

Society and State in Marcuse and Hegel*

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In the 40s and the 50s of the last century existed a largely shared conviction amongst the majority of social scientists in the US regarding the explanation of the theoretical philosophical roots of National Socialism. Contrarily to European writers, who searched its philosophical origins in irrational philosophical traditions, in the US, they relied upon the perception that Hegel's Philosophy of State was the most relevant ideological basis of National Socialism. Hegel's idea for the need of a strong state, seemed to clearly support the hypothesis. Herbert Marcuse, exiled in the United States, had to confront himself with this conviction that academic colleague shared. This theoretical hypothesis was in tune to the *Zeitgeist* and the political context, in which anticommunism was growing stronger by the day and where the cold war was developing. Associating Hegel and National Socialism implied, for most of the hypothesis defenders yet another vantage point: it could discredit also Marx, for the tights links between his philosophical thinking and Hegel's one. For Marcuse this hypothesis was even more problematic knowing that in Germany, national socialist philosophers had rejected Hegel from the very first day their party came to power. In this article we try to analyze Marcuse's respective philosophical argument. The point of departure of this reconstruction is the philosophical interpretation of Hegel's theory of the State. Further than the historical context, the debate on Hegel and his theory of the State, is very relevant for today's debates, dominated by neoliberal ideologies, which often are starting from similar theoretical errors than the mentioned. In both cases exists a lack of understanding of the classic bourgeois content within the concept of the State, based on the French Revolution.

Keywords: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Herbert Marcuse, state, society

1. Introduction

In the 40s and the 50s of the last century, ultimate years of National Socialism military existence and first of post-fascism phase in Germany, existed a largely shared conviction amongst the majority of social scientists in the United States regarding the explanation of the theoretical philosophical roots of National Socialism and its ideology. Contrarily to writers like Lukács, who searched its philosophical origins in some irrational traditions within German philosophy, in the United States, they relied upon the perception that Hegel's objective idealism, above all his Philosophy of State, was the most relevant ideological basis of National

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Socialism. A strong concept of reason, and even more still, Hegel's idea for the need of a strong state, seemed to clearly support the hypothesis.

Herbert Marcuse, exiled in the United States where he lived and worked until the end, had to continuously confront himself with this conviction that most of his academic colleague shared. This theoretical hypothesis was in tune to the *Zeitgeist* and the political context, in which anticommunism was growing stronger by the day and where the cold war was developing. Associating Hegel and National Socialism implied, for most of the hypothesis defenders yet another vantage point: it could implicitly discredit also Marx, as even his most ferocious enemies were aware of the tight links between his philosophical thinking and Hegel's one. For Marcuse, already Hegelmarxist at the time, this hypothesis was even more problematic knowing that in Germany, national socialist philosophers had rejected Hegel from the very first day their party came to power. Lastly, it is also due to Marcuse's great knowledge of Hegel and the political-historical context in which the idealist philosopher writes, that he cannot remain quiet about this hypothesis so much en vogue in the country that participated—belatedly—in military liberation of Germany and Europe from National Socialism and fascism.

We will subsequently try to analyze Marcuse's respective philosophical argument. The point of departure of this reconstruction is the philosophical interpretation of Hegel's theory of the State. Further than the above-mentioned historical context, the debate on Hegel and his theory of the State, is very relevant today, not only for the mere act to oppose to oblivion—that is in social theory and in philosophy one of the worst threat to emancipation—but also because in today's debate, infiltrated with neoliberal ideology, many authors are starting from similar theoretical errors than the ones associated with the intention to link Hegel objective idealism to National Socialism doctrines and reality. In both cases exists a lack of understanding of the classic bourgeois¹ content within the concept of the State, based on the French Revolution. Having heard of the take of the Bastille Georg, Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel celebrated with a good red vine from Bordeaux.

2. State and Society in the Political Philosophy of Hegel

What is the center of Hegel's philosophy of the State? It could be paraphrased this way: the substance of the right, the legal (*das Rechtliche*) and of the moral, are the commandments of the ethical live (*Sittlichkeit*) and the State.²

In his philosophy, Hegel pleads to take up the theoretical and practical-politic work that had been done so far. It is not necessary for each generation to re-elaborate the rationally constructed system of social codes of conduct (*sittliches System*);³ It is not the “novelty” of a developed idea of State for which its genial, intelligent, and rational, on the contrary, these ideas are made starting from ideas and realities that had existed, to the extent of our success in resuming theses experiences Hegel (1991, 44).⁴ Today existing (bourgeois)⁵ State is not to be apprehended as any accidental product, something fortuitous, which can be criticized, suppressed or substituted in any way. Rather, Hegel was convinced, the State had to be conceived as part of the world of the *Sittlichkeit*,⁶ it is to say, as clearly and orderly structured as nature is: ordinate according to the immanent and reasonable natural laws.

In this philosophy, the laws of the world of *Sittlichkeit* are, like natural laws, in themselves reasonable and comprehensible for the spirit. Out of the spirit, are valid natural laws and they exist “nonetheless.” Consequently, if two antagonistic concepts concerning a natural law existed, for instance, one has to be false. Everything is in nature the way it has to be, according to objectives laws.

