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The Sensibility of Kant's Globus Sphere
Critical Philosophy, Physical Geography and the Situated Subject

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Abstract. This essay explores the metaphorical and conceptual significance of the globus sphere in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Physical Geography*. Through its integration of sensibility and corporeal spatiality into the heart of Kantian philosophy, the essay argues that the spherical shape accommodates a situated notion of the subject. A conception that further nuances the "hard-edged" dominance of reason and rationality over sensibility, which often is associated with Kant's thought. While recognizing the viable critiques of Kant's Eurocentrism and racism in *Physical Geography*, the essay concludes by demonstrating how Kant's concept of the sphere – emphasizing that neither Earth nor reason has a fixed center – implies that Kantian critique could likewise serve as a potential alternative to colonial and hierarchical modes of thought, thereby indicating a path toward the notion of a universal reason of a truly global character.

Keywords. Kant, Physical Geography, globus sphere, situatedness, sensibility.

1. *Die Kante. Immanuel Kant.*

In German, the name Kant coincides with the noun "*Kante*", meaning "edge", "border", "exter-

nality". The very name of philosopher Immanuel Kant is thus «a handy revelation of his predilections», as Gunnar Olsson puts it ([2007]: 215). An edge denotes the outermost part of a surface, the borderline where two surfaces meet, often at an angle. Geometry is full of edges, while at the same time we exhort the children to stay away from the edge and, at breakfast, help them to remove the edge crusts of their bread slice. All three meanings of the word "edge" are fitting in relation to Kant as the architect of critical philosophy, which aimed to formulate the conditional limits of the realms of knowledge, morality and aesthetics. They are especially timely if we consider the notions of Kantian philosophy as particularly hard-edged – in the sense of being centered on reason and devoid of sensibility – which have characterized much of post-war aesthetic theory. Here, the affinity between Kant's name and the image of an unappetizingly dry edge crust is close at hand. This line of thought can be summarized as a silly pun, but it points to a general inclination to emphasize a certain mind/body-dualism in Kant and to disregard themes in his writings which rather privilege the sensibility of life and thought.

If Kant's critical-philosophical work could be graphically profiled in a geometric figure, both the triangle and the rectangle are within easy reach. These figures would be fitting, not only to highlight the edginess that has made Kant obsolete in reflecting on thought's situated and corporeal nature. Besides the many triangles in Kant's examples from mathematics that are used throughout his writings, this is a self-evident figure to reflect upon the relationship between the experiences of human life treated in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1787), the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790). Together, the three *Critiques* form a triangular field of tension that articulates the experience of life as such. The triangle also points to the complexity of the relationship between rationality and sensibility in Kant, which cannot be subsumed under the concept of a dualism. In a similar way, the figure of the rectangle also seems apt to graphically outline the critical project if we consider the form of the table of faculties (the faculty of knowledge, the faculty of pleasure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire), the determinations of the mind (*das Gemüt*) which Kant, in the introduction to the third *Critique*, summarizes as the totality of man's theoretical-practical capacities (Kant [1790]: 83).

This essay, however, is about spheres and globes in Kant – about the spherical shape whose roundness, despite its gentleness, sharply contrasts with the aforementioned expectations of Kantian hard-edgy rigidity (*Kantigkeit*). Or rather, the sphere – as the surface of globe-shaped body – is a geometric figure that, by virtue of the space and materiality indicated by its volume, is able to multiply the meaning of Kantian edginess (*Kantigkeit*). The soft edge of the sphere differs not only from the sharp edges of the triangle and the rectangle, but also from the roundness of the circle by the addition of depth, the dimension that characterizes bodies, geometric as well as human.

I will attend to that aspect of the reciprocity between the geography of reason in the first *Critique* and the *Physical Geography* (1802), which demonstrates the key importance of feeling, corporeality and spatiality in critical philosophy. Identifying the globus sphere as a point of connection between the two works will further open a discussion on what we might call a global universalism of reason. To establish this perspective, from which the importance of sensibility in Kant's thought is focused, I start from the correspondence between the description of the limits of reason concerning the nature of knowledge, and the boundary that defines life on Earth. And then we haven't even touched on what is actually "Copernican" in Kant's so-called Copernican turn.

What kind of science is geography for Kant and what position does he give it? What role does the sphere, as the surface of that particular globe which is Earth – the object of geographical description – play in Kantian philosophy? To what extent does Kant rely on geographical terms, ideas and imagery in the first *Critique*? And, finally, what is the relationship between Kant's globus sphere and sensibility?

Response to these questions will be developed through a basic and contextualizing charting of the interconnective points in the above texts (paragraphs 2-4). These are critically tied together through the simultaneously ideal and bodily activity of orientation as it is presented in Kant's *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?* (1786) (paragraph 5), thus providing my main argument: that *Physical Geography* – illustrated by Kant's example of the arbitrary position of the prime meridian – holds the key to a situated understanding of the subject, indicating a path toward the notion of a universal reason of a truly global character.

