Abstract: One of the many unfortunate results of the long-lived misconception that Marx was a “determinist” is a lack of engagement with his ideas of necessity and negation. Reading the *Grundrisse*’s famous comments on the annihilation of space by time, I trace the Hegelian roots of these concepts to show that for both Marx and Hegel, negation is the very act of critique itself, and necessity is properly understood not as the force of history, but as the object of historical explanation—what makes things the way they are and not another. It is therefore crucial to critical geography’s efforts to identify the possibilities for social change, for that analysis must be predicated on an understanding for how things have emerged in their present form, i.e. the one we have to work with. I argue that a negative geography of necessity is the essential basis for anything we might call a communist geography, a geography of “the real movement which abolishes the present state of things”.

Keywords: Marx, Hegel, Marxist geography, necessity, negation, communism

Marxism’s “determinism” is a tired old saw. With the exception of Fukuyama, one hardly ever sees it trotted out anymore. Determinism surely deserves its bad reputation, but it is nothing new to point out Marx was no determinist, economic or otherwise (Bensaïd 2002 [1995]:261–284; Cohen 1988:77; Karatani 2003:165; Lewis 1972:244–255; Lukács 1971:194–204; Walicki 1995:206–268). And yet, while I welcome these corrections as much as anyone, we have nonetheless inadvertently lost something with them, an idea I would like to help recover in what follows. For if determinism is the bathwater, historical necessity is the baby. The theoretical blacklisting of necessity and determination—largely a result of their “determinist” associations—merits re-examination, for these concepts are vital to Marxist geography.

In this regard, the notebooks that comprise the *Grundrisse* matter enormously. For a rereading of Marx’s necessity by way of the *Grundrisse* turns out to speak directly to critical geography’s theoretical dynamism and its capacity to identify opportunities for political change. Geography—as something we do, as scholars—is at least as much about necessity as it is about possibility, maybe more. Geography is, of necessity, about necessity; this has everything to do with determination, but nothing to do with determinism. I believe we need what I call a negative geography of necessity. This concept, which I draw from the Hegelian–Marxist tradition of people like Karl Korsch, Antonio Gramsci
and Georg Lukács, is something like an affirmation of dialectical thinking in the face of post-Marxism. Or, at least, it names the argument that critical geography cannot be entirely “post-Marxist” unless it is also “post-historical”. Whether or not Marxism is indeed “over”—as Derrida (1997:24–25) reminds us, the need to repeatedly declare Marx dead should make us pretty suspicious—the body in the post-Marxist box is not Marx’s, or at least not all of it.1

**Marx’s *Grundrisse* and Hegel’s Geography**

It is a commonplace that Hegel looms large in Marx’s work, even among those whose lack of familiarity with Hegel limits their capacity to identify how exactly that looming operates. I set aside for now the loud and lengthy arguments over the nature of Marx’s relation to Hegel, except to say that for almost every imaginable argumentative position, one could find several painstakingly constructed monographs to support it, and several others to knock it down.2 The important point is that Marx’s lifelong engagement with Hegel was always critical, but no less fundamental for that. His description, at the age of 19, of his encounter with Hegel as a “frontier post” in his life proved to be much more than a poetry-writing teenager’s romantic exaggeration (Marx and Engels 1978:7). Unlike my own adolescent self-examinations, it turned out to be true: no reading of the *Grundrisse* (let alone *The German Ideology*, *The Poverty of Philosophy* or the “early writings”) can fail to speak Hegel to those whose ears are attuned to his theoretical sensibilities and mode of exposition.3