Regarding juridical laws, on the other hand, a contradiction may possibly exist between what is and what should be. Even when they (their criterion), also exist in a certain way, outside from us, and “we get to know the laws of right [...] simply as they are; the citizen knows them more or less in this way, and the positive jurist also stops short at what is given” it is still possible that a division of the spirit may occur in the conflict about the validation of some juridical laws” (Hegel 1991, 13, addition)⁷. In those situations, asserts the German philosopher, “we often turn away from the arbitrariness of life to the contemplation of nature and are inclined to take the latter as a model.”⁸

This conflict, division of the spirit, remits us from juridical laws, questionable, to the unquestionable natural laws. The spirits in conflict can and should find guidance in the organized reason of the sub-mentioned natural laws. As a consequence, considers Hegel with intention to build a more rational world than the medieval one, conflicts about the juridical laws should not be based upon accidental opinion but rather on scientifically elaborated concepts. Only those concepts enable real knowledge, including of the questions of the *Sittlichkeit*.

Research on public right is not only possible, but also comes to be necessary since, with illustration, thought has raised itself as the essential form even above respect and veneration of the (existing) law, for that reason it has to be possible to comprehend the right (as reasonable).⁹ With this idea, is brought to light an emancipatory aspect of Hegel’s philosophy: the thinking subject subordinates the dominant State to his capacity of reflection and rational decision making—a State which at times presents itself as force which is contrary (extern) to the subject. This subordination is realized in the sense that the subject has now the possibility to rationally conceive the State and reach the center of his structure and right, which are reasonable, that is to say, accessible for reason.

Yet, the emancipatory content of Hegel’s concept of State is at risk of transforming itself in a mere apology of the bourgeois State, for public right subordinates itself to the supremacy of reason and this subordination is sometimes paid at a too high price, knowingly, the ignorance of the contradictions and irrationalities of the bourgeois State.

Hegel is the philosophical representative of the bourgeois State. Indeed, in his elaborated theory of State, he describes the latter as “actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of the ethical Idea (*sittliche Idee*)” and as “actuality (*Wirklichkeit*)¹⁰ of substantial freedom”.¹¹ When Hegel speaks here of “actuality” (*Wirklichkeit*), he does not trivially refer himself to the state of what really (*tatsächlich*) exist. Actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), that reason can access, is determined by the latter: it has to be reasonable, it is reasonable. Real (*wirklich*) bourgeois State is paragon, perfection of the *Sittlichkeit* (the rationally constructed system of social codes of behavior)¹² and of the realization of reason within universal history.

With this definition, Hegel does not deny by antonomasia all possibility of irrationality within the bourgeois State that really exists. But irrationality is not, on principle, an element of this State. For it is placed—for the first time in universal history—not higher than that at the level of the momentary appearances. Bourgeois State has an intrinsically potential to be shaped in a fully reasonable way. With French Revolution, the great dialectician from Berlin is convinced about that, reason got infused into modern, post-feudal State, identical to the bourgeois (*bürgerlich*) according to Hegel. Consequently, when Hegel speaks here of the reality (*Wirklichkeit*) of the State, he refers himself to an ideal reality or one according to idea. Conceptually founded, this reality tends to realize itself at all levels and all spheres of historical development. This precision is in no way limitative of the strength of the reality concept, as we are used to analyze in the positivist thinking, which is today’s general consciousness. For the objective idealist, there is nothing more powerful than the idea, in

other word, only reality (*Wirklichkeit*) understood this way—as an ideal reality in process of materialization, has historical relevance.

Bourgeois State is—in the idea, in the possibility of principle, in the reality (*Wirklichkeit*) constructed in such a way—an instance free of contradictions belonging to it in principle. Therefore, this State is something like the end of history. Here, the great dialectician Hegel comes to be anti-dialectic. There, where the bourgeois State is envisioned by him (even in its best possible form) as paragon to human emancipation, he becomes apologetic of that form of society.

It was reserved to Karl Marx (1976, 381),¹³ to point out that, in the bourgeois State, formal equality of individuals is not opposed to inequality in the content. So, despite of the form of equivalent exchange in the selling of workforce as a commodity from worker to capitalist, the fist finds himself exploited by means of additional work achieved in benefit of the capitalist.¹⁴

We should point out here that Marcuse highlights a contradiction in relation to Hegel's State doctrine. One may say that Hegel stands in the force field created by his ideals and his most elevated philosophical concepts, and his unconditional and positive fixation in the (Prussian) bourgeois State. His philosophical system, appropriately tagged as “negative philosophy” (Marcuse 1955, VII) by his contemporaries, irreconcilably collide with his glorification of the Prussian monarchy (Marcuse 1955, 218). The critical and emancipatory contents of his philosophy of reason, assign to the State the role of mediating the general with the particular and individual interests. Hence, the emancipatory and critical content that characterizes it tends ultimately (after all) toward the suppression of the exploitation of one class by the other. This way, according to Marcusean interpretation, Hegelian philosophy indicates more to a “withering away” of the State through a reconciliation of the individual and the general than a strengthening and externalization of the State (Marcuse 1955, 214).

