how this simulacrum of a state exists, because he cannot consistently dismiss gross and obvious facts as mere appearances. He argues that the territorial expansion of the US serves as a *safety valve* through which the excesses of a state not grounded in a *Volk*, or given unity by monarchy and religion, nevertheless continues (*I* 89–90). Mobility and cultural indeterminacy, ordinarily enemies or predecessors of the Hegelian state, are here invoked to save the appearances, to explain a state which is not a true state. Forty years later, the Hegelian D. F. Strauss amplified this verdict, arguing that the US Civil War and its aftermath had demonstrated the ontological instability of the United States. With the US division into red (Republican) states and blue (Democratic) states, along with current and brewing conflicts over energy, water, immigration, and the fundamentalist social agenda, a Hegel of the new millennium would ask whether this experiment of a self-designing, federal constitutional republic without a religion could be expected to continue indefinitely. Hegel famously declared that America is the land of the future, while declining to

make specific projections of what that future would be. While he invoked Minerva's owl in claiming nothing more than retrospective knowledge, his remarks on the US show that he was not averse to *excluding* certain possibilities from the world's future. However, the persistence of a secular, multicultural republic, still not swept away by the movement of world-history, should be an incentive to examining Nietzsche's interrogation of Hegel's intertwined conceptions of state and world.

Questions about Hegel's statist geophilosophy intensify when we examine what he says about Islam in *The Philosophy of World History*. Just as he thought the US could not continue indefinitely as a loosely federated, non-monarchical republic lacking an established religion, so he believed the days of Islam as a significant player on the stage of world history had ended hundreds of years earlier. I note that in both cases Hegel's evaluations of world historical viability are based largely on issues of space, territory, and mobility. With regard to Islam, he embeds such territorial questions in a logical structure that purports to explain the emergence of the post-classical European state. Hegel's Germanic world involves three moments – the elements (governing its early formation), the middle ages (in which feudalism eventually gives way to monarchy), and modern times (marked by Reformation, Enlightenment, French Revolution, and reconstitution of the post-revolutionary state). In this triadic structure (perhaps followed more obsessively by his note-taking students and editors than by Hegel himself), Islam appears as a middle term in the first triad that analyzes the emergence of the medieval state in the form of Charlemagne's empire. The argument goes like this: The presupposition of the Christian Germanic world is the migration of barbarian tribes or groups. These Goths, Visigoths, Vandals and others are merely particular; they and their movement are arbitrary from the standpoint of *Geist*, determined merely by geography, immediate opportunity, or the whim of warlords. As these nations begin to "take firm root" (in territories) they are still characterized by a "dull and narrow intelligence," which splits everything into "a multitude of chance contingencies ... a tangled web of convention" (H 355). The special virtue of the nomadic Germanic barbarians is their receptivity to the classical culture and especially the Christianity of the declining Roman world.

Yet the Germanic appropriation is limited by its particularism, and so the European movement as a whole requires the shock of extreme universality that comes with the rise of Islam. As Hegel puts it,

[In this] political edifice of chance, entanglement, and particularity, the very opposite direction necessarily made its appearance ... in the revolution of the east, which destroyed all particularity and dependence, and perfectly cleared up and purified the soul and disposition, making the abstract One the absolute object of attention and devotion, and to the same extent pure subjective consciousness. (*H* 356)

This notion of the abstract One is a familiar topos in Hegel, associated typically with Judaism and Islam, and illustrated by the impossibility of describing or representing God; hence the iconoclastic refusal of visual images in religious art. In the expansion of Islam and its concept of the universal *umma*, Hegel detects the vanishing of “all limits, all national and caste distinctions” (*H* 357). On his account, this universality is enabled by the identification of the Arabs and the deserts where “nothing can be brought into a firm and consistent shape” (*H* 357). Here Hegel sees nothing but an episodic succession of wars, caliphates, and kingdoms where “nothing firm abides” (*H* 358). The consequence is that the Islamic empire was easy prey for invading Seljuks and Mongols; that is, one mobile assemblage of people was necessarily at the mercy of other migratory or nomadic groups. In the 1820s Hegel can pronounce that

At present, driven back into its Asiatic and African quarters, and tolerated only in one corner of Europe through the jealousy of the Christian powers, Islam has long vanished from the stage of history at large, and has retreated into Oriental ease and repose. (*H* 360)

It is then not surprising that Francis Fukuyama, championing the Kojévian “end of history” reading in 1992, at the high point of US triumphalism, does not know how to integrate the Islamic countries of the world into his analysis. His metanarrative simply brackets the case of Islam, seeming to acknowledge that it exceeds his framework.

