



Hegelian Interviews by hegelpd

Interview with Héctor Ferreiro

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1. We would like to start by asking you about your path in philosophy. How did you get into this discipline in general and into the study of Hegel in particular?

It is not unusual to wonder why people who chose philosophy as their profession have done it; such question, I guess, is less evident in the case of lawyers, accountants or architects. That someone turns the drive to problematize everything, which is a specific trace of philosophical thought, into his or her main occupation in life can provoke in others, indeed, a certain feeling of perplexity. One of the fundamental features of philosophy, says Ortega y Gasset, is “the intellectual eagerness towards the whole”, that is to say, that philosophy is “not definitively content with any position that [...] does not aim at the Universe” (*Obras Completas* VII, 336, 349). Nietzsche is the author that I read the most in my teenage years; his thought is a good example of that universal eagerness to which Ortega y Gasset refers, although in the case of Nietzsche rather in the negative sense that after reading him –to borrow here Marx’ famous wording in the *Manifesto*– one has the feeling that “all that is solid melts into air”. Nietzsche stimulated and strengthened in me a probably preexisting interest in exploring the most general principles of reality; in retrospect, I think that if my teachers of Physics or Biology at High School had been different than those that I actually had, they might have steered that interest towards the most theoretical fields of these sciences, like Astrophysics or molecular Biology. I did not have such interesting teachers, so it was probably Nietzsche who in the end more than anyone else moved me to choosing philosophy.

As far as why or how I got into the study of Hegel, well, that was a rather pragmatic issue. After finishing my degree on Philosophy I could apply for a postgraduate fellowship. For that, I had to develop a detailed research project. Hegel, as we know, is

an extremely difficult author; in fact, I had tried to penetrate his thought and had not succeeded to understand much. On the other hand, I was well aware that Hegel had been immensely influential, so that one cannot just forget about his philosophy; it is perhaps not indispensable to study in detail the philosophy of other also difficult authors like John Scotus Eriugena or even Sartre, but it was not the same case with Hegel. In those days, I read an article of a Belgian Hegel scholar called André Léonard who proposed a reading plan of Hegel's works divided in three phases from minor to greater difficulty (André Léonard, "Comment lire Hegel? Considérations spéculatives et pratiques", *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 70 (1972): 573-586). In the end, I decided not to follow Léonard's reading plan, but it definitively convinced me what he said in the first paragraph of his article: "Hegel's system is of such complexity and difficulty that many have tackled in anguish the question of how to get into this fortress of speculation. Many have attempted the journey and a big number of them have never returned, having got lost, without a guide, in the dungeons of the dialectic, whereas others returned prematurely from the voyage, defeated and discouraged [.]" It was clear that I was not the only one who found Hegel exceedingly difficult; if I had tried to understand his thought through self-study I would have probably ended up having to add my name to the long list of the "defeated and discouraged". So I decided to apply for the fellowship with a research project on Hegel. By doing so, I would be externally forced to understand his vocabulary and thought, and I would have, besides, the guidance of a senior Hegel scholar to help me with the task. I chose Ricardo Ferrara as my supervisor, an Argentine Hegel scholar who had worked in the Hegel Archive with Walter Jaeschke and Peter Hodgson on the first critical edition of Hegel's Lectures on the philosophy of religion (G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, vols. 3-5: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983-5). Academic life encourages and promotes specialization, so after the fellowship I moved to Berlin to make a PhD on Hegel at the Humboldt University under the supervision of Rolf-Peter Horstmann. I can confirm by my own experience that if I had not put myself in the situation of having to understand Hegel's thought for writing the reports required by the different fellowships I received and for writing the dissertation, I would have probably given up the attempt too early, as André Léonard warned. Hegel's rhetoric can be tiring and frustrating; however, if you persist, the text begins to open up. You need time and patience to decipher his terminology, so that you can finally understand his particular approach and his reasoning to solve the different philosophical problems. Once you have managed to overcome the first obstacles, you realize that Hegel's technical vocabulary is surprisingly precise. Although my decision to tackle Hegel's writings was pragmatically motivated, when I began to understand better his thought I developed a genuine and positive interest in his philosophy, that lasts until today. Hegel aims as few other philosophers to develop a comprehensive and unified explanation of reality; his philosophy eminently embodies that "intellectual eagerness towards the whole" that I mentioned before.

2. Your most recent publications and research projects mainly focus on Hegel's epistemology. In particular, you have explored the role of "abstraction" within Hegel's theory of knowledge, contrasting it with Aristotle's and the Scholastics' understanding of such an act. What do you think the 'added value', if any, of Hegel's conception of abstraction is and what could be the relevance of his position for contemporary philosophical debates?