Another tendency, opposed to the latter, is the one that defends the type of State as the one Hegel, in his time, experiences in Prussia and asserts positively in parts of his State doctrine. “He is guilty,” writes Marcuse, “not so much of being servile as of betraying his highest philosophical ideas.” His political doctrine “mirrors the destiny of the social order that falls, while in pursuit of its freedom, into a state of nature far below reason” (Marcuse 1955, 218).

Precisely those elements of the “positive thinking” in Hegel's doctrine of State are questionable because of the fact of National Socialism, until today traumatic to a high number of individuals. In those elements (and others), we have to find the gravitational point for a critique of the dogmas present in his State doctrine.

In at least two occasions, (the concepts of war and Monarch) Hegel's apologetic tendency toward the bourgeois State, keeps him so far from understanding the present conditions within the bourgeois society that Hegel himself ended up equating what “really exist” to reality (in the sense of “*Wirklichkeit*” or gradual realization of an idea or ideal).

To those passages in the Hegelian text applies Marcuse's findings in his introduction to reason and revolution: “The implication, however, that reason will immediately shows itself in practice is a dogma unsupported by the course of history. Hegel believed in the invincible power of reason as much as Robespierre did” (Marcuse 1955, 7).

Starting from those considerations about the Hegelian conception of the State, in general, we will now describe his concepts of the war and the Monarch, in particular.¹⁵ Some contradictions we can find in bourgeois societies come to be intelligible under Hegel's concepts and, at the same time, they are the exact

reason why those concepts, from such an eminent thinker, turn out to be contradictory and even destructive in relation to his own fundamental philosophical convictions.

2.1. *The concept of war*

Hegel's primacy of reason ends, he exposes it that way in his developed Philosophy of State, at the frontiers of national States. The war between bourgeois States, is the inevitable result of the need for accumulation and expansion intrinsic to the capitalist production mode; this inexorably necessary property, of a specific social formation, is generalized by Hegel a-historically, it is to say falsely, as "ethical moment,"¹⁶ that can not only resolve conflicts between States, but also allows that "the ethical health of nations is preserved in their indifference towards the permanence of finite determinacies, just as the movement of the winds preserves the sea from that stagnation which a lasting calm would produce—a stagnation which a lasting, not to say perpetual, peace would also produce among nations" (Hegel 1991, 361).¹⁷

Hegel, arguing against Kant,¹⁸ rejected the idea of "perpetual peace", for idealistically war abolition implicitly is declared possible—even when its material causes are maintained—with the simple creation of a negotiating institution (the *Fürstenbund*—league of princes). Even if Hegel rightly describes the covering function of war in relation to the existing differences within a State and a society ("successful wars have averted internal unrest and consolidated the internal power of the state"),¹⁹ he completely skips the emancipatory force that could bear "internal unrest." Nationalism changes here from an emancipatory orientation, also present in Hegel in the idea of overcoming (*aufheben*) the fragmentation of Germany in small States (*Kleinstaaterei*),²⁰ into an ideology of the conservation of antagonist societies (which are, as a result of its internal contradictions, "disturbed"). The ideology according to which war in itself is supposedly good to societies in protecting them from "putrefaction" (*Fäulnis*), by its capacity to overcome (*aufheben*) the "indifference towards the permanence of finite determinacies," and which tendentially denies the destructive violence of war, fatally recalls the ideology of the mentioned superlatives of human barbarism. This glorification (*Verklärung*) of war as natural force (*Naturgewalt*) eludes any possible development toward a social formation that would no longer need war.²¹

Precisely after World War II and Shoah experiences, the idea was debated, for a while, inclusively in a part of the German bourgeoisie, that a structural (economic) shift was needed in order to impede the repetition of what had been lived through. In a certain way, regarding this aspect, Hegel was obsolete in 1946.²²

In this context, Marcuse shows that for Hegel, including the case of war, the arbitrariness and "naturalness" (*Natürlichkeit*) do not hold the final word. He refers to the third element conceived by Hegel, which stands above the relation between States: "the spirit [...] which gives itself actuality in world history."²³ But here we will not discuss this concept developed in Hegel's Philosophy of History.

2.2. *The concept of Monarch*

The concept of the Monarch, according to Hegel, "is therefore extremely difficult for ratiocination, i.e., the reflective approach of the understanding"²⁴ and in secondary literature, this "extremely difficult concept" is one of the most forcefully criticized.

The premise of the Hegelian State is "full development of the individual" (Marcuse 1955, 216). Mediation between general and individual, which arises within the State, precisely allows the free development of the majority within the whole. Understood that way, Hegel's concept of the State is irreconcilable with national

socialist ideology. The motto “you’re nothing—your racial people are “everything” categorically rejects that mediation, and favors a supposedly unequivocal “supremacy of the (apparently) general” (“*das Volk*”).²⁵

Concerning the latter, it is said, in an addition: “The essence of the modern state is that the universal should be linked with the complete freedom of particularity [...] Thus, the universal must be activated, but subjectivity on the other hand must be developed as a living whole.”²⁶

But then there arises the problem on how to realize this mediation between individual interest and the interests of the whole society, the general. In order to be free in this mediation, the individuals must have previously understood the general as something that is concurrently theirs. In principle, there shouldn’t be any insuperable difference of interests between those individual and general society.