It would be easy to ridicule Hegel’s parallel dismissal of what he sees on the one hand as the disorganized multitude of the US, enabled only by the safety valve of westward expansion, and on the other, the impossible project of Islamic empire which is based on the amorphous desert with its wandering nomads. Yet perhaps a more critical understanding is possible; such an analysis would look more closely at Hegel’s crucial but undeveloped concepts of geography, space, and territoriality.

First, might Hegel be *correct* in attributing the persistence of the US in its republican, secular form to territorial expansion? Hegel wrote in the 1820s before US conquests in wars with Mexico and Spain, the acquisition

of Hawaii, Alaska, and various outposts around the world. If the US is now recognized as an empire, by analysts on both right and left, is this not because it extends its military and economic territory to all continents? Why must empire be limited to geographically continuous areas? Perhaps in the immediate post-Napoleonic period in which Hegel lectured empires were indeed in decline, and he may have been misled by his teleological concept of history to take this as an irreversible tendency.

Second, might we consider a contemporary revision of Hegel's thesis that political Islam is doomed because of its affiliation with the amorphous, indeterminate, shifting sands that comprise the space of the desert? As many analysts suggest, the emergence of instantaneous communication networks and rapid air travel have produced a new virtual space in which we constantly discover fresh forms of mobility and power. Certainly there would be no "global war on terror" as George W. Bush called it, unless this space were actively in play. In 1950, reflecting on the course of World War II and the Cold War then taking shape, the German political theorist Carl Schmitt outlined what he saw as three major forms of political hegemony, international law, and warfare. In *The Nomos of the Earth* he schematized these as distinct forms of the *nomos* (fundamental law, but more primordially territorial division, establishment of boundaries). The *nomos* at first took the form of the division of *land masses*; after the impetus to navigation, trade, and colonization triggered by the European discovery of the Americas, the more comprehensive focus was centered on the *commerce and law of the sea*; the twentieth century saw the rise of *air power*; even in 1950 Schmitt saw that this could be expanded to extra-planetary space. Might the virtual and ubiquitous network of communication, finance, organization, and strategy – made possible like earlier metamorphoses of the *nomos* by technological innovations – be a fourth way of structuring and deconstructing the boundaries of the earth?



If Hegel's geophilosophy is necessarily retrospective, Nietzsche's is a "philosophy of the future" (*Zu-kunft* or advent), a thought of the *direction of the earth* (*Sinn der Erde*) tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. Nietzsche calls on his readers to attend to the direction of the earth, the earth understood as the inevitably plural site of mobile human habitation, the earth of nomads as well as states. While most readers have seen this as simply a call to

honor the this-worldly body and its passions, for Nietzsche earth must be understood also in a fully geopolitical and geophilosophical sense. If the great events that punctuated world-history according to Hegel are only stages of the development of the state in Christian Europe, and its partial anticipation in Asia, Greece, and Rome, could there be an event of the earth? How might we be vigilant in awaiting and seizing the moment or *kairos* of that event?

Nietzsche challenges Hegel's notion that peoples are now in their proper places, organized by state and religion, and exhibiting a hierarchical order in their realization of the freedom that is the purpose of world-history. For him, the sense of history does not move from east to west while the peoples remain stationary: the peoples move in all directions, both ways between north and south, and exhibit internal movements, intermingling, mixing, and sometimes homogenizing, producing what we have recently been wont to call multiculturalism, hybridity, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism. Nietzsche observes the rise of nationalism and its appeal to myths and ideologies of fatherland; he also notes the scare tactics used to justify war and states of exception. Yet he witnesses as well the emergence of transnational "good Europeans" and discerns on the horizon the gradual collapse of the nation-state and the rise of a humanity capable of raising the question of the direction of the earth.

Nietzsche deliberately speaks of the earth rather than the world. He was exasperated by the Hegelians when they invoked the concept of "world," "world-history," or "world-process" (this last term was used by an early target, Eduard von Hartmann). Nietzsche's critique is ultimately anti-theological. Among his famous quips is "I am afraid we have not gotten rid of God yet, because we still believe in grammar" (*TI* "Reason" 5). Let us read this alongside another aphorism that stresses the relation between God and world:

Around a hero everything becomes a tragedy, around a demi-god everything becomes a satyr play; and around God everything becomes – what do you think? perhaps the "world"? (*BGE* 150)

So world is a theological concept, as is Hegel's state, both being among those shadows of God that we have yet to dispel (*GS* 108). If for Hegel "the state is the march [*Gang*] of God through the world," for Nietzsche the earth is a human-earth of mobile multitudes that can prepare a way for the post-human. Nietzsche's "great politics" of the earth constitutes a response

to Hegel's theologico-political treatise *Philosophy of World History* and its later adaptations.