2. *Knowledge of the world*

The aim of Kant's three *Critiques* is to explain how possible experience – that is, the *a priori* conditions of experience – is constituted by the interplay between the various faculties of the human being: the sensibility of outer and inner sense (representations of objects in space through the five senses, respectively of the inner states of the self as objects in time); imagination; understanding; and reason. Kant's so-called applied philosophy, on the other hand, addresses the experience of the exercise of these faculties in the world, as well as the constitution of this world. The *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) deals with the experience of existing in the world as part of a political plurality of other beings (as *Weltbürger*) (Kant [1798]: 4) and constituting a possible object of experience for oneself. As a counterpart, *Physical Geography*, provides the descriptions of the material facts of nature that constitute the conditions of this existence. Although the second part of the *Anthropology* is dedicated to an-

thropological characterization (analyzing what makes man a rational animal by listing the characteristics of individuals, genders, nations, races and humanity as a whole), the book's emphasis is on man as a free acting being. In *Physical Geography* on the other hand, it is the world and the physical characteristics of people which are the main concern.

The relationship between "pure" transcendental philosophy and Kant's empirically based writings has historically been characterized by a divisive distance where the connections between these two parts in Kant's work has tended to become overlooked[1]. Largely owing to feminist (e.g. Schott [1997]) and postcolonial (e.g. Eze [1995], Mills [2017], Bernasconi [2001]) initiatives, the elements in Kant's thought that provide clear links to its historical context have today been given a more prominent role in the comprehensive analyses of his philosophy. In understanding the critical project through its convergence with the applied philosophy, the *Anthropology* has had a particularly prominent function, with Michel Foucault (1961) being an early pioneer. With few exceptions (Adickes [1911]; May [1970]), less attention has been given Kant's physical geography. Possible reasons for this "delay" are the complicated origins and the contested composition and sources of the published lectures. It is only recently – in connection with text critical editions and the publication of the English translation in 2012 – that the material has been made available to a wider readership and integrated into the research field of critical co-readings of critical and applied philosophy, owing to the comprehensive anthologies (Elden, Mendieta [2011]), and articles on Kant's geography (Louden [2014]; Clewis [2018]) that have emerged in the last decade[2].

Unlike the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* – the last text Kant himself prepared for publication – and the majority of the works published in the *Akademie-Ausgabe*, the work published as *Physical Geography* lacks a manuscript that Kant himself authorized for publication. The version claimed to be the authoritative one is a compilation of some twenty student notes and Kant's own notes, edited at his request by his friend Friedrich Theodor Rink, who himself made a number of additions to the text[3]. Despite all the ambiguities and variants of the geography, there is nevertheless an overall continuity in the structure of the content that makes it possible to attribute the text to Kant. Thus, the expressed racism and Eurocentrism must be taken more seriously than merely being «a political and intellectual embarrassment», to use David Harvey's oft-quoted phrase ([2000]: 532)[4].

Being both a study of nature and a study of the freedom of human nature (what man is capable of in accordance with his nature as a freely acting being), physical geography and pragmatic anthropology are closely intertwined. These disciplines constitute two distinct modes of enquiry with one common educational aim of generating the knowledge of the world (*Welterkenntniß*) that Kant in both

works emphasizes as a prerequisite for tackling problems of a more fundamental kind, such as the structure of our faculty of knowledge (Kant [1802]: 445-446; Kant [1798]: 126). On the one hand, this *world knowledge* involves a theoretical familiarity with nature as a whole and with man as a natural and cultural being. On the other, it comprises an understanding of how this knowledge best can be applied in life and in the world (Kant [1777-1778]: 261[5]; Kant [1798]: 4).

In the case of the lectures in geography, Kant's more specific aim was to develop the students' ability to recognize the diversity of the world and, in relation to this pluralism, to be able to orient themselves as to the differences between forms of life in various places and people's adaptation (epistemologically, morally, politically, socially) to these diverse environments and climatological conditions (Louden [2000]: 65, 95; Wilson [2006]: 20). Geography would help them to develop a holistic sense of the world as a whole through which they could realize the potential of their reason – what in pedagogical historical terms is referred to as cosmopolitan civic education. To be comprehensible, the objects of our reason or perception must be fitted into a larger, coherent framework. The task of geography is, according to Kant, to provide thinking with such a framework. Geography's world knowledge is thus established from a simultaneously rational cosmological and empirical perspective: according to Kant, «world» here denotes the synthesis of our knowledge according to the pure rational knowledge of reason – inner sense [*Sinn*] – and the sensuous knowledge of experience – outer sense (Kant [1802]: 445-446). Knowledge of the world thus consists of the union of the experience of nature – the world as the object of outer sense – and the experience of man – the world as the object of inner sense. In other words, the description of the globe and its surface by the discipline of physical geography, combined with the anthropological study of human life which is thereby made possible.

