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Hegel and/in/on Translation

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IS IT POSSIBLE TO SPEAK ABOUT A HEGELIAN THEORY OF TRANSLATION?
ON HEGEL'S *ÜBERSETZUNGSBEGRIFF* AND SOME PARADIGMATIC PRACTICES OF TRANSLATION

by Saša Hrnjez and Elena Nardelli*

Abstract: *In this text we attempt to reconstruct Hegel's various usages of the concept of translation in his works to outline a possible theory of translation in the Hegelian framework. Hegel's* Übersetzungsbegriff *will be set forth through the analysis of the most relevant paragraphs in his main writings and lectures. Some contemporary and historical translations of Hegel's texts in different languages will be briefly examined.*

1. The figure of translation has already shown its flexibility and extensibility by moving beyond the field of translation theory and practice and inhabiting other horizons of human knowledge. Such flexibility can be noted through a frequent figurative usage of the notion of translation in theoretical discourses that aim at designating various processes of transferring, transposing, mediating, and transforming or simply changing passages from something to some other. In these cases, translation lends itself perfectly well as a metaphor[1] for a special kind of processuality, especially when this processuality also embraces the semiotic or linguistic dimension. An investigation of Hegel's engagement with the concept of translation as well as an assessment of a possible Hegelian framework for a philosophical theory of translation may be seen as only further illustrations of the above-mentioned flexibility and vague

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[1] On translation as *the* metaphor in our contemporary times, see R. Guldin, *Translation as Metaphor*, New-York-London, Routledge, 2018.

usage of a certain representation of translation. Yet, Hegel's texts provide significant claims on the basis of which we can attempt to articulate his *Übersetzungsbegriff*. What then are the textual roots of a Hegelian concept of translation? What is the function and sense of Hegel's employment of the term *Übersetzen*? How can we move from Hegel's understanding of language and his aesthetical discourse on the (in)translatability of poetry to grasp the very significance of the concept of translation without again falling into the trap of its flexibility?

In his text on Hegelian language and terminology[2], Alexandre Koyré asserts that it is impossible, or at least very difficult, to translate Hegel. This almost banal claim, which is not exclusively valid for Hegel's philosophy, nonetheless leads us to the core of the problem. The reason that Hegel is untranslatable is not that his concepts are artificially constructed abstractions, resulting in a highly specialized terminology so detached from the ordinary language to be almost incomprehensible, and consequently untranslatable in another language; on the contrary, Hegel's concepts are linguistically embodied, residing in the living organism of the language, so that rather than being abstract and expressionless, they express too much, putting in relation different and often opposite meanings and semantic allusions. Hegel, in the Preface to the Second Edition of his *Science of Logic*, explicitly claims that philosophy does not need to create its specific language[3] because language, in its ordinary common use, already presents the realization of the speculative nature and the dialectics of the spirit and thus offers all the necessary means to express the most complex concepts and their dialectical turns.

What does the foregoing have to do with the theory and praxis of translation? We can argue that Hegel's approach to the language

[2] A. Koyré, *Études d'Histoire de la Pensée Scientifique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, pp. 191-224.

[3] W 5, p. 21; trans. by G. di Giovanni, *Science of Logic*, Cambridge, CUP, 2010, p. 12. (The German edition of Hegel's works we are referring to here is *Werke*, ed. by E. Moldenhauer and M. Michel, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1986, and will be quoted in the following way: W num. of the volume, num. of page).

of philosophy is already translational in its essence. Hegel's claim that the privilege of philosophy lies in its right to choose its expressions from the language of ordinary life [*die Sprache des gemeinen Lebens*][4] and Hegel's task of «teach[ing] philosophy to speak in German»[5] are actually invitations to the incessant practice of translation. The fact that natural languages already contain in themselves logical determinations is not enough; it is philosophy that needs to dig out logical determinations and to bring them to light. Put more clearly, it is philosophy that shows that the terms it uses are already products of translational work handed down by history and philosophical traditions. Philosophy for Hegel does not create its specific vocabulary because it translates and re-creates the language that is already in common use, digging out within it various philosophical traditions and elaborating their discourses. In that regard, the example of Hegel's central concept of *aufheben* is very paradigmatic, having become almost a case of «fetishism of the untranslatable»[6].