Nietzsche turned away from the Hegelian concept of *world*, entangled as it is with that of the *state*, and toward a notion of the earth as the most general site of human life. Earth, then, is a *political* concept for Nietzsche. For a politics of the earth, the state is not an ultimate goal, but one among a number of social and political forms whose genealogy we can trace and whose dissolution we can envision. Despite the fervent, noisy nationalism of the early Bismarck era, he argues that there is a real counter-movement to statism, as Europeans become increasingly mobile or "nomadic," loosening traditional ties and identities. Nietzsche repudiates Hegel's "so-called world-history," which excludes wanderings and migrations; he takes nomadism to be an indisputable facet of European modernity:

Trade and industry, the post and the book-trade, the possession in common of all higher culture, rapid changing of home and scene, the nomadic life now lived by all who do not own land – these circumstances are bringing with them a weakening and finally an abolition of nations. (*HH* 475)

Since the nation state conceives itself as a population of common ethnic origins and culture, it finds itself in an intrinsically unstable position, as mobility and mingling contribute to forming a "mixed race" (*Mischrasse*). There is no point in resisting the inevitable. In his vocabulary the nomadic generally designates a collective rather than an individual mode of territorialization. Nietzsche notes that the main factor retarding the withering away of the national state is fear: its exaggeration or fabrication of external or internal threats to the population's security. These furnish excuses to declare a state of exception, in which constitutional or traditional liberties are overridden and the sovereign unity of the state affirmed – as in the Bush regime after 9/11. Hegelian monarchy, with its theological affiliation, is being replaced by the national security state. Nietzsche speaks of a "*Not- und Belagerungszustand*" (*HH* 475), the equivalent of Carl Schmitt's *Ausnahmezustand*. Fifty years later Schmitt was to define sovereignty in these terms: the sovereign is the one who declares the exception. Schmitt offered this definition in his book *Political Theology*, which argues for a parallel between the sovereignty of God and the state.⁵ Nietzsche could have taken the equation differently: just

⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

as the madman who announces the death of God tells us that this scarcely comprehended news is still on the way, so the state is in a long-term process of dissolution, one of God's lingering shadows.

Nietzsche foresees a long period of "transitional struggles," during which "the attitude of veneration and piety" toward the state will be undermined, as it comes to be seen in an increasingly pragmatic and utilitarian perspective (*HH* 472). Much government work will be reassigned to "private contractors" – that's "outsourcing" – another sign of the gradual "decline and death of the state." On the post-state and post-Hegelian earth "a new page will be turned in the storybook of humanity in which there will be many strange tales to read and perhaps some of them good ones." Just as the domination of the organizing principle of the racial clan gave way to the family and then to the state, so humanity will eventually hit upon "an invention more suited to their purpose than the state."

Nietzsche's Europe is in crisis as it struggles with the collapse of Christianity, the emergence of democratic attitudes and practices, the threat of nihilism, and the possible rule of the herd and the last man. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche sees the emergence in Europe of "an essentially supra-national and nomadic type of person who, physiologically speaking, is typified by a maximal degree of the art and force of adaptation" (*BGE* 242).⁶ While this tendency may lead to homogeneity and the production of a type prepared for "slavery in the most subtle sense," other aspects of the development point in different directions. Mixing, wandering, and migration also produce a variety of singular hybrids, higher humans like Napoleon, Goethe, Beethoven, Stendhal, Heine, Schopenhauer, and Wagner (*BGE* 256). These experimental anticipations of the European *Zukunft* embody diverse mixtures of traditions and lineages. Although Europe "wants to become one," the "truth" of this desire is, at least for now, the proliferation of singularities. Accordingly, in the concluding aphorism of "Peoples and Fatherlands," Nietzsche emphatically declares that "this is the *century of the multitude* [*Menge*]!" This multitude is *not*, as some translators have it, identical with the masses.⁷ The multitude is diverse, masses are relatively uniform. The

⁶ For a fuller discussion see G. Shapiro, "Beyond Peoples and Fatherlands," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 35/36 (2008): 9–27.