Understood as the world of the senses (*mundus phenomenon*), the world is that whole which the *Critique of Pure Reason* describes as the sum of all that can be perceived with the senses: the sphere of all possible experience (Kant [1781/87]: 249). This means that the world as «absolute whole of all appearance» can only be «an idea» (Kant [1781/87]: 319)[6]. The idea of the world as the totality of all interacting material substances is the transcendental idea of the unity of all appearances. This is the essence of Kantian rational cosmology (*cosmologia rationalis*), the transcendental science of the world (Kant [1781/87]: 323) which – through the idea of the unity of all appearances – allows empirical disciplines, such as geography and anthropology, to coordinate the infinite diversity and substances of life according to the systematics that define scientificity (Kant [1781/87]: 653). Rational cosmology makes a secular and purely mechanical explanation of the universe conceivable without having to reject the idea of God's causality, since it is precisely the lawfulness of the whole that can be attributed to divine causality (Wilson [2011]: 162).

As Olsson (2007) lucidly has staked out, the establishment of the limits of knowledge by the critique of reason is immanently linked with geography in Kant's thought[7]. Both the concept of a geography of reason and the echo that characterizes the relationship between empirical science and transcendental conditions for scientificity, as indicated in the above sketch of the concept of the world, point to this. How, then, is this intertwinement expressed and what are the consequences for our understanding of reason and sensibility?

3. *Physical geography*

Kant lectured on physical geography throughout his time at the University of Königsberg with a continuity and persistence which, as Stuart Elden proposes, makes the discipline possible to understand as an archaeological register of his work (Elden [2011]: 1). This register lists a possible origin of a well-known philosophical imagery: in the geographic ordering of the world and by attributing a concrete place to the outlook on this world, the main features of the method that characterizes critical philosophy is traced. But the register also displays the conditioning of the language of critical philosophy by a specific geopolitically coded situation. Namely, the historical situation recognized as the exploration of the world and the mercantile expansion that constitute the foundations of the second wave of European imperialism and colonialism (Mignolo [2011]). These conditions are particularly evident in the antagonism implicit in Kant's idea of a cosmopolitically united humanity (Kant [1784]: 111-112). As a regulative organizing principle for universal community, cosmopolitanism simultaneously postulates, on the basis of geographical differences, a hierarchical concept of progression that makes the white race superior to all others (Mendieta [2011]: 362-363). Moreover, cosmopolitanism is a useful example of how philosophical concepts and historical conditions always relate to each other, even if the analysis of a geographical imagery discursively may emphasize one or the other aspect.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the discovery of the *a priori* determination of objects by mathematics is described as a far more important revolution in thought «than the discovery of the passage round the celebrated Cape of Good Hope» (Kant [1781/87]: 19). From such a formulation, it is easy to imagine Kant as a boxed in armchair philosopher, interested only in purely abstract reasoning about the world. An impression that is reinforced by Kant's strong emphasis on the value of (synthetic) *a priori* knowledge, that knowledge of the world can be obtained independently of sensuous experience, as well as by the widely known fact that he never left the region of his birthplace. However, Kant stands out among his contemporary colleagues for his profound interest in natural science, an interest that leads to both substantiated and highly speculative publications

on, for example, the natural history and theory of the heavens (1755a), the nature of fire (1755b), the causes of earthquakes (1756), and the humidity of various winds (1757). It is to these works on fundamental scientific problems that the comprehensive volume *Physical Geography* can be counted. With his lectures, Kant also gave the discipline of geography scientific status in a university context. At the time, the information gathering activities of the discipline were mainly determined by the state's need to organize land taxation and to carry out military operations, as well as by the requirement for economic growth linked to world trade. Kant was thus one of the first to academically "formalize" this empirical-practical discipline (Church [2011]: 22-27). In 1755 and 1756, after Kant had presented the thesis required for a *Magister*, he became a *Privatdozent* at the University of Königsberg and then immediately advertised the lectures in physical geography. A *Privatdozent* did not receive salary from the university, but earned his living by charging students per lecture.

Since geography was a novelty in the course curriculum, there was no regular textbook. This was usually a requirement of the Prussian Ministry of Education to approve a course at the university, but Kant was granted an exemption to this request. The course was based on an eclectic mix of scientific works as well as travel reports from missionaries, traders and colonial explorers in travel books and journals (May [1970]). Between 1756 and 1796 Kant lectured on the subject forty-nine times – his third most frequently taught course – compared to the fifty-three lectures on metaphysics and the fifty-six lectures on logic (Louden [2000]: 5). And we should bear in mind that from 1770, Kant was serving as Professor of metaphysics and logic. A significant change in the geography lectures took place in the winter term of 1772-73 when some of the material was reorganized as part of a separate course in anthropology. Thereafter, these well-attended and popular lectures alternated between geography in the summer term and anthropology in the winter term[8].