The question that follows, then, pertains to the ways in which Hegel was “fundamental” to Marx. There is no single answer. Marx often thought by way of Hegel’s categories and dynamic historicism, but he was absolutely not “an Hegelian” in the sense that I call myself “a Marxist”. Moreover, like all of us, his thought developed over the years, and his engagements with particular thinkers waxed and waned. By the time he published the first volume of *Capital* in 1867 (at the age of 49), he had dropped much of the Hegelian language of his earlier work. But that language still animates the *Grundrisse*, his earliest elaboration of “the principles of economics”, written just a decade earlier (Marx and Engels 1975: vol. 40, 244). Indeed, I would argue that it is the Hegel in Marx that gives the *Grundrisse* its particularly restless quality, its irrepressible movement. Even though his famous materialist “inversion” of Hegel’s idealism is in operation in the notebooks, as in fact it had been at least since the 1843 *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Colletti 1975:19–24), he still speaks through Hegel. He develops a critique of political economy in the language of necessity and contingency, of subjectivity and objectivity, of affirmation/position and negation, and of dialectical transcendence or “sublation” [*Aufhebung*]—perhaps the most distinctly Hegelian term
of all. Indeed, Roman Rosdolsky, who dedicated more than a decade of his life to a study of the Grundrisse, describes it as “a massive reference to Hegel, in particular the Logic” (1977 [1968]:xiii).

I thoroughly agree. The Grundrisse’s grounding in Hegel’s work constitutes some of its most important geographies—and I want to stress that here I am not using “geography” metaphorically to refer to a conceptual “space” or terrain on which Marx’s thought unfolds, accurate as that metaphor may be. Rather, the Hegelian geographies to which I refer are real, material geographies, lived spatial problematics. Two are perhaps most familiar to geographers. First, there is the notoriously Eurocentric geography of Hegel’s Philosophy of History (1956 [1837]), the one where he parses the great regions of the world into quasi-environmentally determined “nations”.4 (Not that Hegel’s historical geography is as straightforward as many imagine; debate continues today, especially among African scholars, concerning the extent to which the Philosophy of History is as “racist” as many assume; Buck-Morss 2000; Dieng 2006; Tavares 1993.) Second, and more important for contemporary geographers, is the Hegelian geography David Harvey uncovers in his groundbreaking paper “The spatial fix: Hegel, von Thünen, Marx” (1981; cf Harvey 1999 [1982]:413–415). There, Harvey grounds Marx’s expansionist theory of capital (developed in the first volume of Capital)—specifically the connection between capitalism, the state, and imperialism—in the analysis of civil society contained in part III of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right (1991 [1822]: 220–274).5

One of the great merits of Harvey’s Hegel–Marx chain is its geographical substance. There is real space being produced here, and both Hegel and Marx knew it. But there are other Hegelian geographies or spatial analyses in Marx that are less straightforward, if no less compelling. I have two in mind. One, which merits a discussion of its own, is the ground upon which Marx bases his discussion of “pre-capitalist economic formations” (see the papers by Wainwright and Sayre in this issue). Another, which I take up here, breaks the surface in the Grundrisse in a couple of similarly worded, well-known passages.6

Here is the first:

Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange—the means of communication and transportation—the annihilation of space by time—becomes an extraordinary necessity to it (1973 [1953]:524; 1974 [1953]:423).7

Harvey’s article speaks to these ideas, elucidating the mechanisms through which this drive operates. But try as we might to read the “capitalist production of space” here, we cannot get around the fact that Marx, who cared a great deal about terminology, writes “annihilation”
obliteration, extermination, or usurpation are other options—not “transcendence”, or even “abolition” (both of which usually go by *Aufhebung*). In other words, we have to assume that when Marx says “annihilate”, he means “annihilate”. We are not talking about dialectical sublation, the preservation/cancellation/overcoming so fundamental to both Hegel’s and Marx’s understand of historical motion; we are talking about destruction. This is quite a different problem than the one Harvey examines.8

Yet it too is woven of Hegelian thread, or at least it reweaves Hegelian cloth. In the “Preface” to the *Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel argues that space is the realm of lifeless quantity, of mere mathematics.

Space is that kind of existence wherein the concrete notion inscribes the diversity it contains, as in an empty, lifeless element in which its differences likewise subsist in passive, lifeless form . . . In an unreal element of that sort we find, then, only unreal truth, fixed lifeless propositions (1967 [1807]:103).

Later, in the *Science of Logic*, he writes:

Space is this absolute *self-externality* which equally is absolutely uninterrupted, a perpetual becoming-other which is self-identical; time is an absolute coming-out-of-itself, a generating of the one, (a point of time, the now) and immediately the annihilation of it, and again the continuous annihilation of this passing away; so that this spontaneous generating of non-being is equally a simple self-sameness and self-identity (1969 [1816/1830]:189).