I think that the most original and valuable contribution of Hegel to epistemology is to have clearly distinguished between three specifically different kinds of cognitive acts, namely intuition, representation and thought or, in other words, perceptual, abstract-representational and syllogistic (or inferential) knowledge. Until Kant, cognitive acts were usually classified into two kinds: sensible and intelligible. In such a paradigm, the cognitive activity from which abstract concepts derive marks the dividing line between sensibility and intelligibility. Hegel, on the contrary, conceives of the difference between sensible image and abstract concept as irrelevant; in fact, he does not distinguish abstraction as a specific act among the various acts of imagination. According to Hegel, the difference between sensible image and abstract concept is ultimately trivial, since for him the image's content *also* results by means of the abstraction of a particular bundle of determinations from the thoroughgoing determined context in which that bundle appears in perception. Abstract concepts simply arise from a further decontextualization of a still smaller bundle of determinations, eventually of highly isolated determinations like, for example, primary colors and, ultimately, of one single last determination, namely being as such, which since its content has been isolated from all other determinations, it appears as first sight as if it were not a determination, but entirely indeterminate. Hegel places the true transit of sensibility to intelligibility in the act in which the human mind creates symbols and signs. When creating symbols and, further, signs, the mind shows a greater power over its contents, since it is now capable of subordinating one content to another as its meaning. For Hegel, this power is of major importance for the later development of the cognitive activity. But no less a relevant aspect of symbolization and designation is, according to him, *that* the content that is in each case turned into the meaning of a symbol or a sign loses in the unity of these constructs its own sensible character. Indeed, in symbols and signs the mind attends primarily to the content that expresses the meaning. By doing so, the meaning's content becomes a non-sensible content, that is to say, an intelligible one: in order to understand a symbol or a sign we do not need to perceive nor to have an image of the content of its meaning; we can understand that the sequence of sounds "Caligula" designates a particular Roman emperor of whom we do not have, however, any perception nor, for that same reason, any sensible image. The still remaining sensible traces in the content of abstract concepts is overcome for Hegel by the activity of symbolizing and making signs. Signs are, in turn, the basic units of language, which is the proper element of the activity of thinking that has developed the capacity to understand perceptual contents.

In the epistemologies of Plato, Aristotle and the Scholastics, abstract concepts inaugurate not only a new stage of the knowing activity; the apparently non-sensible character of their content is considered, besides, as the indicator that with them we are in a new ontological domain that is essentially different from the one where material sensible things exist. According to this interpretation of the cognitive process, the part of the soul in which abstract concepts reside does not belong anymore to the physical world inhabited by inanimate things, plants and animals. The capacity to know separated forms is associated here to the thesis of the “simplicity” of the human soul and, thus, to its ontological difference with respect to the material world known by the senses of the body. However, in Modern philosophy up to Kant we find again –although transfigured– this same dualism. The sensible thing is in the latter case the universe ruled by necessity, whereas the understanding is the realm of normativity and freedom. Hegel rejects this dualism with its numerous corollaries: the dualism between sensibility and intelligibility (as abstractly opposed to the sensible world), between receptivity and spontaneity, between necessity and freedom, between body and soul. Hegel’s criticism of abstraction and his three-phase conception of knowledge play a crucial role in his rejection of dualism. Abstract contents of merely mental representations do differ from and are opposed to perceptual contents; according to Hegel, comprehending, however, which operates with judgments and inferences, overcomes that difference and opposition. When from knowing the determinations that have been isolated from the thoroughgoing determined context in which they initially appeared in perception our mind transits to their inferential knowledge, it overcomes, according to Hegel, their artificial unrelatedness and disconnection. By doing so, our mind overcomes their representational character, that is to say, the fact that they are known as merely subjective or mental contents opposed to their contextualized version in perception. The inferential activity of comprehending supersedes, thus, the dissociation between sensibility and intelligibility as well as its multiple consequences. Hegel provides with his three-phase conception of the knowing activity an original epistemological theory and an innovative conception of the function and meaning of abstraction within the cognitive process.

When our mind reaches the stage of language, a radical differentiation between sensibility and intelligibility becomes meaningless, because with language the mind acquires the capacity to refer to all beings without the need of their perceptual presence. This does not mean, however, as, for example, Russell or Popper thought, that Hegel – and, more in general, post-Kantian idealists– claimed that knowledge can obtain without perception. Knowledge does need perceptual contents, but these are not in each and all cases strictly necessary for knowing, because the *same* qualitative content or “determinacy” of perceptions can be present in the signs of language in a non-sensible way. Indeed, language can describe the detail of perceptions without that description being itself a perceptual content. Since judgments and inferences relate and mediate with each other the different determinations of the meanings of linguistic signs, inferential thought can, according to Hegel, reassume in itself the thoroughgoing de-