⁷ For example, both the first and most recent translations of *BGE*, by Helen Zimmern and Judith Norman (Cambridge), translate *Menge* in *BGE* 256 (and occasionally

multitude is formed by a mixing of races, cultures, ethnicities, and the like. This might result eventually in the formation of herds and masses, but more complexity is possible. Exemplary here is Nietzsche's discussion of the emergence of the Greeks from a mixing of Mongols, Semites, and others.⁸

The chapter on "Peoples and Fatherlands" should be read as a thorough critique of Hegel's *Weltgeschichte* in which Nietzsche challenges Hegel on the state, human mobility, the persistence of national types, and the supposed east to west movement of the *Weltgeist*, that ghost or phantom, which is dispersed by the rise of a multitude who will not stay put to observe its passage. We need look no further than the US-Mexican border to see the pertinence of this reconfiguration of the Hegelian story in terms of a north/south axis which does not coincide with the rise of states. Among many testimonies I cite Gloria Anzaldúa's book, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, exploring the complexity of that borderland, not merely a scar but an open, hemorrhaging wound left by the Mexican-American war, in which both the duality and the hybridization of US and Mexican peoples is further complicated by the tensions and mixings of Native American, Chicano, and *mestizo* strains, and inflected personally by the author's lesbian identification. Anzaldúa

elsewhere) as "masses." Other problematic English translations of *Menge* abound, e.g., Hollingdale's version of *HH* 472. See *Menge* in Grimm's *Wörterbuch*: <http://germazope.uni-trier.de/Projects/WBB/woerterbuecher/dwb/wbgui>

See another crucial passage employing the distinction: "Statistics prove that there are laws in history. Indeed, it proves how common and disgustingly uniform the mass [*Masse*] is. You should have tried statistical analysis in Athens for once! The lower and more non-individual the mass [*Masse*] is, the statistical laws are that much stronger. If the multitude [*Menge*] is finer and nobler, the law goes to the devil" (*KSA* 7.642; cf. *KSA* 4.18, 7.119, 9.462, 12.96).

⁸ *KSA* 8.96. Yirmiyahu Yovel says that "there is a marked lacuna in [Nietzsche's] thinking – the lack of a positive philosophy of the 'multitude'. Politics is not about the happy few, but about those ordinary people, the modern mass or 'herd' which Nietzsche did not care about and did not make the topic of any positive philosophical reflection." Yovel goes on to say that this political lacuna left (and still leaves) Nietzsche open to abuse by fascists, Nazis, and the like. Yovel conflates multitude, herd, and mass in "Nietzsche and the Jews: The Structure of an Ambivalence," in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, ed. Jacob Golomb (New York: Routledge, 1997), 132. On what could be called Nietzsche's affirmative concept of the multitude or *Menge*, see Hubert Cancik, "'Mongols, Semites, and the Pure-bred Greeks': Nietzsche's Handling of the Racial Doctrines of his Time," in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, 55–75, and Shapiro, "Beyond Peoples and Fatherlands" (note 6 above).

transvalues the borderlands, finding vibrant multiplicity in a territory marginalized by the devilish surveyors of Thoreau's vision.

Nietzsche emerges as a theorist of nomadism, migration, immigration, diaspora, cosmopolitanism, and hybridity. He is better equipped than Hegel to understand the demise or evisceration of the monarchical state with established (Christian) religion. Nietzsche could see a self-described hybrid (or "mutt") like Barack Obama as a paradigmatic voice of and for the multitude. We should also note that the *Menge* is not a universal class, but is conceived as an audience, which is not coextensive with the population at large (*BGE* 263, 269). In *BGE* 256, which announces the century of the multitude, it is introduced as the audience of the higher humans (Napoleon to Wagner) listed there. Goethe constructs a dialogue about such a multitude in *Faust's* "Prelude in the Theater," where the *Menge* is described as relatively educated, widely read, yet mixed in mood and background.⁹ The century of the nomadic multitude, then, as it frees itself from peoples, fatherlands, and states, is not so far from the society of the spectacle, making allowances for technological innovations in its promulgation and marketing. The bad news is that the multitude can be an audience for "tyrants of all sorts, including the most spiritual" (*BGE* 242), and the good news may be that at present they are still sufficiently diverse to resist a powerful religious reformation like the German one that brought Europe the disaster of religious war and the equally disastrous (in Nietzsche's eyes) modern state system (*AOM* 226). However shifting and unstable the earth's multitude may be, its very diversity may be sufficient – if we are lucky – to resist the more monolithic forces of contemporary assassins and crusaders with their unitary visions of the world.¹⁰



Yet what does it mean to be loyal to the earth, to pledge one's troth (*Treue*), and become the earth's disciple (*Jünger*), as Nietzsche's Zarathustra urges? Perhaps it begins with *thinking* the earth fully in its finitude, an event of

⁹ Goethe, *Faust*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Anchor, 1962), 68–81 (lines 33–242); see also *Faust's* speech in the Easter scene 180–182 (lines 903–940), which emphasizes the variety and energy of the *Menge*.