«For speculative thought it is gratifying to find words that have in themselves a speculative meaning»[7], says Hegel, discussing the term *aufheben* and recognizing its corresponding Latin word *tollere*. As Franco Chiereghin shows, the Hegelian term *aufheben*, besides the Latin *tollere*, also has as its historical antecedent the Greek term *anairein*, from Plato's Πολιτεία. In other words, according to Chiereghin, Hegel's formulation of the German *aufheben* is already a translation and is in fact a simultaneous double translation from two different languages, Greek and Latin. Chiereghin, referring to further translations of *aufheben* in other languages, concludes,

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[4] W 6, p. 406; *Science of Logic*, p. 628.

[5] Id., *The Letters*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 107.

[6] See the entry «Aufhebung» written by P. Büttgen in *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, ed. by B. Cassin, Paris, Seuil, 2004.

[7] W 5, p. 114; *Science of Logic*, p. 82.

«[t]ranslation in this sense can only be the continuation of a translation that is already at work within the source language»[8]. The key term of Hegel's speculative dialectics, itself a translation of the Greek and Latin 'originals', brings in a new philosophical concept, transforming the source language, German, and the common usage of that already existing word. This analysis of the translational semantics of *aufheben* shows not only that the practice of translation in philosophy builds the language itself by producing concepts but also that translation is already at work in the 'original'. Moreover, this approach reveals the continuity of a certain tradition[9] in its translations. The original is nothing but a product of the previous philosophical translations, and the history of philosophy is a multilayered, polylingual translation, a translation of translations.

The special issue «Hegel and/in/on Translation» is focused on the problem of translation, investigating its polyvalent meanings and assessing its limits and ambiguity to demonstrate the productivity of the interaction between Hegel's philosophy and translation's theory and practice. So far, the questions that interest us here have been approached by means of considering Hegel under three different aspects[10]: Hegel as a commentator and an interpreter of other translations (mostly in his lectures on the history of philosophy), Hegel as a translator himself, and Hegel as a philosopher of translation who conceptualizes translation in its

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[8] F. Chiereghin, *Nota sul modo di tradurre "Aufheben"*, «Verifiche», XXV, 1996, pp. 233-249, p. 249 [our translation]. Chiereghin's analysis interestingly supports Antoine Berman's reflections concerning translation internal to the original and polylingual translations (A. Berman, *La traduction et la lettre, ou L'auberge du lointain*, Paris, Seuil, 1999). *Aufheben* is a good example of Hegel's philosophical polytranslation.

[9] Cf. E. De Negri, *Introduzione*, in G.W.F. Hegel, *I Principi*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1974, p. X. For the nexus between translation and tradition, see L. Illetterati, *Translating Animals*, in *Cultures in Translation: A Paradigm for Europe*, ed. by I. Fiket, S. Hrnjez and D. Scalmani, Milano-Udine, Mimesis, 2018, pp. 89-102.

[10] A. Sell, *Perspektiven der Übersetzung in Hegels* Gesammelten Werken, in *Edition und Übersetzung. Zur wissenschaftlichen Dokumentation des intellektuellen Transfers*, ed. by B. Plachta and W. Woesler, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 2002, pp. 119-131.

broader, speculative dimension. Besides these three aspects, to complete the picture we shall add two further topics: (1) Hegel's texts as the object of translation in other languages and, therefore, translators' experience with Hegel's texts; and (2) Hegel's philosophy and Hegelian dialectics as the bases for a theory of translation. Completely aware of the difficulty of all the problems and risks that arise from the intersection of different levels and usages of the notion of translation, we nonetheless present this volume with the aim of creating a solid skeleton for an overarching approach to the translational aspects of Hegel's philosophy and dialectics and in an attempt to establish a Hegelian theory of translation.