termination of the sensible world. Abstract thought, on the contrary, precisely *because* it isolates a limited set of determinations from the rest of determinations, has as such a representational, that is, a merely mental character: in its unrelatedness, the content of an abstract concept is opposed to the thoroughgoing determined context of the real world. If abstract concepts are taken as the model for understanding the intelligible in general, the relation between the intelligible and the sensible cannot be but a disproportionate relation: there is, indeed, always an imbalance between the abstract universal content and the sensible singular content. That is why the relation between the intelligible and the sensible has been traditionally conceived of as problematic. For solving the problem posed by the relation between the intelligible and the sensible when the intelligible is identified with the abstract some scholastic authors developed the theory of the *conversio ad phantasmata* and Kant, in turn, his theory of schematism. For Hegel, instead, the problem of the disproportion between the intelligible and the sensible arises if and only if the intelligible is conceived in an abstract way; abstraction, however, is in his eyes an artificial and temporary state of what is determinate. Thought encompasses *all* its instances –the intelligible as well as the sensible–, even when it does not contain them all, of course, explicitly and simultaneously. Thus, in actual thinking there are for Hegel no concepts that are not part of judgments nor judgments that are not part of inferences. The content of an abstract concept is the intelligible as far as it is transitorily considered by the mind *as if* it were a one-and-only content, but that content is in fact always integrated in the judgments and inferences of the living mind. Therefore, there is for Hegel no real disproportion between the content of concepts and the content of perceptions. For that same reason, there is in his philosophy no place either for a theory of schematism: the problem that this theory seeks to solve does not even exist in Hegel's approach to knowledge. The linguistic activity of judging and inferring overcomes the initial abstraction of the intelligible contents by interrelating them with each other. Unlike what happens in perception, in language the mind has power over the determinate, since what is determinate has become through the cognitive process a self-determination of the mind as the content of the meanings of its linguistic signs. The mind can, thus, elaborate new types of connection between the determinate contents in order to understand their true determinacy, that is to say, their 'concept'. Due to the thorough concreteness that derives from judgments being interrelated with each other by a systematic web of inferences, explicitly syllogistic or inferential thought, that is to say, comprehending, can for Hegel, unlike representational abstract thought, conform without conflict to perceptual contents. Along these lines, Hegel claims that comprehending and intuition have more in common with each other than with representation. According to Hegel, perceptual contents are not less ideal than non-perceptual contents; both are immanent instances of thought; therefore, the transit between each other can be perfectly fluid, since it takes place in the homogenous element of their common ideality. In Hegel's paradigm on knowledge, the intelligible conceived of as essentially different from and as opposed to the sensible is nothing but an error resulting from an insufficient understanding of the nature of thought's ideality.

Hegel's criticism of abstract thought and his three-phase conception of the cognitive process are, in fact, entirely functional to the main claim of absolute idealism, that is to say, to the thesis of the unity of being and thought.

3. We would also like to take the opportunity to expand upon this topic moving towards a more general metaphilosophical horizon. One major charge against philosophy is its alleged abstractness, which is often understood as philosophy's detachment from 'real' problems, the use of incomprehensible and hyper-specialized jargons, and the inability to communicate with non-philosophical areas. Do you think there is a different, positive meaning in the notion of 'abstractness', and could Hegel help us re-elaborate a sense in which abstraction plays a crucial role in the philosophical reflection, also in light of the resolution of so-called 'real problems'?

In Hegel's philosophy, "abstract" has always a rather derogatory sense, as it is made clear, for example, by the brief article from Hegel's time in Bamberg "Who thinks abstractly?". This should not be misunderstood, however, as if our minds could avoid abstraction; abstraction plays for Hegel an irreplaceable role in the cognitive process, namely making explicit the constitutive ideality of every determination. By isolating a determination from of its own context, abstraction posits it as a determination *of* the subject that performs the abstraction, that is, as an explicitly *subjective* content. The possible shortcoming of abstractness resides for Hegel in taking as absolute that merely transitory state of the determinate contents of knowledge, one of whose consequences is that abstract contents present themselves as unilaterally subjective or purely mental. As I've already mentioned in my answer to your previous question, ideality for Hegel is not limited to non-sensible or intelligible contents; perceptual contents are as ideal as abstract concepts, since both are instances of the activity of thinking. The inherent ideality of the perceptual content, however, is not explicit for perception itself: she who perceives a content, spontaneously thinks that that content is a real thing in the robust sense of realism. On the contrary, in its abstract state, that is to say, when separated from the thoroughly determined context of perception, every determination explicitly appears *as* ideal. But this ideality that becomes explicit for the first time in the abstract content is for Hegel a still partial ideality, because in that first appearance in the abstract content, ideality is unilaterally turned on itself; it is, to say it with Hegel's words, the mere being-*for* of the determinate (or its being-for-one in general: *Sein-für-Eines*) that excludes its being-in-itself (*Ansichsein*), which appears therefore as the real as such, as the real *schlechthin*. That is why the abstract content is here ideal and at the same time "merely" subjective. But for Hegel the abstractly ideal must return to the concretely real and idealize it *without* turning it into a purely subjective content (the opposite is what happens in Berkeley's philosophy), that is to say, the being-for-one has to recover the being-in-itself –i.e. the "mere" reality of the determinate– from which it has been

temporarily isolated by our mind so that being-for-itself and being-in-itself could be differentiated and reciprocally posited as such.

