

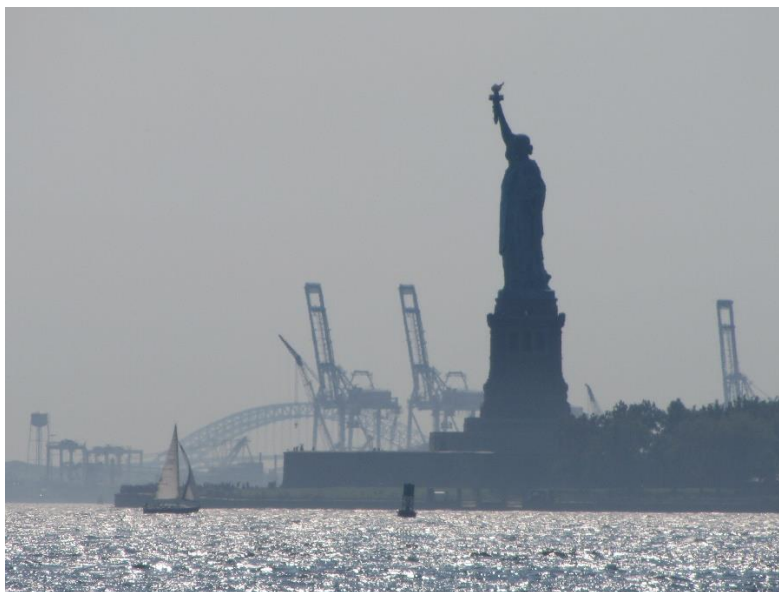
NORTHERN CHRONICLE: USA

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Freedom runs the risk of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibility. That is why I recommend that the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast be complemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast.

Viktor Frankl



Oh, freedom, how many crimes are committed in your name?!
(Manon Roland [1754-1793], on the way to the guillotine that killed her)
(Photo taken by the Author)

“God made the Earth, but the Dutch made Holland.”

Scholars usually take for granted that geographical conditions, especially climate, have great importance on the character of individuals and the societies that bring them together. In the writings of the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), for whom “the environment makes the man”, we find one of the most illustrious defenders of this propensity. Such importance, however, has never ceased to include exceptions – and many! – which prevents us from speaking (as Ratzel himself realized, despite the distorted interpretations of his colossal work) of a mere and infallible “geographical determinism”. European Greece, the homeland of poets like Aeschylus, sculptors like Phidias and philosophers like Plato, was enslaved by the Turks for more than 500 years, and what we now call “Turkey” is nothing more than ancient Asian Greece – also a tireless generator of great men of the Greek race. If geographical conditions were a determining factor in culture, the Turkish cultural legacy would be, at the very least, comparable to the Greek one. However, the historical truth is quite different. If we give credit to Ratzel’s statement that “the environment makes the man”, equal credit must be given to its opposite, since man is equally capable of making his own environment. Let us consider the saying “God made the Earth,

but the Dutch made Holland.” Having made these considerations, let us focus on the United States of America, the country that is the protagonist of this article.



Death Valley, in eastern California, the hottest place on Earth
(Photo taken by the Author)

About “Bandeirantes” and Pioneers

Geographical advantages – of which there are many – would be of no use if there were not, in the USA, a people duly willing to make the most of them. That is what happened: British pioneers came, saw and defeated both the former owners of those endless lands and the difficulties that Nature imposed on them, making them the richest and most powerful nation of all time. My guide here is the Brazilian writer Clodomir Vianna Moog (1906-1988), author of this unparalleled book, *Bandeirantes and Pioneers: Comparisons Between Two Cultures*, in which he compares, with abundance of data and arguments, the reasons why the United States are the United States and why Brazil is Brazil.



From 1973 to 2001, here in Manhattan, the Twin Towers stood
(Photo taken by the Author)

Indeed,

When in 1607, John Smith, the famous founder of the State of Virginia, said of the United States that “never have heaven and earth been so well-combined to create a habitable place for man”, he knew what he was saying, and the future would confirm his impressions.¹

It is still Viana Moog who observes and exclaims:

To begin with, there is, for example, the orographic factor. It is the first to demand the observer’s attention. As soon as one arrives in the United States, on the Atlantic coast, anyone traveling by train from Miami to New York or from New York to Philadelphia, Washington or Chicago, is surprised by the endless plains. No mountains blackening or blocking the horizons. One or two gentle elevations at large intervals, and then the train returns to the flat plain. No breathtaking granite fortifications, tunnels or viaducts. At most, one or two engineering works in the level differences necessary for the intersection of railways and highways. What a contrast with the journeys from Rio to Belo Horizonte, from Rio to São Paulo, from Paranaguá to Curitiba, or from São Paulo to Santos! In these, flatness is the exception; the rule is mountains, cliffs, tunnels, viaducts and curves framed by the fortification of inhospitable mountain ranges. However, these contrasts are nothing more than the exact translation of the geographical reliefs of Brazil and the United States. If you look at the maps, you will see that, in the United States, the entire Atlantic coast, from Florida to New York State, is made up of an uninterrupted plain, and that the Alleghenies and Appalachians are about 300 kilometres from the coast. However, once the Alleghenies were crossed or bypassed, new mountain ranges, the Rocky Mountains, would only appear far beyond the Mississippi, towards the Pacific.²



The granite of *El Capitán*, which is 100 million years old, bears witness to a time when the North Atlantic was half its current width.
(Photo taken by the Author)

About the American way of life

Rooted in Calvinism and its typical emphasis on the conquest of material wealth (the Calvinist is the “*homo economicus* par excellence”, as Vianna Moog makes clear once again), North American society has been substantially entrepreneurial. It is no surprise that the notion of *self-made man* emerged from it. It was created by the lawyer and statesman Henry Clay in the first half of the 19th century, to represent individuals whose prosperity results from their own efforts. An example of this is the writer, scientist, inventor, statesman, diplomat, printer,

¹ Clodomir Vianna Moog. *Bandeirantes e pioneiros. Paralelo entre duas culturas*, 4ª ed., Rio de Janeiro/Porto Alegre/São Paulo, Globo, 1957, p. 34.

² Id., p. 25.

editor, philosopher and politician Benjamin Franklin (1705/6-1790), native of Boston, one of the founders of the United States and one of the greatest names in the History of Sciences.



Mesa Verde, in Colorado: the place began to be inhabited almost 12,000 years ago
(Photo taken by the Author)

A target of envy and contempt for some, an ideal to be admired and achieved by others, the self-made man has never ceased to arouse interest or, at least, curiosity; the Wikipedia dedicates an entire entry to him, an entry rich in perspectives and quotations. For my part, I am reminded of the television series “Bewitched” and “I Dream of Jeannie”, both from the 1960s, both mouthpieces for the American way of life, the principle according to which any and all US citizens can achieve happiness through work and the effort required. We are talking here about purely earthly happiness. Samantha is a witch, and her husband is a designer who wants to succeed in life without the help of his spells; the same goes for the couple Jeannie and Major Nelson, an astronaut who finds himself in trouble whenever Jeannie (who is a genius) works her magic for his benefit. In short: both TV heroes want to succeed in life without any kind of favoritism (they are both self-made men and live in complete harmony with the American way of life); it is, however, a world without God and without religion, where the supernatural is limited to witchcraft and magic: an extremely poor world, therefore, an unequivocal sign that, already at that time, the writing was on the wall: the North American Empire’s days were numbered and the New World Order (with its atheist, pagan, amoral and materialistic dictates) was in full swing. Let us hope that better days will come for all of us!



New York: the “city that never sleeps”, home of the self-made man and stage of the American way of life
(Photo taken by the Author)