Here is specifically one of the points where Hegel’s idealistic concept of the State threatens to fail because of the reality (*Wirklichkeit*) of the bourgeois State, that is to say, because of the bourgeois society’s (limited) fundamental possibilities, whose conceptualization Hegel attempts to develop. Conceptualizing individuals from bourgeois society as individuals whose interests are not secluded from (society’s) general interest, denies, of course, the contradictions inherent in the capitalist form of production.

But the form of production corresponding to bourgeois society necessarily keeps the individual apart from the general. As Marx had proved, the contradiction between social production and private product appropriation alienates its producers from the product, constituting the alienation, inherent of the bourgeois society in general. As Marcuse writes, in an alienated society, “simply doesn’t exist” this individual who “knows and wishes his true interest in the common interest” (Marcuse 1955, 216). When Marcuse writes, that the “individuals exist only as private owners, subjects of the fierce processes of civil society, cut off from the common interest by selfishness and all it entails” (Marcuse 1955, 216), then his critique refers here to the same aspect of Hegel’s Philosophy of right, as Marx does when he emphasizes that the essence of the State is “the abstract private person,” whose relation with the State, however, isn’t normally realized.²⁷

How hence does Hegel “resolve” that contradiction between his highest philosophical ideas and the reality of the bourgeois State as he describes in his Theory of the State?

At the head of the State, he places the Monarch, the prince who acquires his governmental function in a “natural way,” by succession and primogeniture. This prince, being established by “natural force,” stands outside of the conflicts of interest in the bourgeois society. Standing above internal discords, independent of any private interest, for it had been crowned by a “disinterested” nature, the Hegelian prince embodies the identity of the general and of the particular; of the general interests of the whole society and of the particulars of its groups and classes, as well as the individual interests of his citizens (Hegel 1991, 316). The acknowledged contradictory nature of the bourgeois State shall be compensated simply by means of the introduction of a harmonizing “natural head” (*natürliche Spitze*). The dialectic method which already prepared the next step to the overcoming (*Aufhebung*) of the bourgeois society, starting from its own contradictions, surrenders confronted to the also present reactionary substance of the Hegelian system.

Hegel’s “monarchist solution,” the constitutional monarchy, a kind of “gentlemen’s agreement” between French Revolution and Prussian monarchy, prompted several responses: while Marx ironically states that “the highest constitutional act of the king is his sexual activity, because through this he makes a king and carries on his body” (Marx 1970, 40), Marcuse follows him when he says, for instance, that the Monarch is “the lone private person in whom the relation of the private person in general to the state is actualized”.²⁸ In relation to this point, as we mentioned, Marcuse refers us to the fact that the true problem lays not in Hegel’s glorification

of Prussian Monarchy, but in the “betraying his highest philosophical ideas” (Marcuse 1955, 218). Hegel, committed in his dialectic method with reason and human emancipation, got in his reactionary apology of the bourgeois state so far, that he surrenders “[...] society to nature, freedom to necessity, reason to caprice” (Marcuse 1955, 218).

Reason, threatened by downfall for the contradictions of the analyzed society, shall be saved, as of work of magic, dipping into nature’s mystical bag of tricks. Here, it seems that Hegel does not believe in himself. Marcuse, more indulgent to Hegel than Marx, admitted in *Reason and Revolution* that the first sometimes “seems to be smiling at his own idealization of the Monarch, declaring that the decisions of the Monarch are only formalities” (Marcuse 1955, 218).

The Hegelian Marxist (Hegelmarxist) seems to be smiling to himself about his own defense of the great dialectical philosopher, when he tries to get a smile out of Hegel, just by the moment of formulating one of his most reactionary concepts.

3. Epilogue to the Reflection about Hegel and Marcuse

3.1. *The Debate on Hegel and the National Socialism*

“Hegel’s philosophy was the last which could dare to comprehend reality as manifestation of the Spirit. The subsequent history made such an attempt impossible”²⁹ (Marcuse 1989).

The author of this article does not conceal here “his” difficulties with the Hegelian in question. This problematic when analyzing Hegel’s Philosophy of State seemed, at first, more of a “personal” character to the author: Almost at the same time he worked for the first time on Hegel’s Philosophy of the State (1987), a series of projections and conferences take place in the independent movie theatre Camera, that was then in the old cinematographic building of Frankfurt University. This series was organized in response to the ultra right-wing attempts to revise the then seemingly overwhelming reject of National Socialism, what resulted in the so-called “Historians’ Quarrel” (Historikerstreit). Claude Lanzmann’s SHOAH was the principal movie to be shown. The analysis of this period of German History, intensified in the time after the screening of this unique film,³⁰ was a factor that made difficult a neutral reading of the Hegelian philosophy of State.

The articles author’s intent, to philosophically discuss in a seminar at Frankfurt University, his difficulties when studying the first time Hegel, when thinking that he perceived spontaneously some supposed parallels between Hegel’s philosophy of the State and the National Socialist doctrine, did not result in anything. The renowned philosopher Alfred Schmidt—chairman of Social Philosophy (Sozialphilosophie) after Max Horkheimer, who gave the seminar on Hegel at the time, merely recognized our objections as simply “honorable moral impulse.”