¹⁰ Cf. Gary Shapiro, "Assassins and Crusaders: Nietzsche After 9/11," in *Reading Nietzsche at the Margins*, ed. S. V. Hicks and A. Rosenberg (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008), 186–204.

thought that becomes both possible and imperative in the age of new wars Nietzsche saw on the horizon. So I turn to a compelling but incomplete text composed in 1916 during the “Great War,” which was to be recognized as the first of the world wars. This is Franz Rosenzweig’s essay “Globus: Studies Toward a World-Historical Theory of Space,” which was published many years after his death.¹¹ Rosenzweig is not generally recognized as a geophilosophical thinker. He is known mainly for his religious philosophy, as developed in his masterful and enigmatic work, *The Star of Redemption*, the fruit of his immersion in German idealism, theology, and a personal struggle that led to a renewed commitment to Judaism. As a volunteer in the German army, serving on the Balkan front, Rosenzweig wrote a series of meditations on the meaning of the war, the most important of which is “Globus.”

Rosenzweig’s geophilosophy extends his concern with the question of orientation, a theme articulated in German Idealism. To answer Kant’s question “What is Orientation in Thinking?” Rosenzweig turns to theology. To put the point quickly and schematically for now, he worries that prevailing forms of philosophy do not offer absolute orientation, but only relative forms. In October 1916 (while composing “Globus”) Rosenzweig was engaged in a philosophical correspondence with Eugen Rosenstock; the exchange is recognized now as a decisive turning point in his thought. Rosenzweig asked Rosenstock how he conceived the relation between nature and revelation, and Rosenstock replied by turning the question to the subject of orientation:

Natural understanding, then, knows front and back, left and right, and helps itself in this enclosure with a net of analogies. It makes comparisons and thus limps from one place to the next in this vast space The resolution not to take one’s own position in this quarter of space as the center of knowledge, but as conditioned from above – this renunciation of being *omphalos kosmou* [the navel of the cosmos] is no longer a matter of the natural human understanding but is the means within us that makes revelation to, in, and for us possible.¹²

¹¹ Page numbers that follow refer to this text (*G* in abbreviations).

¹² Eugen Rosenstock, letter of October 28–30, 1916; cited in *Judaism Despite Christianity: The Letters on Christianity and Judaism between Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Franz Rosenzweig* (Schocken, 1971), 119–120. On the question of orientation I have found the following collection of Rosenzweig’s essays with editorial comments very helpful: Franz Rosenzweig, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, ed. Paul W. Franks and Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000).

Inspired by this answer, Rosenzweig sees the significance of revelation in a new way, drawing additional resources from Schelling's critique of Hegel's philosophy. During the war years 1916–17 he pursues two parallel paths, one philosophical-theological, the other geophilosophical-geopolitical, each of which insists on the importance of absolute orientation, and the historical-dialectical path to achieving such orientation – yet on neither of these tracks makes explicit reference to the other. These are two great moments or zones of indeterminacy; “Globus” arises from an intense time of possibility, when the event of the war was defining itself and opening a future.

On the surface, the war was generated by European states protecting their boundaries and privileges; it led to redrawing the map of Europe and lands beyond, new boundaries, and eventually a greater war. As the term “world-historical” in the subtitle of “Globus” signals, Rosenzweig was soaked in Hegel's philosophy of history and the state. Before the war he had substantially completed a pathbreaking study of Hegel's theory of the state. He saw the *Reich* proclaimed by Bismarck at Versailles in 1871 as consistent with Hegel's conception of reason realizing itself in history, while acknowledging an ambivalence concerning its ability to fully achieve that realization. When he published *Hegel and the State* after the war, he added a foreword and a concluding remark noting that the study no longer had its anticipated relevance to political and historical actuality. “A field of ruins marks the spot where the empire previously stood,” he confesses in the foreword. In the concluding remark he continues to speak in the language of ruin, observing that “We feel the extent to which we are at the end today, when the century of Bismarck, at whose gate the Hegelian life stands like the thought before the deed, has collapsed.”¹³ In the interval between writing the body of the book, which sought to reclaim the spirit of Hegel (the spirit of Hegel's spirit, we might say), came the war and “Globus.”