Physical geography is a descriptive science that, according to Kant, claims wholeness. It is a description of the Earth (*Erdbeschreibung*) as a whole. In its broadest sense, geography is defined as an account of the present state and spatial variations of the Earth. This description of nature differs drastically from contemporary systems of classification such as Carl Linnaeus' similarity-based taxonomy of species (Farinelli [2012]: 378). Instead of following a logical (conceptual) order, Kant's description of the Earth is based on a physical classification in which the objects of nature are organized according to the place where they are located (Kant [1802]: 447-449). Physical geography is the main field that underlies all other types of geographies. Kant makes the following divisions: mathematical geography deals with the shape, size and motion of the Earth, as well as its relation to the solar system; moral geography concerns the different customs and characters of people in relation to different regions;

political geography links laws to the inhabitants and environment of an area; commercial geography concerns the question of why one country has an abundance of a resource while another suffers a shortage of the same resource; and theological geography deals with the regional variability of theological principles (Kant [1802]: 451-453). Unlike mathematical geography, which has its own section in the introduction, Kant's brief discussions of the other areas are undeveloped and scattered throughout the general sections on different continents and countries.

Physical geography is instead divided into the following sections: mathematical geography; the natural history of land masses, rivers, oceans and winds; animals, plants and minerals; and Asia, Africa, Europe, America. The final section, based on the continents, focuses on how cultural practices (moral, political and theological) are causally determined by their natural environment. It also contains the grotesque descriptions of the moral aspects and inherent hierarchies of racial differences that have come to be at the center of both straightforward expositions of Kant's racism and discussions of the philosophical consequences of racial thinking (e.g. Sandford [2018]).

The descriptions of nature in *Physical Geography* are initially contrasted with the narrative of history (*Erzählung*) (Kant [1802]: 447). Unlike history, which deals with the division of successive events in time, geography deals with phenomena characterized by their simultaneity in space (Kant [1802]: 449). The division of these two sciences in terms of space and time thus takes place according to the *a priori* forms of transcendental aesthetics for all appearances. According to this model of categorization, the historical narrative implies a fixed order, while it – to some extent – is possible to rearrange the descriptions of the sea, the winds of the atmosphere and the flora, fauna and population of the Earth's surface. In any case, these descriptions do not depend on the same strict disposition. In this respect, the divisions of space, which are nevertheless necessary for its description, involve an inherent arbitrariness. One example Kant gives of this arbitrariness is the position of the prime meridian (Kant [1802]: 459). However, as the use of terms like "natural history" and "hierarchy" suggest, geography and history stand in a complex relationship. The two sciences do not completely coincide but, like the two dimensions of space and time in transcendental aesthetics, they are inseparably linked. Geography provides the discipline of history with a concrete foundation, while the discipline of history informs geography with explanations of the origins of the state of the Earth. But geography's descriptions also involve – albeit unintentionally – other kinds of narratives, as the example with the location of the prime meridian indicates. We find here a cultural and scientific Eurocentrism that is most painfully expressed in the representations of human races. One of several examples of this is found in the second part of the volume, *Particular*

observations concerning what is found on the earth, where Kant begins with a few paragraphs on the climate related differences between the various appearances and characters of people.

> In the torrid zones, humans mature more quickly in all aspects than in the temperate zones, but they fail to reach the same [degree of] perfection. Humanity has its highest degree of perfection in the white race. The yellow Indians have a somewhat lesser talent. The Negroes are much lower, and lowest of all is part of the American races. (Kant [1802]: 576)

This quote also makes it clear that the geographically distributed differences between people imply a temporality by being related to the evolution of "humanity". Insofar as the object of geography is the whole world, which necessarily implies becoming and change, geography is only possible – and therefore equally impossible – as a complete systematic science by including history (Marcuzzi [2011]: 120). On the one hand, this means that a description of the Earth's surface can only be properly geographical if it abstracts from the processes – geological as well as political – that have brought about its present state and will produce its future change. On the other hand, such a "timeless" description would be incomprehensible if we take into account both the abovementioned racist rationale of the variations in human endowment and concrete phenomena such as volcanoes, winds and high and low tides. A description of the Earth can therefore only be a description of change. It is this impossible position in relation to scientific systematization, the fact that geography requires history, that makes the arbitrariness of the conventions in geographical description discernible. As we now turn to the discussion of Kant as a geographer of reason, it is worth keeping this problematic in mind.