We get the definite feeling that space is passive, time is active; space is form, time is content.9

Then we remember that Marx’s discussion of this space–time hierarchy is very explicitly and specifically attributed to the historical mode of production dominated by capital. And, according to Marx, Hegel was talking about capital too, if necessarily unwittingly, given the historical conditions under which he worked (Colletti 1973 [1969]; Uchida 1988:138). The “annihilation of space by time” is not a transhistorical inevitability, but the historically particular operation of capital. One possible read of the *Grundrisse*’s geographic critique, then, is the implicit re-spatialization and re-materialization necessary to the emergence of a post-capitalist world. As Marx mentions throughout the *Grundrisse*, space functions for capital principally as a barrier to the realization of value (eg 1973 [1953]:521, 533–534, 685; 1974 [1953]:420, 432, 577). But the conclusion we should consequently draw is not that communism (whatever form it takes) will somehow finally overcome the problem of space by “completing” the process of annihilation. On the contrary, space in communism will be returned to its proper “quality”, something Hegel, who like Ricardo, could
not see the historical specificity of his own thought, argued was impossible:

More specific examples of pure quantity, if they are wanted, are space and time, also matter as such, light, and so forth, and the ego itself ... Space, time and the rest, are expansions, pluralities which are a coming-out-of-self, a flowing which, however, does not pass over into its opposite, into quality or the one (1969 [1816/1830]:189).

In other words, according to Hegel, space and time escape the force of the dialectic. For Marx, this only underscores the bourgeois limits of the idealist dialectic. Communism—as traced here and there, usually silently, by the Grundrisse—involves what we might call material emplacement (minus back-to-the-land romanticism and the nation-state), the dis-abstraction without which post-capitalism is impossible. So communism necessarily entails not merely an inversion—or at least not as we usually think of as inversion (see below)—but a transcendence of Hegelian space.

The Grundrisse’s Geography of Necessity

If we go back to the annihilation of space, then, we find not only that it is a consequence of capital’s drive [Trieb]—there is a Freudian’s playground in there somewhere—but also that annihilation of space “becomes an extraordinary necessity” for capital. In an effort to take ahistoricism and teleology out of necessity, a possible first move might be to point out that here necessity “becomes”, which is not something a transhistorical force normally needs to do. What I would like to note, however, is not only necessity’s becoming, but also its inevitable impermanence. As discussed above, from the fact that the annihilation of space “becomes” a necessity for capital, it does not follow that history is permanently despaced. Rather, capital’s necessity is bounded by history on both sides, in its emergence and in its transcendence.

Marx says as much in the Grundrisse. In a discussion of labour time, he writes “this necessity is itself subject to changes”, for that which is “posited as necessary” is “a historically created necessity” (1973 [1953]:527–528; 1974 [1953]:425–426). It might be tempting to think that since these phrases are a part of his analysis of necessary labour, the necessities to which he refers are human “needs”, which of course will change with the times. Like the political economists at which he directed his critique (Smith 2000 [1776]:39; Ricardo 1951 [1817]:96–97), Marx analyzes these culturally determined “necessaries of life” [Bedürfnissen des Lebens] closely, but they are a product of another kind of necessity [Bedürftigkeit] (1973 [1953]:604; 1974 1953]:497). Historical necessity [historische Notwendigkeit] describes an entirely different conceptual register.
In the seventh and last of the *Grundrisse* notebooks, in a passage on what he would later call the increasing organic composition of capital, Marx reflects on the way in which the objective conditions of labour in capitalism—the “congealed labour” that constitutes the means of production for industrial capital and its labor force—come to have a “colossal independence”, increasingly to appear as the worker’s dispossession and the capitalist’s appropriation. This process, which we recognize as a central to his analysis of class struggle in capitalism, Marx here calls “inversion” [Verkehrung]. He goes on to remark:

But obviously this process of inversion is a merely historical necessity, a necessity for the development of the forces of production solely from a specific historical point of departure, or basis, but in no way an absolute necessity of production; rather, a vanishing one, and the result and the purpose immanent to this process is to sublate [aufzuheben] the basis itself, together with this form of the process (1973 [1953]:831–832; 1974 [1953]:716).10