Hegel's conception of the abstract is, thus, very precise; in its proper and restricted meaning abstractness in Hegel's philosophy cannot be appropriated in an entirely positive way. But it should be made clear that what Hegel understands as "abstract" does not exactly coincide with the usual meaning of that word nowadays. In our daily language, "abstract" does not primarily refer to something that has been isolated from its context, but rather to something that is significantly different from what we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands, something that is far from the concrete things that we perceive. Indeed, "abstract" means for us primarily "intelligible" in the sense of "non-sensible" and, further along this line, of "counterintuitive" and "abstruse". "Abstract" in Hegel's philosophy has partially this same meaning too, since for Hegel abstract is not only what has been separated and isolated, but also the first figure of the intelligible and universal: the abstract is, strictly speaking, the intelligible and universal as far as it excludes from itself the sensible and singular. If we focus only on the latter aspect of the abstract, then, it is legitimate to affirm that Hegel rejects the claim that what is far from perception is for that same reason far from reality. Quite on the contrary: for Hegel, it is precisely by understanding perceptual contents by means of non-empirical concepts as we can comprehend their true nature. In this broad sense, abstractness is by no means for Hegel, as it is, for example, for empiricism, an indicator of estrangement from the real world. According to Hegel, perceptual contents should not be left untouched as they appear to perception, but they need to be integrated in the concept of the object and reordered and subordinated under the unity of that concept as sensible properties of the object. With other words: perceptual contents are not isolated atoms, but instances inside the ideal element of thought that, therefore, must be integrated in the totality of the activity of thinking. For Hegel, there is, thus, no conflict between the daily experience of the so-called real world and the intelligible, counterintuitive and –in this broad sense– abstract contents of our mind. It is, in fact, difficult to find another thinker in the history of philosophy that has claimed more clearly than Hegel that is understanding perceptual and concrete contents out of highly universal categories how we know how the real world really is.

4. Regarding the reception of Hegel in Argentina, what is the present philosophical landscape of the Hegel-Studies in your country? What parts of Hegel's thought are (and have been) most explored, and for what reasons?

There is in Argentina a considerable number of Hegel scholars and discussion groups on the philosophy of Hegel. Since in Buenos Aires, the capital, lives around one third of the entire population of the country it should come as no surprise that most of those scholars and reading groups work at universities located in Buenos Aires and in the surrounding areas. But there are also Hegel scholars and groups in other cities, mainly in Mendoza (a region of Argentina that people in Europe may have already heard about,

since most of Argentine wines are produced there), Santa Fe and Mar del Plata. Although many aspects of Hegel's thought have attracted the interest of Argentine Hegel scholars through the years, it is not unfair to say that his practical philosophy, especially his political philosophy, has attracted more attention than any other. In Latin America –I think, for example, in Mexico, Venezuela or even Chile– many people got into Hegel from marxism and neomarxism; in Argentina, however, Hegel scholars have seldom come from Marx or critical theory. The interest in Hegel's political thought has developed in Argentina less out of the interest for marxism than for the interest in finding a philosophical legitimation of the concept of welfare state. Hegel has been seen, indeed, as a forerunner of the idea of the welfare state, as a thinker who provides conceptual tools for a philosophical critique of economic liberalism and for grounding the irreplaceable role of the State in the political and economic life of society. More clearly: people searched in Hegel's political thought a philosophical legitimation of the right of the State to regulate economic activity for public purposes, respecting at the same time individuals, private property and civil society with its "system of needs".

5. Does it make sense to talk about a 'Latin American reception of Hegel' or do we run the risk of reducing a plurality of very different interpretative nuances, also linked to national contexts, to an artificial unitary vision?

Indeed, there is no such thing as a Latin American reception of Hegel –or at least not yet, although there might be one in the future. Latin America is more than twice as big as Europe –therefore, many times the surface of Western Europe– and has today around 650 million inhabitants. Although the cultural and idiomatic diversity in that immense territory might be smaller than the one that there is in Europe, where on a relatively small surface there are a big number of nations with different languages, that diversity is, however, bigger than what the common noun "Latin America" may suggest. Anyway, the vast distances between the different Latin American countries, the limited connectivity between many of their cities and further factors, like, for example, the insufficient financing of travel expenses, had as a consequence that Latin American Hegel scholars have had in the past less contact with each other than with their European colleagues. In fact, many Latin American Hegel scholars have met studying at universities in Europe and have seen each other afterwards more often at conferences in Europe than at events in Latin America. Besides, most Latin American publishing houses have only local distribution channels, so that their books are often not available in the other countries of the region. Ultimately, libraries in Latin America are usually not well resourced. All these factors have contributed to the lack of effective cooperation between Latin American Hegel scholars, what has in turn resulted in the lack of a common reception of Hegel's philosophy. But the situation has begun to change in the last two decades due to the massive use of the internet and the decreasing travel costs; especially the new opportunities for dissemination of information opened by the digital era are stimulating a greater cooperation at regional level. Thus, in the

mid-term or long-term future there might be in the region a common tradition of reading Hegel's works, but it would be, in my opinion, a mistake to think that that tradition already exists.