4. *Critique and geography*

Kant is a pioneer of «philosophical topology» (Malpas, Thiel [2011]: 195), that is, how space and place figure in human knowledge and experience not only as its object but as part of its structure. A crucial feature of geography's methodology to consider in relation to the critical project is how Kant emphasizes the open relationship between traveler and map (Kant [1757]: 388). The traveler must constantly be prepared both to compare his observations with the map, which is necessary for undertaking the journey at all, and to simultaneously reassess and adjust that map. This reciprocal interplay between traveler and map is reminiscent of how Kant later defines the main characteristic of critical philosophy as a philosophizing without philosophy. «[W]e cannot learn philosophy; for where is it, who is in possession of it, and how shall we rec-

ognize it?» (Kant [1781/87]: 657) Philosophy neither comprises a set of doctrines nor a technical apparatus to be mastered. As far as reason is concerned, Kant famously writes, «we can at most learn to *philosophize*» (Kant [1781/87]: 657), which means for reason to excel in the process of its self-questioning and struggle with itself, defining the internal limits and outer bounds – the edges (*Kante*) – of its domain. And it is in the very idea of such limits and boundaries that the geographical is invoked in the first *Critique* (Olsson [2007]: 213, Malpas, Thiel [2011]: 198). It is well known that Kant's epistemology throughout is defined in geographical terms, not least by presenting the conditions of knowledge as a mappable territory. It is a matter of relocating metaphysics to its proper place within the limits by which it can maintain itself and be prevented from knowledge of the absolute. The geography courses include several seeds to critical philosophy and, together with examples drawn from a range of other disciplines such as mathematics, physics and chemistry, Kant gives metaphysics the status of a science, which is required for its mapping of fundamental *a priori* knowledge. But while a characterization of the critique of reason as being "chemical" or "mathematical" is ill-motivated, accepting its character as geographical is a general truth for Kant.

At one point in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant refers to David Hume as one of the geographers of human reason (Kant [1781/87]: 606). And although Hume's achievement is said to be incomplete – since he merely points out the "horizon of human reason" instead of determining, as Kant himself does, this horizon of reason's determinate limits on the basis of principles – the critique of reason follows the same geographical approach. In introducing the distinction between phenomena and noumena, Kant explicitly acknowledges this character of his thinking and provides the reader with an image of this "land of truth" in connection with thought's temptation to always go beyond these limits:

> We have now not merely explored the territory of pure understanding, and carefully surveyed every part of it, but have also measured its extent, and assigned to everything in it its rightful place. This domain is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth – enchanting name! – surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion, where many a fogbank and many a swiftly melting iceberg give the deceptive appearance of farther shores, deluding the adventurous seafarer ever a new with empty hopes, and engaging him in enterprises which he can never abandon and yet is unable to carry to completion. (Kant [1781/87]: 257)

In this account, geography is completely entwined with cartography as a field, which on the one hand involves strategies of binding and consolidating knowledge, and on the other hand allows its own generalizations to point to the provisional nature of projecting spatial information (Farinelli [2012]: 380-381). Critically, the map shows how geographical knowledge and meaning are constantly under negotiation in ongoing geophysical/geopolitical and conceptual processes

of change. But even if maps need to be continuously redrawn, their absolute condition is constant in accordance with the following fact:

> The shape of the earth is almost spherical, or, as Newton has established more precisely on the basis of [his] fundamental laws and the law of attraction, a spheroid; and this assertion has subsequently been confirmed by repeated observations and measurements. (Kant [1892]: 453)

Like the condition imposed by the spherical shape of the Earth on the two-dimensional map projection, factual empirical knowledge may in some sense be subject to change, but not the fact *that* our knowledge is conditioned. «Reason, considered as the faculty of a certain logical form of knowledge» (Kant [1781/87]: 320)[9] to draw conclusions from transcendental ideas – e.g. the idea of the unity of all appearances – is for Kant a globe. To understand knowledge as something with a given determined structure is to understand it as spherical. Kant writes:

> Our reason is not like a plane indefinitely far extended, the limits of which we know in a general way only; but must rather be compared to a sphere, the radius of which can be determined from the curvature of the arc of its surface – that is to say, from the nature of synthetic a priori propositions – and whereby we can likewise specify with certainty its volume and its limits. Outside this sphere (the field of experience) there is nothing that can be an object for reason. (Kant 1781/87: 607-608)

Kant opposes an account of reason as an extended plane on the grounds that we will never be able to show the boundaries of such a surface from within, or with reference to, this surface itself. The curvature of the spherical surface, on the other hand, entails precisely the kind of immanent limit – or edging – that the *a priori* demarcation of reason aims at (Malpas, Thiel [2011]: 201). Unlike the determination of the limits of reason as such, which can only be performed on *a priori* basis, one can gain knowledge *a posteriori* of the limits within its domain; this is what constitutes perception. This is exemplified by Kant with the difference between knowing that the Earth is a globus sphere and the sensible perception of the Earth's surface as a flat plate:

> If I represent the earth as it appears to my senses, as a flat surface, with a circular horizon [*als einen Teller*.], I cannot know how far it extends. But experience teaches me that wherever I may go, I always see a space around me in which I could proceed further; and thus I know the limits of my actual knowledge of the earth at any given time, but not the limits of all possible geography. But if I have got so far as to know that the earth is a sphere and that its surface is spherical, I am able even from a small part of it, for instance, from the magnitude of a degree, to know determinately, in accordance with principles *a priori*, the diameter, and through it the total superficial area of the earth; and although I am ignorant of the objects which this surface may contain, I yet have knowledge in respect of its circuit, magnitude, and limits. (Kant [1781/87]: 606)

The purpose of critique is to ensure that the truth claims of philosophy and science are placed within the limits of reason. It is a purpose which stems from reason's inherent tendency to transcend the limits of the understanding and thus also its own boundaries, partly by means of the power of imagination. In the world as a cosmological whole, reason thus finds a self-limiting system that resembles itself in its critical activity. As we have seen in the case of geography, this reciprocity between critique and geography implies that spatiality is inscribed into philosophy on several levels. Something that points to further investigations of both the importance of geoscience as a philosophical foundation and Kant's recognition of critique as an open-ended endeavor, akin to the traveler's relationship to the map. It would also be constructive to include the question of how geographical structures – such as the idea of the global – permeate thought when place (history) – the local – is highlighted as fundamental in a critical-transcendental investigation of the mode of thought. This applies, for example, to questions such as the one raised above concerning the relationship between Kant's imperialist view of the world and his concept of cosmopolitanism. In light of such issues, how are we to understand Kant's claimed premise that the point of departure for an understanding of the conditions of philosophy is universally valid? The passages in *Physical Geography* concerning the arbitrariness of the location of the prime meridian, in relation to the Earth as a centerless globe, suggest an opening in Kant's own critical thought to specify and problematize the implications of the universal in relation to these conditions.

The aspect of the connection between spatiality and thinking implied by Kant's spherical reason, which I will elaborate on under the last heading of this text, is of aesthetic nature. It is a matter of the sensibility of the body as the constitutive condition of thinking. Admittedly, this is an approach which, by extension, provides resources for a critique of Kant's concept of the subject. This would be a critique based neither on a conception of the Kantian subject as universally acting beyond the body and history – a conception in which corporeality in Kant *per se* is understood as synonymous with racialized bodies –nor on its male whiteness as the embodiment of the universality of experience (Lloyd [2019]). The point I wish to make is that the spherical shape of reason emphasizes the globality of its universalism. If the *universal* etymologically denotes a more uniform whole – which has usually also encompassed a centripetal corrective, returning the diverse multiplicity of the world to a European center – the *global* is a concept which is open to a different kind of whole. As a term emphasizing materiality, the global – from the Latin "*globus"* (compact mass of spherical shape), of the same base as classical Latin "*glæba"* signifying lump, land, soil (*Oxford English Dictionary*) – constitutes a whole which includes the very decentered multiplicity that *Physical Geography* – again in contrast to Linnaeus's taxonomies – shows the empirical world to consist of. The corporeality

attributed to reason by the globus sphere, thus seems to hold the possibility of a similar decentralization. And perhaps herein also lies the possibility of a truly universal universalism[10]?

5. *The sensibility of the globus sphere*

Kant's critical turn towards the transcendental conditions of the possibility of knowledge, ethics and aesthetics opens to a historically new understanding of human sensibility. Since sensibility in addition plays such an important role in Kant's theoretical conceptualization of the critical turn itself – remember its many imaginative metaphors and examples – it will serve as point of departure for the last section of this text. I will now show how the three-dimensional body of the shape of the globus sphere – which provides reason not only with its inherent boundary, but also with mass and weight – is related to sensibility as the fundamental element in all the abovementioned areas of Kant's philosophy.