The foregoing can, on the one hand, enable the experience of translating Hegel in other languages to contribute to the understanding of the concept of translation itself, and on the other hand, enable Hegel's non-systematized reflections on translation to drive the field of the philosophy of translation to indicate new directions in the conceptualization of translation. That Hegel's conceptualization of *Übersetzen* as a process and an activity is firmly embedded in his system, especially in his *Logic*, while his reflections on the concept of translation are not themselves systematized, is a point of great interest – one that could reveal some of the yet unthematized points of Hegel's thought as well as its inner contradictions and gaps. What is certain, however, is that 'translation', or 'translating' (often used as a verb but more often as a verbal noun), as a process that goes beyond its common sense of interlingual transfer, can be found in almost all the works of Hegel. Another fact is that there is no explicit and articulated theory of translation in Hegel's works, and Hegel's reflections in that regard are not only unsystematic but also difficult to reduce to a unique concept of translation. If we add to this the fact that Hegel, from the time of his youth, had pursued his vivid interest in translations from Greek and Latin[11], showing an awareness of the

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[11] K. Rosenkranz, *G.W.F. Hegels Leben*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963, pp. 10-12. See also Hegel's *Rede zum Schuljahrabschluss* (W 4, pp. 319-322).

importance of translation as praxis for philosophy, then we can conclude that the translational issues concerning Hegel's philosophy have so far remained unjustifiably ignored. These facts constitute our point of departure. The current state of the literature shows that the analyses of the concept of translation within Hegel's framework are almost marginal, and we can thus speak of a visible lacuna in Hegelian scholarship that needs to be addressed. In the field of the philosophy of translation Hegelian perspectives are not only almost nonexistent but, when they are acknowledged, can also seem odd or even heretic. In this text we aim to provide a map of the problems that emerge from the interaction between Hegel's thought and the inquiry of translation. Throughout the mapping, we will locate the different essays of this special issue with specific problems they treat and how they discuss these problems and carry them forward.

2. The problematization of the language of philosophy and its relation to the ordinary language leads us directly to one of the central problems of Hegel's philosophy: the relation between concept (*Begriff*) and representation (*Vorstellung*). In the Introduction to his *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*[12] from 1830, Hegel says that philosophy translates into the form of thought the genuine contents of our consciousness (i.e., our feelings, opinions, and representations), defined as metaphors of thoughts-concepts. This translation, whereby philosophy builds its own concepts and forms the true objects of knowledge, is comparable to the transformation of ordinary language into philosophical language. If translation, however, self-reflectively transforms representations, as metaphors, into concepts, is this very translation a metaphor or a concept? This question is addressed by Gianluca Garelli in his text *Critica della «Regione Pura». Übersetzung e Rappresentazione in Hegel*, moving exactly from the introductory paragraphs of *Encyclopaedia*

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[12] W 8, p. 46; trans. by T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris, *The Encyclopaedia Logic (with Zusätze)*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1991, p. 28.

and also taking into account the transition from concept to representation, from the pure domain of concept to the real domain of experience (see pp. 55-74).

The act of conceptual generation of philosophical contents through translation of the representative material is not accomplished once and forever: it is an act that must be repeated, it is a continuous translation. The repeating translation into concepts allows philosophy to be constantly in contact with common sense, with concrete language (i.e., the «world of imaginary representations»[13]). A decisive detachment of concepts from the colorful representative and associative material stored in our language will be nothing but a sign of the death of our thoughts in abstraction. The necessary translatability between the conceptual and the representative language is thus a condition and a guarantee for philosophy to have a real grasp on the world, to have a concrete reference point in historical actuality[14].

Translation in the way described above acquires the meaning of the self-reflective mediation of what is immediate, familiar and already possessed by ordinary language. Such mediation produces a necessary transformative effect on the reflected content. This self-reflective character of translation is exhibited in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Indeed, it is in the structure of Hegel's *Logic* that we must seek the basis of a Hegelian *Übersetzungsbegriff*. Otherwise put, we have to move in a totally Hegelian manner from the representation of translation to its concept. Moreover, again in conformity with the Hegelian dialectics of representation and concept, we can build a concept of translation only *through* its representation, moving ourselves within the experience of translating. This means that the experience of translating shall be reflected together with the representations that common sense provides us of what translation is in order to transform them into a concept. This self-reflective transformation into the concept of translation, however, already

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[13] W 6, p. 406; *Science of Logic*, p. 628.

[14] Cf. A. Nuzzo, *Il problema filosofico della traduzione ed il problema della traduzione filosofica*, «Quaderni di traduzione», XXVIII, 1994, pp. 169-193.

presupposes the horizon of logical categories whose exhibition alone can lead us to the speculative logical structure of the translational process.