6. Recently a debate has emerged concerning Hegel's Eurocentrism. On the one hand, some scholars have emphasized Hegel's Eurocentric perspective, which becomes particularly evident in his teleological reconstruction of world history. On the other hand, however, other scholars interpret Hegel as the philosopher of freedom who can provide us with conceptual tools to resist the Eurocentric vision of world history. You have addressed this topic in one of your recent lectures, titled "Hegel y América Latina: entre el diagnóstico de la brecha de desarrollo y el eurocentrismo". Can you briefly remind us your position on this matter?

I think that both claims are basically correct, namely that it is possible to identify in Hegel a Eurocentric position and that his philosophy offers at the same time conceptual tools to criticize and overcome that position. A claim that can not be legitimately made against Hegel, however, is that of racism. There are enough passages in Hegel's work that we would definitely find today very difficult not to characterize as racist: in fact, anyone who openly held such views today would be accused of discrimination, might lose her job and could even be prosecuted. This, of course, would happen not only to Hegel, but also to a great number of thinkers, artists and politicians of the previous centuries. And yet, it is still fair to say that Hegel did not naturalize racial peculiarities in the sense of a racial theory. The content as well as the formal structure of Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit, that is to say, of what can be characterized as his philosophical anthropology, make sufficiently clear that, according to him, the aspects of the human mind that immediately derive from its biological background are overcome by its theoretical and practical activity in order to make explicit its constitutive universality and freedom. There is a broad textual basis in Hegel's works to solve this question in this direction.

The situation changes to some extent in the case of Eurocentrism. When one addresses the problem of Hegel's possible Eurocentrism –and here I think first and foremost in his position with respect to the Americas– one should not forget that Hegel's philosophical life spanned from the last decade of the XVIII century to the third decade of the XIX century. We are talking, thus, of a time when the countries of the American continent had just become independent from the European powers that had either conquered or colonized them for centuries. Those countries did not have yet a sufficiently long postcolonial history that could distinctly reveal their political and socio-economic specificity. This partly justifies Hegel's claim that "what has taken place in the New World up to the present time is only an echo of the Old World — the expression of a foreign life". Anyway, when I describe Hegel's attitude towards the countries of the Americas as partially Eurocentric I do not mean the thesis –that Hegel, by the way, vehemently defends– that Europe is at the forefront of civilization ahead of Asia and,

even more, of Africa and pre-Columbian America. That claim rests, in my opinion, in convincing facts and arguments, although some people may find them debatable. I understand “Eurocentrism” in a narrower sense, as the position that combines the claim that Europe is at the forefront of civilization, firstly, with the downplaying of the unique contributions of other civilizations, and secondly, with the denial of the own negative aspects of the European civilization. Hegel did not invent this somewhat narcissistic self-understanding of Europe, but he accepts it and reproduces it in his philosophy. In the case of pre-Columbian America, Hegel minimizes the importance of the Aztec and Inca civilizations; along these lines, he dismisses or plainly ignores the long history of resistance against the conquest by the Europeans, although in Hegel’s own time, that is to say, still two centuries and a half after the beginning of the conquest, one of the greater indigenous uprisings against the Europeans took place in Peru, namely the so-called “Great Rebellion” led by Tupac Amaru II. In the case of the post-colonial Americas, Hegel fails to see a phenomenon that, in my opinion, implies not only a step forward of the New World with respect to what Hegel calls the “principle of Europe”, but also a novel contribution of the Americas to Universal History: the overcoming of the nation-state by the state of citizens. Few years after the end of World War II and the Holocaust, Hannah Arendt published *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. (World War II and the Holocaust are, by the way, two events that still today Europe does not seem particularly keen to recognize as a result of its own history: in fact, I consider the thesis of Nazi-Germany’s alleged “deviation from the West” as a variation of the denial of the European specificity of both events. The Italian historian Enzo Traverso, on the contrary, has offered a brilliant reconstruction of the Pan-European origins of Nazism [see Enzo Traverso, *La violence nazie: Une généalogie européenne*, Paris: La Fabrique, 2002; eng. transl.: *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, New York: New Press, 2003], while the Israeli historian Zeev Sternhell traced back fascism’s intellectual origins to XIX century France [see Sternhell, Zeev; Sznajder Mario & Asheri Maia Nais, *Naissance de l’idéologie fasciste*, Paris: Fayard 1989; eng. transl. *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989]). In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt claims that there has been in Europe a persistent tension between the “State” and the “Nation”. Hegel sees above all in Protestant Europe, especially since the French Revolution, the materialization of the universal principle of Humanism. In contrast with this complacent self-image, Arendt affirms that the French Revolution linked the Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen with the declaration of the sovereignty of the people, that is to say, with the national sovereignty, so that the same fundamental rights were declared as inalienable rights of all human beings, but at the same time as the specific rights of the members of the nation-state. Thus, according to Arendt, in Europe the declaration of the Rights of Man “had never been politically secured but merely proclaimed” (Hanna Arendt [1951], *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, San Diego/New York/London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1979, 447). Arendt does not see Europe, but rather the United States as the place where the particularist principle of the national community, that is to say, to use Tönnies’ words, the principle of the