Kant's sharp separation of the spontaneity of reason and understanding from the receptivity of sensibility has commonly been identified as synonymous with a dominant reason and understanding. Despite the constant interest in Kant's philosophy, his concept of sensibility has been largely unexplored or criticized. The tendency to emphasize Kant's general centering of reason and the suppression of sensibility by the understanding is found in readings belonging to both the so-called "analytic" and "continental" traditions. But questions concerning embodiment and the role of sensibility in Kant's philosophy have come under more consistent scrutiny in the last decades, and broader reconsiderations of sensibility in Kant can be discerned (Meld Shell [1996]; Svare [2006]). My reflections on how Kant's geography relates to the multifaceted nature of human sensibility and its complex interplay with the understanding and reason respectively are based upon Angelica Nuzzo's ([2009]) comprehensive study of what she terms the "ideal embodiment" in Kantian philosophy. As Nuzzo points out, sensibility in Kant is not confined to its empirical dimension of experiential sensations, but also includes an ideal dimension of thinking. The latter in turn combines an element of free, aesthetic reflection – as well as the feeling/sensation of thought in reflection – with its opposite: the conceptualizations of the understanding. Sensibility thus encompasses both mere sensations, such as the feeling of pleasure, and theoretical queries about perception and knowledge (form, object). That is, it includes both subjective perception and objective materiality. This immanent duplicity of sensibility itself both presupposes and facilitates an analytical interface between Kant's critique and geography I have argued for.

Thus, Kant's pursuit of systematics is not by definition a suppression of the singularity and multiplicity of sensibility, as many of his contemporary critics

would argue[11]. Similarly, the often-invoked equivalence between the Kantian subject and the idea of a metaphysical subject exclusively grounded in reason has meant that aspects of reason's interaction with sensibility have been obscured. However, the metaphysical subject, as founded in spherical reason, already has a sensuous dimension. That the subject thus appears only with reference to sensibility is to say that Kant grounds the humanity of reason in its embodiment as a transcendental "human" form, that is, in *a priori* sensibility, and not in an excluding concept of «human nature» (Nuzzo [2009]). For Kant, the body is partly a physical fact that can be empirically explored, anthropologically observed, genetically and historically described and reconstructed, etc. On the other hand, it is a transcendental condition for something to appear as such a fact. It is this condition of our cognitive, practical and aesthetic orientation in the world that Nuzzo calls an "ideal embodiment", a notion derived from the tension between the transcendental critique of pure reason and the anthropological demarcation of this domain. This notion is pertinent to grasp the reciprocity of the globus curvature of reason and the shape of the Earth, as well as anthropology's close ties to geography. In particular, it is Kant's establishment of space and time as *a priori* forms of sensibility that transforms the entities of body and soul into formal conditions of experience, operating on the same plane. This relocation expands the field of sensibility – which is thus able to transcend the dualistic split between body and mind and thereby dissolve the classical opposition between rationality and sensibility – and complicates the very concept of man as a union of a material body and an immaterial subject (consciousness) (Nuzzo [2009]: 8).

In one sense, Kant's sphere presents us with a paradox. On the one hand, it signifies the materiality of the globe, whose mass and weight evoke the corporeality of the Kantian subject. On the other hand, this same corporeality is indirectly articulated through the hollow space spanned by the curvature of the sphere – the space for movement that renders the subject's action and thinking possible. The signification of the globe as both a lump and an empty sphere recalls the interaction in Kant's philosophy that simultaneously unites and maintains the separation between sensibility and rationality – those two stems of knowledge that must be kept separate discursively, yet are necessarily united in experience. Nothing expresses this paradox better than the familiar lines: «Intuition and concepts constitute, therefore, the elements of all our knowledge, so that neither concepts without an intuition in some way corresponding to them, nor intuition without concepts, can yield knowledge» (Kant [1781/87]: 92).

Through its thematic coupling of *Physical Geography* and *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant's essay *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking*? is essential for understanding the coexistence of the globe's signification as both materiality and space. The essay's main objective is to demonstrate how man can give

direction to thought, in other words, how to think without relying on dogmatic claims about reason. Since humans neither need nor have access to a transcendent reality beyond experience (God) that could put an end to their disorientation once and for all, they must find the conditions and boundaries of their thoughts' movements within themselves. It is important to keep both Kant's antidogmatic idea of autonomy and space as an *a priori* form of intuition in view when embodiment as the form and condition of thinking is articulated in *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?* In the essay, Kant approaches questions about the constitution and faculties of human reason through an extended comparison between geographical orientation on Earth – physical movement in contingent space – and orientation in thinking, which involves both the fixed direction of deductive conclusions and the free movement of reflections. In both cases, the corporeality of the human being is defined as constitutive. To orient oneself in the proper meaning of the word, Kant writes, means to use a given direction in order to find the others – «literally, to find the *sunrise*»:

> Now if I see the sun in the sky and know it is now midday, then I know how to find south, west, north, and east. For this, however, I also need the feeling of difference in my own subject, namely, the difference between my right and left hands. I call this a *feeling* because these two sides outwardly display no designatable difference in intuition. (Kant [1786]: 8)

The body is indisputably the seat of sensory effects, but it also constitutes the faculty of a particular feeling of orientation – one that perceives a difference that cannot be discerned by the senses nor specified solely by the concepts of understanding. This feeling, in its structure, is recognizable as the aesthetic feeling of (dis)pleasure, leading us, for a moment, into the realm of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Because the concept of faculty here has a double meaning – analogous to how the *Third Critique*, in addition to specifying the conditions of aesthetic judgment, also identifies the coordinates of the experience of applying judgment, as shown in the passages on the nature of laughter and wit in §54. As a faculty, the feeling of orientation involves both the force to realize change (in direction) and the condition that makes certain actions and activities (perception, desire) possible. The difference between left and right of our bodily asymmetry is not only a physical fact, an object of experience, but also functions as the necessary *a priori* condition of this experience itself. In Nuzzo's words, the body is ideal, as it possesses the formal dimension associated with space as a form of intuition – the condition of our experience of outer objects.