There is a lot going on here. Like many passages in the *Grundrisse*, it offers several ways in.11 For my purposes, I will stick to this: To put it bluntly, for Hegel and for Marx, necessity is not what you think. Necessity is neither predictive nor fateful. And it is not causal—at least not in the everyday sense—let alone teleological:

[A]bove all, we must note the inadmissible application of the relation of causality to relations of physico-organic and spiritual life. Here, what is called cause certainly reveals itself as having a different content from the effect; but the reason is that that which acts on a living being is independently determined, changed and transmuted by it, because a living thing does not let the cause come to its effect, that is, it sublates it as cause. Thus it is inadmissible to say that food is the cause of blood, or certain dishes or chill and damp are the causes of fever, and so on: it is equally inadmissible to assign the ionic climate as the cause of Homer’s works, or Caesar’s ambition as the cause of the downfall of the republican constitution of Rome. In history generally, spiritual masses and individuals are in play and reciprocal determination with one another; but it is rather the nature of spirit, in a much higher sense than it is the character of the living thing in general, not to receive into itself another original entity, or not to let a cause continue itself into it but to break it off and to transmute it (Hegel 1969:552; emphasis in original).12

We have to think of necessity not as cause, but as process (Hegel 1975 [1817/1830]:211–212), a property of movement immanent to objects of experience. What must animate a historical moment for it to plausibly be what it is? Even if it has yet to reveal itself, which Marx (1973 [1953]:415, 443–444, 447) and Hegel (1969 [1816/1830]:651) call “inner necessity”. Necessity is what we might call “whatness” itself,
the quality of an object that makes it what it is. We cannot forget that quality is always developing; “whatness” is never static. As one prominent modern commentator writes, “[w]hat Hegel calls Necessity is a necessity of meaning which progressively unfolds itself; ‘it is hidden in the events that happen and only appears in the end’” (Hypolite 1969 [1947]:164). I think it impossible to exaggerate the importance of this insight into Hegel and Marx. The Grundrisse shows us that for Marx, as Fredric Jameson says (1971:360), necessity is a “characteristic of historical understanding as such”; it is its very condition of possibility:

True actuality is necessity; what is actual is necessary in itself. Necessity consists in the division of the whole into the distinctions within the concept, and in the fact that this divided whole exhibits a fixed and enduring determinacy which is not dead and unchanging but continues to produce itself in its dissolution (Hegel 1991 [1822]: 302).

In the passage from the Grundrisse cited above, Marx calls very explicitly on this Hegelian formulation of necessity to make a crucial distinction, that between “historical” and “absolute” necessity, concepts Hegel works through in the Science of Logic (1969 [1816/1830]). Clearly, historical necessity is not the teleological, determinist beast flogged by some (a critique differently inflected, of course, from Popper to Lyotard; cf Losurdo 2004:36–38). Instead, Marx says it is about “the development of the forces of production solely from a specific historical point of departure, or basis”. In other words, historical necessity is not the force of history, but the object of historical explanation—indeed, of explanation proper: to describe why something happened the way it did and not another. It is the whatness of a moment in history, a moment that is otherwise literally incomprehensible. Note also that Marx embraces contingency and conjuncture, confronts them head on, and not in an attempt to dismiss them. On the contrary, necessity makes sense “solely from a specific historical point of departure”.13

What Marx called historical necessity, Hegel called “real” or “relative” necessity. Real necessity, Hegel says, is “a relation that is pregnant with content . . . For it has a presupposition from which it begins, it has its starting point in the contingent . . . Thus in point of fact real necessity is in itself also contingency” (1969 [1816/1830]:549–550; emphasis in original). My point is that historical necessity on Marx’s or Hegel’s terms is not something we can shirk. Rather, to understand the interplay of structural–historical forces and lived contingency—Gramsci’s organic and conjunctural—we have no choice but to commit to grasping a moment’s necessity.14 Historical necessity, as Marx says, is a “vanishing [necessity], and the result and the inherent purpose of this process is to sublate the basis itself, together with this form of the process”. In short, there is no dialectic, materialist or otherwise, without
necessity. Nor can there be anything meaningfully called possibility. To imagine what can be, we must understand what is. Historical necessity is not what must be or had to be, but what must be for us to say “is”:

When anything is said to be necessary, the first question we ask is, Why? Anything necessary accordingly comes before us as something due to a supposition, the result of certain antecedents. If we go further than mere derivation from precedents, however, we have not gained a complete notion of what necessity means. What is merely derivative, is what it is, not through itself, but through something else; and in this way it too is merely contingent. What is necessary, on the other hand, we would have be what it is through itself; and thus, although derivative, it must still contain the antecedent which it is derived as a vanishing element in itself. Hence we say of what is necessary, “It is” (Hegel 1975 [1817/1830]:208).