Gemeinschaft has been finally overcome by the universal principle of society, of *Gesellschaft*. However, the overcoming of the principle of the national community by the principle of society is actually not exclusive to the United States, but common to the rest of the countries of the Americas. On the contrary, the *ius sanguinis* is still today an essential aspect of the “principle of Europe”. That the source of citizenship is the “right of the blood” is just one of the numerous symptoms that the principle of Europe is not really entirely universal. The “right of soil”, that is, to say it with plain words, the right to citizenship and nationality based not on the naturalistic and hereditary membership of the nation, but on the fact itself that we are always born into a given society, is recognized until today almost only by the countries of the American continent. I hold the recognition of that right with its many, far-reaching implications to be one of the original contributions of the Americas to Universal History. Be that as it may, Hegel’s partly Eurocentric self-understanding of Europe is, in the last analysis, inconsistent with his universalist anthropology and his conception of Universal History as the process of self-consciousness of human freedom and dignity.

7. As Italian-speaking researchers we often find ourselves speaking and writing in English to discuss Hegel’s philosophy. On the one hand, English has the clear advantage of being a *lingua franca*, on the other hand the prevalent use of English in Hegel-scholarship is not philosophically neutral: there might be the risk of obscuring a plurality of languages, cultures and perhaps ways of thinking. What do you think about this issue? Is it a real threat? Do you experience the same problem in Argentina? If yes, how do you think it has impacted on Argentinian academic philosophical communities and on the study of Hegel?

It is important to distinguish the fact that there is a *lingua franca* from the fact that that *lingua franca* is the native language of the inhabitants of certain countries. It is an undoubtedly positive development that a particular language has become the language in which a great number of philosophers communicate and interchange ideas with each other, and eventually most or even all of them can do it in the future. This is of particular benefit for people who speak as mother tongue a language that is not spoken by many other people throughout the world. In order to disseminate their ideas, philosophers in such a position never had any other option but to publish their works in a foreign language (even if that language might not have been a *lingua franca*); let us think, for example, in philosophers like György Lukács, Émile Cioran, Tzvetan Todorov or nowadays Slavoj Žižek. But even those whose mother tongue is spoken by a considerable number of people in the world, they are, ultimately, also limited by their own language. If we take a look at the references of papers or books by German, British or US American Hegel scholars, we will find, as a rule, only few titles, if any, in French, Italian or Spanish. That is why it is of great benefit that there is a common language for the dissemination and communication of philosophy.

Now, unlike Latin in the Middle Ages and early Modern times, the actual *lingua franca* is the mother tongue of the inhabitants of certain countries. This circumstance is not, in my opinion, philosophically neutral. I am not thinking first and foremost on the Hegel scholarship of the English-speaking world, but rather on the mainstream philosophy in its Departments of Philosophy, that is, analytic philosophy. Analytic philosophy has been expanding in the world at the expense of the research on other philosophical movements, among them, German idealism. Since analytic philosophers lean to conceive analytic philosophy as the result of applying the scientific method on philosophy and, thus, as the only valid philosophy, they quite frequently harbor hegemonic ambitions. This attitude has begun to have concrete consequences on the hiring policies of universities and the selection criteria of funding institutions of several countries: analytic philosophers are more likely to get offered teaching positions as well as public funding than non-analytic candidates. This state of affairs, of course, does not immediately follow from the mere fact that English has become the *lingua franca*, but from the general situation that explains in turn that fact. Indeed, that English has consolidated as the common language is a result of the military, technological and cultural predominance of the United States since the end of Second World War. Movies, pop music and other expressions of mass culture are, besides, strongly influenced worldwide by the English-speaking countries. This explains that English has become the common language and, along these lines, that analytic philosophy, as the dominating philosophy in the Departments of Philosophy of the English-speaking countries, began to become widespread in other countries. The universities of Latin America are not immune to this phenomenon. In the particular case of Argentina, although there is no disproportionate spread of analytic philosophy in the Departments of Philosophy, where Continental philosophy has traditionally been strong, and still continues to be, one can already perceive a preferential treatment of the applications with research projects on analytic philosophy by public funding institutions.