But the hesitancies were not only moral. In his book *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse states once and again that the perception of Hegel as the intellectual precursor of National Socialism ideology is a mistake and that the Italian fascists only could link their thoughts to Hegel through some serious distortions and by quite rejecting, at the same time, important points. This is what Marcuse writes about an Italian fascist philosopher:

Gentile proclaims practice, no matter what form it may be taking, to be the truth as such. According to him the sole reality is the act of thinking. Any assumption of a natural and historical world separate from and outside this act is denied. The object is thus “resolved” into the subject, and any opposition between thinking and doing, or between mind and reality becomes meaningless. For, thinking (which is “making,” real doing) is ipso facto true. “The true is what is in the making.”

Recasting a sentence from Giambattista Vico, Gentile writes, “verum et fieri convertuntur.” And he sums up, “the concept of truth coincides with the concept of fact.” There can be few statements more remote from Hegel’s spirit.³¹

The simple fact that Marcuse so insistently attempts to prove that Hegel is not the theoretical precursor of fascism, shows that it was a common thesis and deserved to be contradicted when *Reason and Revolution* was written. Alfred Schmidt, philosopher formed in a Critical Theory tradition and Marcuse’s English German translator, states it in straightforward terms: “When *Reason and Revolution* was edited in English, in spring of 1941, the author wanted to oppose himself to the prevailing idea in Anglo-Saxon countries according to which Hegel’s philosophy, specially his theory of the State, was one of the direct sources of fascism and national socialism ideology” (Schmidt 2004, 375). As Schmidt states implicitly as well, those debates are no longer valid in that way. In this sense, one can understand why our objections were only considered as “moral impulse.”

But since a while, with the advance of several conservative and right-wing thinkers toward a “new interpretation of recent German history” (for instance the planning and achievement of a “German History Museum,” the “Historians’ Quarrel” (Historikerstreit), and finally the controversial visit of then FRG Federal Chancellor, Helmut Kohl and Ronald Reagan, United States president of the time at the graves of SS members in the military cemetery at Bitburg, Germany on May 5th 1985), it becomes once again necessary to analyze that period of human history, that forbids understanding reality as a manifestation of the Spirit.³²

Regarding Hegel’s theory of the State, it is now valid (once again), at least for those who are taking part at this attempt of historical analyze, what Marcuse wrote in *Reason and Revolution* still at that time: “The content of a truly philosophical work does not remain unchanged with time. If its concepts have an essential bearing upon the aims and interests of men, a fundamental change in the historical situation will make them see its teachings in a new light. In our time, the rise of Fascism calls for a reinterpretation of Hegel’s philosophy.”³³

That Hegel’s theory of the State is not the unquestionable antithesis to national socialist regime can be seen in the passionate polemics that took place around it in specialized literature. For instance, texts from Ernst Topitsch, Wilhelm Raimund Beyer, György Lukács and Herbert Marcuse can be analyzed.³⁴ It would of course be necessary to study more thoroughly the context from which arose these different postures.

In all, the only mentioned author that tries to prove unequivocal continuity between Hegel’s philosophy and national socialist’s ideology is not very convincing: Ernst Topitsch uses very imprecise quotations, sometimes not even mentioning the source. Furthermore, he quotes G. Lukács and W. R. Beyer in a way that could falsely suggest that they equally see this continuity between Hegel and fascism or National Socialism. He “confuses” the critique on Hegelianism with the critique on Hegel. The intention of Topitsch’s article is to discredit Marxian and Marxist theory while discrediting Hegelian Dialectic, and it is precisely this intention that Lukács and Beyer try to refute in their texts quoted by Topitsch. Topitsch admits: “the relation between Hegelianism and national socialism is almost exclusively analyzed by Marxist authors, for instance G. Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (The Destruction of Reason), Berlin 1955 or W. R. Beyer “Hegel Bilder,” Berlin 1964” (Topitsch 1966, 36n2). But, at the same time, he does not discuss in no way their arguments, on the contrary: he “forgets” the difference between Hegel and some Hegelianism and denies all contradiction between the dialectic method and then, in part, reactionary system in Hegel. Instead of that, he is superficially reasoning on Hegel’s dialectic: “Hegel himself filled his system of empty formulae with contents that carried an extremely authoritarian conception of the State” (Beyer 1968, 154). Against the “dialectic salvation diagram,”

he condemns for it supposedly served to “dialectically justify even the most drastic measures of Hitler’s regime”, he apologetically stresses: “empiricism and relativist positivism”, “positivist legal science,” “religious theory of the *Sitte* (*Sittenlehre*),” “individuality and subjectivity” and Popper, who’s publisher he also is.