In “Globus” Rosenzweig begins by asking whether the conflict is a world war, as some say. He raises this question in 1916, before the US's entrance into the conflict, and while its outcome is still in doubt. It cannot be so called if one judges on the basis of the powers involved, for then neither the US nor East-Asian nations were belligerents or battlegrounds. Yet “if this name for the current war cannot be justified on account of the powers involved, it can be on account of its goals” (G 314). These goals, as he understands them, go

¹³ Franz Rosenzweig, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, 74–75.

far beyond any explicit aims of the contending parties. While Rosenzweig gives a detailed account of colonial rivalries and competition for spheres of influence that were more or less public and understood motives for the warring nations, what he takes to be the ultimate goal can be nothing less than the aim of “world-history,” namely, the explicit unification of the earth, or to be more precise, the finite globe. “What we call world-history is nothing other than the earth’s becoming [*Werden*] an enclosed historical space, a ‘world’” (G 314). If this “world” is conceived in Hegelian terms, then it must be a state, a single state. Is this what Rosenzweig sees on the horizon? One of the two named divisions of the “Globus” essay is “*Ökumene: Weltstaat und Staatenwelt*” or “The Ecumenical: World-state and the World of States.” While the essay proceeds without explicitly naming Hegel, it is a radical critique of the very idea of Hegel’s narrative of world-history. Rosenzweig’s “world-historical theory of space” is a counterpart to Hegel’s world-historical theory of time and the state. What he shares with Hegel is an approach to the meaning of human history that stresses the importance of “great events,” major turning points, the result of unanticipated consequences of actions undertaken for reasons seemingly unconnected or at odds with their results – what Hegel called “the cunning of history.”

Hegel saw world-history as the production of a hierarchical order of states, each securely resting in its own territory; he was forced into extraordinary maneuvers to explain and contain facts of nomadism, migration, and diaspora that threatened to disrupt his story. Rosenzweig begins by taking the existence of boundaries and borders, the basic constituents of sovereignty, as necessary starting points that become transitional phases within a larger development in which they are destined to disappear. World-history began, he claims in the first sentence of the essay, when someone claimed a part of the earth as his own, thus establishing *Grenzen* (borders), and the distinction between “mine” and “yours” (G 313). But this is *only* the beginning:

The earth is thus determined, from creation on, to be covered [*inscribed, überzogen*] with borders. Being bounded [*Begrenzbarkeit*] is its nature, boundlessness only its final goal, but as the final goals of history always have a firm and visible substructure in natural things, so it is here. The boundlessness which remains the final goal of the earth is the sea’s own from the very beginning. (G 313)

Although no names are mentioned, we could say that Rosenzweig is playing Schelling against Hegel, a move well developed in his philosophical theology. Despite their common post-Kantian origins, Schelling came to see Hegel’s as

a “negative” philosophy, one that constructed a complex set of concepts and categories oblivious to the necessarily dark, unthought *Abgrund* out of which all bounded things like concepts and categories emerge. In “Globus” the earth itself (Rosenzweig also terms it the *Erdball*) is such an *Abgrund*, a sheer given, unknown in its depths, a surd that requires a “positive” philosophy, involving an “absolute” or “radical empiricism” (to invoke both Schelling and William James). The earth resists full articulation, but we can situate its relation to the realm of the bounded. The sea plays this role of the unbounded in relation to the land as divided among states; the whole earth itself is the *Abgrund* vis-à-vis the state-defined world of Hegel’s world-history.