That a particular language has become the common language has as such no negative effects on Hegel scholarship, but it may have them if in the future English bears too much influence on Hegel scholars from the non-English speaking countries. We can already see today that secondary literature on Hegel in English receives more attention than secondary literature in other languages –with the exception, maybe, of literature in German. This does not mean, of course, that books and papers on Hegel in Italian, French or Spanish have less impact *because* those published in English has a bigger one. Anyway, who has as mother tongue other language than English has today, precisely because English has become the *lingua franca*, the possibility of publishing English translations of her works and, by doing so, of reaching a broader public. Now, as far as the risk that I have mentioned above that the Hegel scholarship of the English-speaking countries could maybe in the future disproportionately influence the Hegel studies of other countries, I am not thinking on the legitimate influence that Hegel scholarship in English might exert due to its content, but on the possibility that it does it, so to speak, surreptitiously by the mere fact that it is in English. More clearly: if En-

English as means of expression and communication leads in practice to the general adoption of the particular agenda and specific approach of the Hegel scholars of the English-speaking countries, the danger I am talking about is not unreal. On the one hand, the increasing dissemination of the works of English-speaking Hegel scholars has certainly enriched the Hegel scholarship in other languages; on the other hand, however, there is a danger that Hegel studies worldwide focus in the future almost exclusively on the secondary literature produced by English-speaking Hegel scholars. That would stifle other hermeneutic and exegetical traditions. If we look at the Programmes of the main conferences on Hegel that have taken place in the last years in different parts of the world as well as the secondary literature that is discussed worldwide in recent publications, it is not unfair to say that we can already observe a trend towards favoring key speakers, titles and themes of Hegel scholars from the English-speaking countries. Indeed, it is today more usual to hear conference speakers and to read papers discussing the interpretation of English-speaking Hegel scholars than to hear talks and read publications that discuss the interpretation of prominent Hegel scholars from non-English speaking countries like, for example, Claudio Cesa, Leo Lugarini, Remo Bodei, Franco Chiereghin, Guy Planty-Bonjour, Pierre-Jean Labarrière or Bernard Bourgeois, to name only a few. This is certainly not a positive development. But, on the other hand, it is not easy to solve the problem, because the barrier raised by languages is real. A way to counteract this “anglifying” trend would be, as paradoxical as it may seem, to translate into English the representative works of the most renowned Hegel scholars of the non-English speaking world.

8. You have been actively engaged in the founding of the *German-Latin American Research and Doctoral Network in Philosophy* and you are a member of its Executive Board (<https://www.fernuni-hagen.de/filored/es/index.shtml>). Started in 2011, this programme has already promoted two international Hegel congresses (in 2014 and 2017 – the third one was scheduled for this October, but has obviously been postponed) and many publications (https://www.fernuni-hagen.de/filored/es/es_publicaciones.shtml). What is the idea behind this programme? What have been the main steps that have led to the creation of this network?

The *German-Latin American Research and Doctoral Network in Philosophy* (FILORED) started out as an initiative of the FernUniversität in Hagen, that is, the German University of Distance Education. The initial objective of the FernUniversität was to sign bilateral agreements with universities in Latin America in order to offer, respectively, a Joint-PhD in Philosophy. Although those agreements were intended to be –and, in fact, they are– between the Departments of Philosophy, the link between the FernUniversität and the Latin American universities ran in practice through the Chair of Practical Philosophy at the FernUniversität held by Prof. Dr. Thomas Sören Hoffmann, a well-known scholar on Classical German Philosophy. The counterparts in Latin

America were also colleagues whose expertise is Classical German Philosophy. Thus, Hegel's philosophy was from the very beginning at the heart of FILORED. Due to the shared thematic interests, the project of bilateral agreements for Joint-PhD programmes rapidly turned into the broader project of a cooperation network between Germany and Latin America to support and promote the research on German Classic Philosophy in Latin America. As I have mentioned it in one of my previous answers, several factors had hampered the cooperation between Hegel scholars in Latin America. Thus, we decided to organize with FILORED an itinerant Hegel conference that should take place every three years in a different country of Latin America. Our objective was to create a forum for Latin American Hegel scholars to periodically present and discuss the results of their research with their regional colleagues and with colleagues from Germany as well as, potentially, with Hegel scholars from around the world. The I German-Latin American Hegel Conference took place in 2014 in Buenos Aires and was attended by over 150 speakers from as many as 90 different universities of Latin America and Germany; we had also attendees from the United States, Canada, Austria, Czech Republic, Israel, Italy, Poland Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The II Hegel Conference took place in 2017 in Valparaiso and had over 100 speakers from 15 countries. Considering the great number of attendees and the diversity of their background, the two Hegel Congresses organized by FILORED were the biggest meetings on Hegel to have ever taken place in Latin America. The III German-Latin American Hegel Conference should have taken place in October of this year in Lima and Cusco, the ancient capital of the Incas, but due to the pandemic it had to be postponed for next year. Besides the triennial German-Latin American Hegel Conference, FILORED organizes every year a Symposium on Classical German Philosophy; the philosophies of Kant, Fichte, Schelling and again Hegel are at the core of those meetings. FILORED has to date organized seven Symposia on Classical German Philosophy in universities belonging to the network in Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Colombia. I should have organized the eighth Symposium in November 2020 in Buenos Aires, but unfortunately I also had to postpone it for 2021.