Beyer replies in the second, increased, edition of his *Hegel-Bilder*, quoted referring to the first edition by Topitsch, to the latter, attacking him vehemently:

It’s worth revealing the reasons of those efforts to use Hegel in such a way. Ernst Topitsch had denounced these misuse of Hegel by fascists in a very unbalanced compilation. But he did not considered that his magic formulae from “Hegel as empty formulae” and the unmasking of Hegelians studies in the Third Reich (citing only few philosophers of the right and forgetting “great” philosopher as Hermann Glockner and Heinrich Heimsoeth) do not have any historical justification if they end up in mere cry of Cassandra. (Beyer 1968, 154)

Marcuse points out, on one side, the continuities between the bourgeois regime and fascism and National Socialism, but he rejects, on the other side, the dull thesis of continuity between Hegel and the National Socialism. As György Lukács in *The Destruction of Reason*, he strictly divides reactionary tendencies of the Hegelian system from its humanist content and dialectic method, which on occasions transcend bourgeois social formation. Lukács states in his critique of “neo-Hegelianism”:

Thus we observe that the Hegel, whose “renaissance” German imperialism had brought about, had nothing to do with Hegel’s progressive tendencies, either historically or systematically. Everything conservative or reactionary about his system, on the other hand, was carefully retained and fondly cultivated. We have been able to note exactly from many individual accounts that it was just the dialectical method which became the main victim of this Hegel “renewal.” (Lukács 1981, 575)

Finally, it is worth mentioning that despite of the similar way in which Herbert Marcuse, in *Reason and Revolution*, and György Lukács, in *The Destruction of Reason*, describe the two mentioned sides of Hegel’s philosophy, Lukács vehemently attacks Marcuse, whom he considers a “neo-Hegelian,” reproaching him “bringing Hegel another stage closer to Romantic thought” (Lukács 1981, 566). His connections to romanticism, says Lukács, is an “historical falsification of the origin and effect of Hegelian philosophy, its hypotheses and its growth” that was orientated to two purposes: “One purpose was radically to banish the dialectic from the Hegelian method, ‘correctly understood’ and ‘seasonably renewed.’ The second was to make vitalistic irrationalism the constitutive basis of that new synthesis of the whole German reactionary philosophy for which neo-Hegelianism was striving” (Lukács 1981, 567).

But it was precisely Marcuse who, in his interpretation of Hegel’s theory of the State in *Reason and revolution*, highlighted that the dialectic method counteracts the reactionary elements of his system. Nevertheless, Lukács quotes Marcuse from his earlier text (from his “Heideggerian time”), *Hegels Ontologie und die Grundlegung einer Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit* (Lukács 1981, 581n23),³⁵ and does not mention *Reason and Revolution*, whose English edition was published in 1941 in New York. One has to guess that when he wrote *The Destruction of Reason*, completed in 1954, he did not know Marcuse’s work, whose German publication would wait until 1962 (Schmidt 1962, 375-376).

Let us remind also, that György Lukács, criticizing the existing limited rejection of the reactionary content of Hegel’s system, that coincide with the weak intents to recover his emancipated dialectic method, strongly attacked on many occasion social democracy from the Republic of Weimar (Siegfried Marck, Max Adler, etc.) for its politics of compromise attempts (*Kompromißpolitik*) with bourgeoisie’s highly reactionary segments, which finds also expression in the philosophy developed within social democracy (Lukács 1981, 578).

Furthermore, the analysis of the reasons why, until today, in these circles predominates the attitude of discussing widely Hegel's productive side, while rejecting a deeper critical examination of the reactionary contents of his political theory, could be revealing.

3.2. *Hegel's Philosophy of State and the 'Philosophical' Eurocentrism*

Back to Marcuse: when he says, concerning the relation between Hegel and national socialism, that his politic philosophy is based on the (false) supposition that bourgeois society is and will be able to function without giving up on the individual (Marcuse 1955, 398) essential rights and liberties, a question arises: in what context do we have to understand this false supposition?

Asked differently: Was there a prize to pay (in Hegel's time) for the transformation of society from feudal to bourgeois that the philosopher in Berlin did not consider in his political philosophy? In what measure did Hegel underestimated the anti-humanists aspects of European history, that where necessary conditions for the formation of modernity, French Revolution, idealistic culture, idealism? Contemporary Hegel followers (even those close to the once called "left wing Hegelians") tend to introduce on their research a restriction that attracts our attention: the study the social and scientific development is, generally limited to Europe (mostly to Western Europe) and North America (excluding Mexico). This leads (especially in periods similar to the New Deal) to conclusions like: today's capitalism, facing Marx analysis, only produces a relative, not absolute, impoverishment. A superficial knowledge of the development of standard of living for the great majority of the world population is sufficient to clearly see that, on the contrary, a growing absolute impoverishment resulted of the capitalist development of means of production.

Precisely asking: to what extent does a relation exist between Hegel euro-centrism and today critical social science and humanities? A research and critique about euro-centrism in German theoretical tradition, long due, should examine the origins of Hegel's statements about American and African population in his time (for instance in *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*). Nevertheless, in relation to our subject, it is precise to assert an intimate relation between Hegel false supposition and his euro-centrism: the price of progress in Europe was (is) precisely (amongst others) the unlimited exploitation of human individuals and societies, as well as its wealth, in Africa, America, and Asia. Only Hegel's disrespect, expressed in many passage of his work, towards those individuals and society that "paid the price" for the creation of Europeans bourgeois states—without benefiting the possible advantages of this development, but instead of that their existing socioeconomic structure were largely destroyed—permitted him his idealization, described by Marcuse, of the state of restoration individual (Marcuse 1955, 398).