Hegel employs the concept of *Übersetzen* mostly when discussing the logic of essence, and it is interesting to note that this concept does not appear in the Doctrine of Being (put more clearly, it is here that Hegel resorts to the figurative and associative use of translation when speaking, for example, of the translation of the Archimedean method into the modern principle[15]). Only with the logic of essence and the determinations of reflection can we enter the conceptual domain of translation. Except for the very opening of the *Wesenslehre*, where Hegel introduces the category of Shine with reference to skepticism and idealism («*aus dem Sein in den Schein übersetzt worden*[16]»), the process of translating is mentioned by discussing the self-resolving of *contradiction*[17], which is without a doubt one of the central categories of Hegel's system. Here, Hegel refers to the process of translation, saying that the positive and the negative self-translate into their opposites; each of them is nothing but its own *self-translation* (*das sich Übersetzen*) into the oppositional determination. The translational capacity of opposites to reflect themselves in their other is not only an expression of their contradiction but also the agent that resolves the contradiction itself.

In the chapter on the Essential relation (*Das wesentliche Verhältnis*), Hegel, treating the relation between force and its expression (*Äußerung*) or manifestation, claims that the movement of force is not as much a transition as a *translation* in which, as force passes over into its expression, it externalizes itself and remains in this alteration[18]. This process of becoming-other, with its dialectics of self-negation and self-reference, is explicitly associated with the translation process. Other operations of translating that Hegel assigns to the categories of essence are: the substance, which

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[15] W 5, p. 354; *Science of Logic*, p. 257.

[16] W 6, p. 20. See also W 6, p. 136.

[17] W 6, p. 67; *Science of Logic*, p. 376.

[18] W 6, p. 173; *Science of Logic*, p. 455. See also W 6, p. 179; *Science of Logic*, p. 460.

translates the possible into actuality (in the chapter on the absolute relation)[19], translation of cause into effect (*Wirkung*) and the translation of conditions into actuality (*Wirklichkeit*)[20].

The translational character of the actuality is expressed in a more explicit way in the Doctrine of Essence in *Encyclopaedia* (§§ 146, 147, 148): activity (*Tätigkeit*), as one of the constitutive moments of *Wirklichkeit*, is defined as self-movement of form, or self-translation (*das Sichübersetzen*) of the inner into the outer and of the outer into the inner[21]. Through such an activity an immediate actuality, which appears as a mere external condition, is transformed and transposed into a new actuality; it is a possibility that translated itself into actuality. In § 148 Hegel sets forth the movement of double translation as the activity «is the movement of translating the conditions (*Bedingungen*) into the matter (*Sache*), and the latter into the former as the side of existence (*Existenz*)»[22]. The activity of translation is the third moment in the structure of the actuality that mediates between the other two: between the condition and the matter and between the contingent, external circumstances and the inner possibility.

What can we deduce from the foregoing, extremely short, exposition of the translational dynamics in the Logic of Essence? Is *Übersetzen* just a transpositing, a sublation of the positing, a kind of overpositing or positing-beyond, which abolishes and at the same time conserves the logic of positing? What distinguishes translation from a mere transition or passage is the self-reflectivity, whereby the process of becoming-other is reflected in itself; that is, what is translated is kept and maintained in its translation, as *its* otherness. Thus, if the dialectical movement of the categories of Being is exposed as transition (*Übergang*), would translating

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[19] W 6, p. 220; *Science of Logic*, p. 491.

[20] W 6, p. 248, p. 396; *Science of Logic*, p. 510, p. 621.

[21] Pinkard, for example, remarks that Hegel prefers to use 'translation' in speaking of the inner/outer but calls this Hegelian use metaphorical. Cf. T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 32.

[22] W 8, p. 293; *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, p. 224.

(*Übersetzen*) then be the peculiar form of the movement of Essence, or is the *Übersetzen* the underlying dialectical movement of the entire logical system?

In this issue Guillaume Lejeune (*L'Übersetzen comme articulation interne du système encyclopédique. Hegel et Novalis en perspectives*) argues that translation is the internal articulation of Hegel's system, a universalizing and reflexive activity of discovering foundations and creating presuppositions (see pp. 37-54). What interests Hegel is the logical scheme of translation, which finds its place in the logic of essence but does not cease its movement there. Essence is only a preparation for the concept in which what is translated must develop its meaning.