I would like to clarify that FILORED is not a "society" or an "association" of scholars on a particular subject or author –for example, on Classical German Philosophy or Hegel–, but a network of universities. Thus, its members are not directly scholars, but universities through their Departments of Philosophy. The universities that form FILORED are to date the following: Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina (Argentina), Universidade Federal do Ceará (Brazil), Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), Universidade Federal de São Carlos (Brazil), Universidad Diego Portales (Chile), Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Chile), Universidad Nacional de Colombia (Colombia), FernUniversität in Hagen (Germany), Ruhr-Universität Bochum (Germany), Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg (Germany), Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Mexico) and Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (Peru).

There are currently over twenty PhD candidates from Latin America writing their dissertation in the frame of the Joint-PhD Programme of FILORED, and several students have already finished their doctorate studies. FILORED periodically organizes online colloquia specifically designed for its PhD candidates; since its foundation, it had organized eighteen online meetings.

From the many other activities that FILORED carries out, I would like to mention the publications: FILORED has published the Proceedings of both Hegel Conferences of 2014 and 2017; it has also published the Proceedings of the next-to-last Symposium on Classical German Philosophy that took place in 2018 in Porto Alegre, Brazil; finally, the volume with the papers read at the last Symposium, which took place in Bogotá in November 2019, is currently in process of publication by the publishing house of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

9. As usual, we will conclude the interview by asking you to mention at least five books or contributions on Classical German Philosophy that have been crucial to your education.

It is never easy to make a selection, but if I have no alternative, my list would be the following:

(i) Dieter Henrich, *Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967. This brief text of Henrich opened my mind on the meaning and main objective of post-Kantian idealism.

(ii) Ramón Valls Plana, *Del Yo al nosotros. Lectura de la Fenomenología del Espíritu de Hegel*, Barcelona: Estela, 1971. Valls Plana's book has been for decades –and probably still continues to be– the best exposition of Hegel's *Phenomenology* that we have in Spanish.

(iii) Michael Theunissen, *Sein und Schein. Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980. Theunissen provides in this book a compelling, thought-provoking reading of the first chapters of Hegel's *Logic* –besides being one of the first books to clearly reveal the critique of metaphysics contained in the *Objective Logic*.

(IV) Rolf-Peter Horstmann, *Ontologie und Relationen. Hegel, Bradley, Russell und die Kontroverse über interne und externe Beziehungen*, Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1984. A highly insightful explanation of Hegel's idealist monist ontology in contrast to the realist ontological pluralism at the core of early analytic philosophy. (Horstmann takes up few years later the main thesis of this book in his *Wahrheit aus dem Begriff. Eine Einführung in Hegel*. Frankfurt am Main: Hain, 1990, where he provides an atypical and enlightening introduction to the theoretical foundations of Hegel's philosophy).

(v) Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. In my particular case, the relevance of this book relied less on Pippin's claims on Hegel –although I still agree with most of them– than rather on his specific kind of approach to Hegel's texts. The secondary literature on Hegel that I had read before reading Pippin was almost without exception by Continental Hegel scholars, mostly, German authors and French, Italian and Spanish-speaking authors that had been in turn influenced more or less directly by German Hegel scholarship. Pippin's book was for me the first serious encounter with the Hegel scholarship of the English-speaking world, which differs from the Continental Hegel scholarship in that it dares conceptual readings that are less close to Hegel's own text and vocabulary; that approach can provide especially insightful interpretations of Hegel's thought (although it occasionally runs the risk of moving too far away from the original text).

(vi) Adriaan Peperzak, *Hegels praktische Philosophie. Ein Kommentar zur enzyklopädischen Darstellung der menschlichen Freiheit und ihrer objektiven Verwirklichung* Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1991. A very good example of what a literal commentary on a text of Hegel should be: Peperzak does not simply paraphrase Hegel's own wordings (something that is not unusual in commentaries on Hegel's works), but he explains step by step their content without loosing the direct link to the text. Stephen Houlgate's commentary on the first chapters of the Greater Logic contained in the Third Part of his *The Opening of Hegel's Logic. From Being to Infinity* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006, 263–441) is, in my opinion, another good example of a successful literal commentary on one of Hegel's works.

(vii) Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Still the best exposition of the reasons that have led to the so-called "Hegel renaissance" in the English-speaking countries.