Examining Hegel's false assumption that bourgeois state does not require—on principle—of profoundly inhuman means to sustain his existence, leads to the conclusion that a theory constructed on such a basis is condemned to fail when it has to analyze the rupture of civilization that happened in the heart of bourgeois society: the Shoah in the National Socialism; as it had renounced before to analyze crimes against humanity committed in European colonies. So a critique of the reactionary content of Hegel's political philosophy, in the light of recent German history, refers us to a critique of the (implicit) ethnocentrism established until today.

Taking back these reflections and distancing us from the tendency—still dominant up to the day and in several countries—to ignore these questions reading Hegel main works, something like a "left-wing Hegelianism for the 21st century" could be possible. This would probably be necessary as an argumentative counterpart in order to keep on developing what we consider the most important philosophical project of the

moment: a reinterpretation of the western Marxism, and consequently a redevelopment of Critical Theory—that could even be critical of its own tradition, as a non-Eurocentric Critical Theory.

Notes

1. Note to the English version of this text: we use the term “bourgeois” in the double sense that has the German word “bürgerlich”: “bourgeois” and “civil” at the same time. We decided not to use the term “civil,” as it is used today generally in an affirmative and naïve way, which forgets the theoretical and historical contradictions that this term includes necessarily. Marcuse still uses, in occasions the term “civil society,” which is in his time less degraded to a simplistic and tendentially affirmative concept than today. This does not mean that we understand the term “bourgeois” only in its critical and depreciatory sense, as it is usual in certain debates of the political and theoretical left. S. G.

2. Hegel (1991, 12) We translate here “*Sittlichkeit*” provisionally as “ethical life,” inspired in the translation of Hegel’s book *System der Sittlichkeit* as: *System of Ethical life*. Compare: Hegel (1979, 288).

3. We do not use here the usual translation of Hegel concept of *Sittlichkeit* as “ethic.” A part from being linguistically questionable, it does not even come close to what Hegel had expressed in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. In which he insists over and over on the dialectical relation that exist between *Sittlichkeit* and *Sitte* (habit/social code of conduct) on the one hand; and between *Sittlichkeit* and *Selbstbewußtsein* (self-reflection) which is connected with the concept of liberty (*Begriff der Freiheit*) on the other hand. Furthermore, in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, he opens the chapter on *Sittlichkeit* with a description of “ethical life” (Hegel 1991, § 142, 189) [“das lebendige Gute” (Hegel, 1986, § 142, 292)] which indicate a clear reference to what is objectively actualized as the capacity to live together in modern society, and clearly distinguishes it from the ethical concept of the “abstract good” (Hegel 1991, § 144, 189) [“das abstrakte Gute” (Hegel 1986, § 144, 293)]. “Ethical” has anyway a clear linguistic reference, and at the same time, a fairly technical tone, that is very different from the tone Hegel used in formulation like “the good life” [“das lebendige Gute” (Hegel 1986, 292)] or to the direct references made between *Sittlichkeit* and *Sitte* or *Gewohnheit* (“social codes”/“habit”) (Hegel 1991, § 151, 195f) that also becomes a “second nature” (“*zweite Natur*”) to the members of the respective society. Finally, “ethical” is much closer to Kant’s affirmation than Hegel would have liked and it represent a tendency very present in different countries amongst right wing Hegelians that cut off Hegel social theoretical aspects (and with it, its revolutionary aspects) in order to minimize Hegel as yet another philosopher amongst German idealistic.

4. Original: Hegel (1986, 15).

5. We use the term “bourgeois” in a descriptive form (German “bürgerlich” meaning) and not despicably (the way “bourgeois” is used in German).

6. See note 2 about the Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* concept and its translation difficulties.

7. Hegel. (1991, 13 , addition). Original: Hegel. (1986, 16, addition).

8. Hegel (1991, 13, addition). Original: Hegel. (1986, 17, addition).

9. Hegel (1991, 14). Original: Hegel. (1986, 17, addition).

10. The German term “*Wirklichkeit*” is etymologically present in the verb “*verwirklichen*” meaning “to realize”, in the sense of realizing a plan, a project or an idea. A slight optimistic-progresist connotation exists in some use of the term. For instance in the use of “*Selbstverwirklichung*” (self-realization) which in general is seen as a way to be happier, or at least, more peaceful.

11. Hegel (1991, § 257, 75 and § 260, 282). Original: “*Wirklichkeit der sittlichen Idee*” (Hegel 1986, § 257, 398) and “*Wirklichkeit der konkreten Freiheit*” (1986, § 260, 406). About “ethic” as translation of the Hegelian term “*sittlich*”, see note 2.

12. See to note 2.

13. For instance, see part three: “The production of Absolute Surplus-Value,” Chapter VII: “The Labor Process and the Valorization Process” (above all 283f). Original: Marx (1975), see for instance: Dritter Abschnitt: “Die Produktion des absoluten Mehrwerts,” Fünftes Kapitel: “Arbeitsprozeß und Verwertungsprozeß” (above all, 208f).

14. See also: Marcuse (1955). German version: Marcuse (1962, 187).

15. They are others questionable aspects in Hegel’s doctrine, but for the time being, due to lack of space, we will limit ourselves to these two extremely polemical aspects in the debate surrounding Hegel.