Rosenzweig finds himself (knowingly or not) with a geophilosophical position that parallels Nietzsche’s critique of Hegelianism. The earth becomes world, and the aim of world is to become earth again, but in a way that involves an awareness of its specific, finite, and surd character. *Globus*, then, can be defined as the earth comprehended and unified in its finitude. So Rosenzweig is still a Hegelian of sorts, because he sees the destiny of *Globus* in a higher form of reflection and consciousness. His narrative is marked by stages of increasing consciousness of the growing unity of the earth. These realizations are embodied in the equivalent of Hegel’s world-historical figures, indeed they often *are* the same figures, but they are so for different reasons. So Alexander is important not simply for overcoming the limited form of the Greek polis and establishing the idea of a universal empire (Hegel), or for fusing the cultures of east and west (Nietzsche), but most significantly for seeking to go beyond the bounds of the Mediterranean world to what the ancients thought of as the Ocean surrounding the land at its outermost perimeter. Caesar, on this analysis, had a similar vision that coincided roughly with the Christian production of the concept of the *oikomene*, the common world (Rosenzweig notes that beginning with Augustus, Caesar’s successors failed to understand, let alone pursue, this project). Whereas for Hegel, such men are world-historical figures because of their contribution to new forms of the state (in which they destroy and supersede self-contradictory regimes, notably republics and democracies), for Rosenzweig it is their geographical vision, adumbrating a unified *globus*, which allows us to mark the epochs of world-history.

Recount the full, intricate story Rosenzweig tells is not possible here. It involves the play of universality and particularity in medieval church-state relations, the early modern balance of power among European sovereignties,

the emergence of modern European nation-states, the so-called discovery of America, colonial and imperial expansion, incorporation of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans into the world sphere, the rise of the United States, and the conflict of the British Empire with Germany and Austria-Hungary that precipitated the Great War in which he served and wrote. Suffice it to say that read alongside (or better against) Hegel's world-history, this narrative is not centered on freedom (as Hegel understands it) but on events marking transformations in the comprehension and hegemony over the earth as a whole. To cite his comprehensive statement of principle: "In both land and sea, therefore, the unity of the earth is the driving force of historical process [*Geschehens*]" (G 314).

History is a matter of dialectical inversions and transformations, as with Hegel. For example, in the age of mercantile nationalism and initial colonial expansion, states strangely identify their inner identities with what is most external, their competitive standing in relation to other states: "With this [mercantile] concept of power, which finds its boundaries neither within itself nor in an idea of the world [*Weltgedanken*], but only in the power of the other, or the neighbor, the inner productive source of external power, the most external aspect of the inner life of the state, steps into the foreground: the economy [*Wirtschaft*]" (G 325).

What then is the nature of the unity that the globe approaches? In the concluding sections of "Globus" Rosenzweig makes sweeping yet penetrating suggestions that bring together the oldest ideas of the earth with his contemporary situation in the midst of the war, which he now acknowledges as a world war. He distinguishes two archaic conceptions of the earth, *Homeric and Biblical*. In *Homeric cartography*, the Mediterranean sea is bounded and surrounded by a circumference of land, as known to the Greeks and their successors. Beyond that surround of land lies *Ocean*, thought generally and indefinitely as the final limit of the earth. In the *Biblical map*, which Rosenzweig finds in the prophets and ancient kingdoms of the near east, the earth is a vast land mass with uncertain outer bounds, containing within it various bodies of water. While later Greek thinkers speculated intelligently that the earth was round, this received no experiential confirmation until the voyages of Columbus and other early navigators. Given the hundreds of thousands of years of human history, it is only very recently that we have been set the task of coming to terms with the finite sphericity of the *Erdball*.

The work required by this task has largely been accomplished by sea. That is, humans ventured into what was seen as the unbounded in order to seize territories, extending old boundaries or creating new ones. This brings the sea itself within bounds, hence the concern in the modern era with the law and freedom of the sea. This takes us from the problem of piracy, important for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to the conflict of British and German fleets in the twentieth, as Germany seeks to limit the power of the British Empire while establishing a parallel dominion of its own. It was German submarine attacks on US vessels, which were disregarding an embargo on Britain and her allies, that officially led to US entrance into the war (shortly after Rosenzweig broke off the essay) and to Woodrow Wilson's effectively declaring it a *world* war (US historians tend to downplay the fact that the US respected the British "no shipping" zone which was enforced by mines rather than submarines). "Globus" makes no predictions about whether the US and Japan (two significant sea powers then still neutral) would enter the conflict. But Rosenzweig does offer an explanation of their neutrality up to that point. It confirms his conception of the ultimate meaning of the war and the spatial world-history of which it is a part, namely, to fully realize the unity of the earth – that is, roughly what we call globalization. At the same time it marks and defines the *kairos*, the event-al turning point of the war.