**Absolute** necessity, which Marx brackets in this part of the notebooks, might appear closer to the caricature of Hegelian teleological totalization. But it is worth noting two things. First, it was not what Marx was talking about. Second, the caricature is wrong—it is not what Hegel was talking about either. Absolute necessity is for all intents and purposes “essence”; not the essence, but essence as such, the idea of that without which something cannot be what it is. “Absolute necessity is not so much the necessary, still less a necessary, but necessity” (1969 [1816/1830]:554). “That which is simply necessary only is because it is” (552). In other words, absolute necessity, for Hegel and Marx, turns out to be the contingency they are so often accused of trampling beneath their feet:

But this **contingency** is rather absolute necessity; it is the **essence** of those free, inherently necessary actualities. This essence is **light-shy**, because there is in these actualities no **reflective movement**, no reflex, because they are grounded purely in themselves alone, are shaped for themselves, and manifest themselves only to **themselves**, because they are only **being**. But their **essence** will break forth in them and reveal what it is and what they are . . . [C]ontingency is absolute necessity, it is itself the presupposing of that first, absolute actuality (Hegel 1969 [1816/1830]:553; emphasis in original).

This is not exactly geography’s material necessity, perhaps. But to the extent that one might take up David Harvey’s (1999 [1982]) frequent calls for an historical–geographical materialism, I believe we need also confront the force of historical–geographical necessity. In fact, I would say we cannot do one without the other. Historical necessity is the content of history, the movement of history. An attempt to understand it is our privilege and responsibility as intellectuals. Examining the
forces—including “accident”—that determine why things are the way they are, and not another, is a sine qua non of politics.

A Negative Geography of Necessity
This is so because necessity negates possibility. For Hegel, the actual—what is—is a result of the confrontation of possibility and necessity. The “outcome” is the actual—and possibility and necessity are both simultaneously negated but contained in the actual. They are superseded but preserved in the movement. (This is an excellent example of Hegel’s dialectic if you ever need to teach it, because it shows that a commitment to grasping necessity is not a rejection of possibility, but its authentic embrace.)

Now negation may bring us back to exactly what terrifies people about the idea of necessity. But again, I want to allay those fears and try to show that it cannot be otherwise, since a properly political geography, ie a geography that is political, is a negative geography of necessity in this sense. For both Hegel and Marx, negation is the necessary operation or moment through which we come to confront the posited—the “given”, the “mere” facts – that both of them scorned (eg Adorno 1993 [1963]:30, 94–110; Hegel 1967 [1807]:92, 1991:11; Marx 1973 [1953]:472, 852–853; 1974 [1953]:375, 736).

All objects are initially experienced as “posited” insofar as they must be “given” to us to be considered an object of experience or conception for and by us. The objects of the world must be for us to encounter or experience them in thought or action, and their constant movement and internal opposition will mean that when we “simply look upon them” we will always find them to be not—ie more or other than—what they “are”. This, not annihilation, destruction or removal, is the meaning of negation. A geography of necessity, then, is a negative geography; grasping the historically necessary is a negative process. In its relentlessness, restlessness, unwillingness to settle—in the dialectic as such—this geography is of course active, crafting the world, but this is not the opposite of negative. The negative is, rather, the very process of encountering and changing the world. “As a matter of fact”, Lucio Colletti (1973 [1969]:116) says, “thinking is always the negation of what we have immediately before us”.