16. Hegel (1991, § 324, 361): “the ethical moment of war” (Hegel 1991, § 324, 361). Original: “*das sittliche Moment des Krieges*” (Hegel 1986, 492) Again, we refer to the translation problem of “*sittlich*” as “ethic,” mentioned in note 2. Same comment for note 21.

17. Here, Hegel quotes his text “Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts” (1802-1803, 62). The text slightly varies in the original version.

18. See also Hegel (1991, § 324, addition, 325): “Perpetual peace is often demanded as an ideal to which mankind should approximate. This Kant proposed a league of sovereigns to settle disputes between states, and the Holly Alliance was meant to be an institution more of less of the kind. But the state is an individual, and negation is an essential component of individuality. Thus, even if a number of states join together as a family, this league, in its individuality, must generate opposition and create an enemy” (1991, 362). Original: Hegel (1986, § 324, addition, 493f).

19. Hegel (1991, loc. cit., § 324, 362). Original: Hegel (1986, 493).

20. See Heller (1963, 58): “Respecting Hegel’s idea regarding the relation between States, they are, with their historical vision of the world in general, certainly in particular not much determined by the analysis of that ‘highwaymen policy’ (Wegelagererpolitik) of the time, which had ended ‘all respect to the partner’s possessions, all confederated juridical sense (eigenössisch) from the German princes’ cast’, whose only incentive were territorial yearning and dynastic pride.” (Heller cites here: Treitschke (1913, 17).
21. “We note again that blind nature enters and elbows aside the self-conscious rationality of objective mind” (Marcuse 1955, 222).
22. In today’s situation, the Hegelian concept of war also presents itself as an anachronism in the sense that “war,” in our days can mean self-extinction of humanity (“rational”).
23. Hegel (1955, loc. cit., § 259, addition, 282). See: “Admittedly, several states may form a league and sit in judgment, as it were, on other states, or they may enter into alliances (like the Holy Alliance, for example), but these are always purely relative and limited, like (the ideal of) perpetual peace. The one and only absolute judge which always asserts its authority over the particular is the spirit which has being in and for itself, and which reveals, itself as the universal and as the active genus in world history”. (Ed. original Hegel 1986, loc. cit., § 259, addition, 405 and following.) Also: Marcuse (1955, 223f): “the state right, though not bound by international law, is still not the final right [...]. The state has its real content in universal history (Weltgeschichte), the realm of the world mind”.
24. Hegel (1991, § 279, 318); Original: “der Begriff des Monarchen ist deswegen der schwerste Begriff für das Raisonement, d.h. für die reflektierende Verstandesbetrachtung.” (Hegel 1986, § 279, 446).
25. Here is how Herbert Marcuse (1955) sums up this difference: “Civil society under Fascism rules the state; Hegel’s state rules civil society. And in whose name does it rule? According to Hegel, in the name of the free individual and his true interest” (1955, 216). We use here the translation “racial people” for the national socialist expression “Volk,” as Franz Neumann from the Critical Theory does in his standard work about National Socialism. See: Neumann (2009), especially chapter IV. The racial people, the source of charisma (2009, 98-129).
26. Hegel (1991, § 260, addition, 283). Original: Hegel (1986, § 260, addition, 407).
27. Marx (1970, 40). Original: Marx (1972, 242).
28. Marx (1970, 40). Original: Marx (1972, 242), see also: Marcuse (1955, 217).
29. Marcuse: “Epilogue” (written in 1954), in Marcuse (1955, loc. cit. 433).
30. In relation to the significance of the movie Shoah for an entire generation of students and young Germans, see: Gandler (2009).
31. Marcuse (1955, 404). Marcuse quotes here: Gentile (1922, 10, 15 and 17).
32. See for example the publication about the mentioned conference and film series, where are documented the “historians’ quarrel” central articles: Tim Darmstädter, *Geschichte und Identität. Film- und Diskussionstage an der Universität Frankfurt. Frankfurt am Main*, AStA-Linke Liste Uni Frankfurt, 1987.
33. Marcuse, 1955, VII. See also Arthur Rosenberg’s review of the book *Behemoth -The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*: “Learning and science are always part of an existing society. Also the political theory of the last 200 years was an appendix of the ‘Liberal’ society. Also the conservative and the radical or socialist enemies of Liberalism were much more dependents on its theories than they usually confessed or knew. We see at present, in Europe the total breakdown of the old ‘Liberal’ society. Therefore, also the old science falls. It is a most important part of our fight against Fascism on its own field” (Rosenberg 1941, 525-27).
34. Ernst Topitsch (1966, 36-51); Wilhelm Raimund Beyer (1968). Specially chapter I: “Typologie der ‘Hegelei,’” subchapter 13: “Der faschistische Hegel,” (144f). György Lukács (1981, 865), especially Chapter V: “Neo-Hegelianism”. Herbert Marcuse (1955) specially: “Preface”, “Introduction”, “Epilogue” and in “Conclusion. The end of hegelianism” subchapters: “3. Fascist ‘Hegelianism’” and “4. National Socialism Versus Hegel”.
35. Lukács quotes here Marcuse (1932. 278).

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