Rosenzweig's analysis hinges on two claims which at first sound eccentric: (1) the war is essentially about Africa, and (2) the fortunes of Britain and her allies depend on enforcing a misreading of the nature of the globe. These claims are more plausible and more philosophical than they initially appear. A US reader may be surprised to hear that the war was about Africa, given the iconic images of European trench warfare that dominate its representations. But in large part the conflict had to do with whether Germany could establish its own colonial empire and restrain Britain's quest for global hegemony. Germany had launched a number of colonial ventures in East and West Africa, joining rather late in the European stampede to occupy and exploit "the dark continent," a phrase that acquires a philosophical sense in Rosenzweig's analysis (see his discussion of the Berlin Congress of 1883). From a geopolitical standpoint he argues that having a foothold in the Cape (South Africa) was an essential component of Britain's empire, because of its crucial position on the circuit of Canada, Britain, India, and Australia. The Boers had achieved independence in a struggle with Britain a few years earlier, aided by the neighboring German colony; yet during the

Great War, after fierce internal struggle, they sided with Britain. As the “dark continent,” Africa could also be understood in Schelling’s sense as being an exemplary *Abgrund*, the unknown, unmapped aspect of things. To say that the war is about Africa is to say that it is about who will be “lords of the earth” (Nietzsche’s phrase) and that it involves coming to terms with what the unified *globus* will be.

Rosenzweig’s second thesis is that Britain has strengthened its position by publicizing a distorted cartography, one that obscures the globe itself. From a strategic point of view, he argues, one of Britain’s principal aims must be to keep the US and Japan neutral or possibly gain the US as an active ally. It does this by persuading these two powers, whom he regards as natural enemies facing each other across the Pacific, to see the war as an internal European affair. If the US and Japan were to understand that global hegemony is at stake, beyond the European theater, they might engage in the conflict in unpredictable ways, endangering British plans. The Pacific Ocean was relatively underdeveloped as a scene – Rosenzweig is fond of terms like *Schauplatz* – of global competition. Keeping it that way (safeguarding British interests in Australia and Eastern Asia) obviously favored the British. Rosenzweig’s geophilosophical analysis is that Britain succeeded in representing the world according to Mercator projection, with the globe transformed into a two dimensional representation with Europe at the center and the US and Japan at the extremes. The Pacific is then divided in such a way that the observer overlooks its role as a medium and possible object of contest. The truth, on the other hand, is the earth as a globe. “Both, Japan like America, seem to forget that they have a ‘back’ [*Rücken*] and could ‘turn around’. If they were to do so, two future enemies would look each other in the eye” (*G* 367). Rosenzweig seems to suggest, without being completely explicit, that we can see here the difference between British empiricism or analysis and a philosophy like German idealism, notably in Schelling’s version, which assumes the task of thinking the whole. One could speculate that something analogous happens now, in so far as world crisis is seen to be located in the (poorly named) Middle East; this distracts attention from the long-term competition between the US and China.

Rosenzweig proposes a geographical reversal of Hegel’s world-history. Rather than treating geography as the initial staging point of history, he sees the unified earth with its continents and seas as history’s *telos*. Today talk of earth’s finitude brings to mind questions concerning climate change,

depleted natural resources, environmental pollution, and overpopulation. It remains to be seen whether these issues will be addressed by the ecumenical world order that Rosenzweig believed destined, or whether national states jockeying for position by war and other means will succeed in disrupting the emergence of a political order corresponding to the singular “Globus.”¹⁴

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Abbreviations

Hegel

- I* *Introduction to The Philosophy of History*, trans. Leo Rauch. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988: page numbers.
- E* *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971: numbered sections.
- H* *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree. New York: Dover, 1956: page numbers.

Nietzsche (references are to numbered sections and aphorisms or chapters, except for *KSA*: references to volume and page)

- AOM* *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, vol. 2 of *HH*.
- BGE* *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1966.
- GS* *Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1974.
- HH* *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- KSA* *Kritische Studien-Ausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967.
- TI* *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. In *The Portable Nietzsche*. New York: Viking, 1954.

Rosenzweig

- G* “Globus: Studien zur weltgeschichtlichen Raumlehre,” in *Franz Rosenzweig, Der Mensch und sein Werk*, vol. III. *Zweistromland. Kleinere Schriften zu Glauben und Denken*. Edited by Reinhold and Annemarie Mayer. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984, pp. 313–368.

¹⁴ The paper is a revised version of an essay published in *Érzéki tapasztalat és kritikai gondolkodás: Nietzsche-Symposion*, ed. Fenyvesi Kristóf and Orbán Jolán (Pécs: Jelenkor, 2012), 78–102. I thank the editors and publisher for permission to reprint. I am grateful to Prof. Donatella di Cesare for calling my attention to Rosenzweig’s “Globus.”