For Marx, history involves people in the process of constantly breaking things open (unfolding), making the implicit explicit (learning, questioning, politicizing) in all its contradictoriness. Negation, in thought and practice, denounces the “given”, always revealing, ever making the world to be more and other than it is (Adorno 1973 [1966]:161). Hegel and Marx call it negation because to do so makes it not what it was, or might have been. This is the negative moment—it is critique—and to the extent that it identifies possibility, it is “the
possibility of which their reality has cheated the objects” (Adorno 1973 [1966]:52). Neither Hegel nor Marx dismiss possibility *qua* future-as-radically-other in favour of iron laws of determinate necessity. For Marx, possibility in that sense is everything: “Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things” (Marx and Engels 1978:162; emphasis in original). Communism is not a terminal social formation or an identifiable order. It is the historical unfolding of what Hegel, in no uncertain terms, called “possibility”: neither pure openness-as-possibility, nor meaningless, ahistorical utopianism, nor pure “positivity”, but possibility as a concrete, specific, grounded, historicized and thus constrained possibility (Hegel 1969 [1916/1830]:550). For Marx, communism *is* possibility. It is the very movement of the dialectic beyond the “present state of things”. This seems to me so important it can hardly be overstated.

A negative geography of necessity, then, captures the dialectic in this “real movement”. It is also captures some its radical political potential insofar as it can make sense of “the dynamic instantiations of the dialectical rhythm” (Spivak 1999:74) which drives and is driven by “the real movement which abolishes the present state of things”. One might even say it is a *communist geography*. The problem is not that the “present state of things” is illusory; the problem is that it we live in an “upside-down world” [*verkehrte Welt*], in which space is abstracted and hypostatized as “amounts of time [*Zeitquantum*]” (Marx 1973 [1953]:538; 1974 [1953]:436; cf Colletti 1973 [1969], 1975). A geography of necessity is certainly the seed of anything Gramscian in contemporary critical geography, since it consists in the re-assertion of space, the transcendence of capital’s abstract aspatial annihilation, the dialectical “return” to “real relations” without which Gramsci’s entire strategic edifice is incomprehensible (Said 2002:467–468; Wainwright 2005).

Gramsci holds that in “history, in social life, nothing is fixed, rigid, or definitive. And nothing ever will be” (1985:31) not despite, but because of his Hegelian Marxism. Indeed, I would contend that that strategy—the grinding work of constructing spaces beyond the reach of hegemony, spaces like the factory council in which it is possible to “shift the terrain” and construct a new hegemony—is still the best alternative we have. What falls out of that struggle I cannot at present imagine—that is part of the point—but real possibility becomes actual only if we act. As Marx writes, all of it is “merely historical” (1973 [1953]:461; 1974 [1953]:365; emphasis in original). Consciousness of necessity is about transcending/sublating “it could have been otherwise”, and moving on to “it is otherwise, but it contains the possibility of what it might yet be”; it contains its own negation. Possibility at its most concretely meaningful
is not “anything can happen”, nor even “anything we can imagine”, but necessity harnessed—grasped—in political praxis. If we are to speak of the future, which Marx rarely does, we can do so analytically, by which I mean in a politically relevant manner, only if we try to understand the forces through which what is came to be (Koselleck 2004 [1979]).

An attempt to understand necessity as the negation of possibility, as the fundamental condition for “is”, is the very act of explanation, of political argument, or political sociality. Necessity is what possibility must have become for there to be anything called “history”. The effort to identify “possible worlds” is meaningless without the simultaneous effort to critically explain, as Marx did, why the world is not otherwise, and in doing so, to explode the “given” from which the not-given can emerge. This is what Hegel meant when he wrote, “[N]ecessity is transfigured into freedom—not the freedom that consists in abstract negation, but freedom concrete and positive. From which we may learn what a mistake it is to regard freedom and necessity as mutually exclusive” (1975 [1817/1830]:220; cf Adorno 1973 [1966]:68). Herein, perhaps, lies the Grundrisse’s fundamental geographical insight. On its volcanic textual terrain—from which we occasionally glimpse the geography of a world after capitalism, beyond the annihilation of space—we find the transfiguration of necessity into freedom as critique. And the myriad insights into the dynamics of capital it contains, some burning slow like molten rock, some exploding momentarily like fumaroles, continue to illuminate contemporary political economies by grasping the movements by which they are what they have become—of historical necessity.