The source of orientation for both mind and body can thus be traced to a subjective feeling. Although this feeling can only be experienced within the subject, it also has an "outer" or "external" dimension, as it presupposes the world – the given area within and from which the subject tries to orient themselves. The

possibility of an important clarification thus presents itself: the Kantian subject (of knowledge) does not oppose the attribution of place, of being localized. The subject is already situated in relation to seasonal changes and geo-historical configurations, as well as to institutions and the multiplicity of other thinkers alluded to in the third *Critique*'s concept of "*sensus communis*" (§40). Proceeding from the global universalism of the sphere, of spherical reason, we can see how the first of Kant's questions designating the field of philosophy in *The Jäsche logic* – «*What can I know*?» (Kant [1800]: 538) – does not contest, but on the contrary is able to generate, the following question: «Who is the knowing subject and what is his or her material apparatus of enunciation?» (Mignolo [2011]: 325). That is, the question of his or her given place, the material circumstances of his or her orientation? The critique of Kant's racism in the *Anthropology* and *Physical Geography* is largely based on the premise that Kant positions himself at the center – of a circle – from which knowledge of the world is defined and blindly emanates. This suggests that Königsberg, or Europe, functions as a zero point, failing to account for its own situatedness.

Here again, the inherent paradox of the sphere – as both the surface of a lump and as an empty form – asserts itself: it is precisely Kant's own historical-geographical position – which, among other things, manifests in *Physical Geography* through the anchoring of central concepts such as the cosmopolitical within patriarchal and racialized hierarchies – that points to the potential of his philosophical methods and concepts to develop alternatives to such colonial modes of thought. As Kant demonstrates, both with the meridian example in physical geography and with his geography of reason, neither Earth nor the sphere has a center. The method of physical geography defines the center as that place on the surface where one happens to be located, which implies constant displacement in relation to the whole. Thus, while the given area of our orientation is a universally valid condition for thinking, it does not imply that the given is a fixed center, either geographically or historically.

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Notes

1 As recently as 2000, the anthropological writings were described as a well-kept secret within Kant studies (Louden [2000]) – a description that applies even more fittingly to *Physical Geography*, largely due to its philological complexities, being based on heavily edited student notes.
2 The following contextualizing accounts of the origins of Kant's geography and its place in his work are based on the above-mentioned works on the *Physical Geography*.
3 For information on the origins of the geography course, the manuscripts, and Kant's sources, see Adickes (1911), May (1970), Werner Stark (2011), and Eric Watkins (2012).
4 Taking aim at liberal voices like Martha Nussbaum, Harvey uses the particularities of geography and anthropology, which he takes as troubling for a universal ethic, to undermine contemporary interpretations of Kantian cosmopolitanism according to such an ideal.
5 In the *Pillau* notes from Kant's anthropology lectures (1777-1778), knowledge as such is defined from a pragmatic point of view as precisely knowledge of the world: *Weltkenntniß*.

6 «I understand by idea a necessary concept of reason to which no corresponding object can be given in sense-experience» (Kant [1781/87]: A327/B383).
7 In addition to Olsson, my discussion in the following paragraphs elaborates the studies of Franco Farinelli (2012) and Jeff Malpas and Karsten Thiel (2011).
8 For the relation between geography and anthropology see Wilson (2006) and (2011).
9 Full quote: «Reason, considered as the faculty of a certain logical form of knowledge, is the faculty of inferring, *i.e.* judging mediately (by the subsumption of the condition of a possible judgment under the condition of a given judgment). The given judgment is the universal rule (major premiss)».
10 A universalism analogous to Souleymane Bachir Diagne's concept of the universal as the decentering of thought through translation (Amselle, Diagne [2018]).
11 Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on Kant's transcendental method in his general critique of the tendency in the history of philosophy to intellectualize perception and overlook embodiment, can be considered one influential reference to the view of Kantian philosophy as suppressive of sensibility. «Human being is *antiphysis* [*Freiheit*] and completes Nature by opposing itself to it […] Kant opposes human being to the cosmos and makes all that there is of finality rest on the contingent aspect of humanity – freedom». (Merleau-Ponty [1995]: 26)