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Endnotes
1 “When we say ‘Marx is dead’, that oft-repeated formula, what are we saying? When someone dies and we repeat the notice of his death for more than a day—normally, when a newspaper prints someone’s obituary, it does so for one day and then no more—when we repeat it again and again, it’s because something else is going on, because the dead man is not that dead” (translated from Derrida 1997:24–25).
2 In Marx Beyond Marx (1991 [1979]:57–58), Antonio Negri manages the unusual feat of agreeing with virtually every position in the debate on the “relations Hegel–Marx”, while simultaneously, and very usefully, encouraging us to move beyond it.
3 For those unfamiliar with Hegel’s work, without getting into the theoretical details I think it is fair to say that even new readers of Marx understand that feeling one gets at the beginning of Capital—like one’s feet cannot find the ground; that mix of anxiety and excitement, where one starts to make a hundred seemingly brilliant connections in a chaotic mix of insight and obscurity. This is an important part of what Marx got from Hegel. Still, the inclusion of Capital in the list of Marx’s Hegel-influenced work is the subject of one of the great debates in the history of Marxism. Many would add it (including me), but many would not.
“Nature is the first standpoint from which man can gain freedom within himself; and this liberation must not be rendered difficult by natural obstructions... In the extreme zones man cannot come to free movement; cold and heat are here too powerful to allow Spirit to build up a world for itself. Aristotle said long ago, ‘When pressing needs are satisfied, man turns to the general and more elevated.’ But in the extreme zones such pressure may be said never to cease, never to be warded off; men are constantly impelled to direct attention to nature, to the glowing rays of the sun, and icy frost. The true theatre of History is therefore the temperate zone; or, rather, its northern half, because the earth there presents itself in continental form, and has a broad breast, as the Greeks say” (Hegel 1956 [1837]:80).

Although Harvey only cites her in passing, choosing instead to focus on what Lenin did with these ideas, the expansionist argument is perhaps best worked out by Rosa Luxemburg in The Accumulation of Capital (2003).


Later in the notebooks (1973:538; 1974:436), Marx writes: “in as much as the circuits which capital travels in order to go from one of these forms into the other constitute sections of circulation, and these sections are travelled in specific amounts of time (even spatial distance reduces itself to time; the important thing e.g. is not the market’s distance in space, but the speed—the amount of time—with which it can be reached), by that much the velocity of circulation, the time in which it is accomplished, is a determinant of how many products can be produced in a given period of time; how often capital can be realized in a given period of time, how often it can reproduce and multiply its value”.

Elsewhere in the Grundrisse, Marx actually contrasts these two spatial problems in similar terms: “Thus, while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate [vernichten] this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital, therefore, the more extensive the market over which it circulates, which forms the spatial orbit of its circulation, the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation [Vernichtung] of space by time” (1973 [1953]:538; 1974 [1953]:438). Harvey analyzes the first of these, ie the conquest of “the whole earth for its market”.

See also Grundrisse (Marx 1973 [1953]:321; 1974 [1953]:227): “expressed passively, the magnitude of labour appears as an amount of space; but expressed in motion, it is measurable only in time”; or “the working day, regarded spatially—time itself regarded as space—is many working days alongside one another” (Marx 1973 [1953]:399; 1974 [1953]:303).
nonetheless famous base-superstructure comment in the Preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1970 [1859]). See also Jameson’s (1990:46) interesting speculations on the mobility of the basis.

12 We can see what inspired Lukács’ *History and Class Consciousness* (1971) in this passage, and all the trouble it got him into with those party members faithful to the Stalinist doctrine of “scientific” dialectical materialism, or “Diamat”.

13 The way in which historical necessity works in the *Grundrisse* is similar to its operation in Marx’s mature work generally. See, for example, *Capital*, vol 3: “the mode of production itself possesses a transitory historical necessity and so too therefore do the relations of production and exchange that arise from it” (1981:760), or *Theories of Surplus-Value*: “the merely transitory historical necessity of [capital]” (1972:vol III:1138).

14 Hegel “makes a clear distinction between historical process and natural process, and the category of historical necessity is linked not to nature per se but to ‘second nature’. Second nature is clearly the result of history, and therefore of man’s freedom; nevertheless, the result is not revocable by . . . any other individuality which believes itself ingenious and wants to shape history and the masses according to its pleasure” (Losurdo 2004:38).

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