In the Doctrine of Concept translation no longer stands for a self-reflexive passage to the otherness but is a realization of the concept in which the exteriority of the otherness is sublated. Translation is assigned to the teleological process defined as «translation (*Übersetzung*) of the concept that concretely exists distinctly as a concept into objectivity»[23]. Even here, as in other places, Hegel distinguishes a mere transition from a translational passage because in the latter the concept posits its otherness as its own moment and realizes its content as purpose (*Zweck*). Translation is the self-realization of the concept into objectivity, just as it is the realization of the objectivity of the concept itself.

Does this development of the concept of translation as a sort of translation of translation actually make translation vanish and pass into its otherness, into non-translation? The negativity of translation itself [i.e., the act of non-translating], the untranslatable, as the condition of the possibility of the translation, is discussed in Angelica Nuzzo's *Untranslatable in Translation*. Nuzzo locates the moment of untranslatability in Hegel's concept of *das Logische* at the end of *Science of Logic*, which is interpreted through a reading of Derrida's text on monolingualism of the Other as the monolingualism of the logical idea, a single and unique universal language that grounds the movement of the entire system (see pp. 1-18).

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[23] W 6, p. 454; *Science of Logic*, p. 664.

The idea of translation as realization into objectivity is also deployed in *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, as well as in the chapter on the Subjective spirit in *Encyclopaedia*. Translation is envisaged as a realization of the subjective contents in the realm of objectivity, as objectification, *Verwirklichung* of the subjectivity. In the introductory paragraphs of *Outlines*, Hegel defines the will as «the process of translating the subjective purpose into objectivity through the mediation of its own activity and some external means»[24]. The realization of the will is brought up as the translational activity of the will itself, the self-translation of the will in actuality.

The passages from *Outlines* actually fit in § 475 of *Encyclopaedia*[25], where the subject is defined as an activity that translates the subjective content (impulses, inclinations, desires, etc.) into objectivity. Subjectivity is in this sense not only self-translating activity but also the product of its own translation. It is in this realization of objectivity that subjectivity constitutes itself as actuality, as a real and actual subject. The subject is therefore a negation of itself in its own translation[26].

Encyclopaedia offers another interesting paragraph in which translation again plays an important role. This time, the progress of the spirit is explained as the activity of translation, as the formal transition into manifestation (*nur der formelle Übergang in die Manifestation*) and the return into self in its manifestation[27]. The purpose and inner contents that the spirit needs to realize is the rational

[24] W 7, p. 57, § 8; trans. by T.M. Knox, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 33. See also W 7, § 28; § 109 and: «the will is rather a particular way of thinking, thinking translating itself into existence» (§ 4; *Outlines*, p. 26).

[25] W 10, p. 253, § 475; M.J. Petry (ed.), *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit 3. Phenomenology and Psychology*, Dordrecht, D. Reidel, 1978, p. 253.

[26] Cf. L. Illetterati and S. Hrnjez, *Soggettività e traduzione. Dinamica traduttiva e ontologia del soggetto in Hegel*, in *Morale, etica, religione tra filosofia classica tedesca e pensiero contemporaneo*, ed. by L. Illetterati, M. Quante, A. Manchisi, A. Esposito and B. Santini, Padova, Padova University Press, 2020 (forthcoming).

[27] W 10, p. 234, § 442; Petry, *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit 3*, p. 89.

itself (*das Vernunftige*) but they are also the realization of the form of knowledge (*Wissen*) in which the spirit exists and that initially appears to the spirit as something external. Translation, therefore, is a way by which the spirit reappropriates its rational essence. As shown in the contribution of Alessandro Esposito, *L'attività del tradurre nella psicologia hegeliana: sapere e libertà dello spirito soggettivo*, which gives a detailed analysis of §§ 441-442 of *Encyclopaedia*, this translation is the liberation of the finite subject and its becoming free spirit (see pp. 95-112).

It is interesting to note that the above dynamic of the spirit is explained in terms of «formal transition into manifestation». In fact, Hegel often associates translation with the formal aspect of movement or activity (i.e., «*Formtätigkeit* des Übersetzens»[28] or «*Form* des Übersetzens – aber auch dann der Subjektivität»[29]). Hegel, from a definitively different point of view, would agree with Benjamin that translation is a form[30].

This 'active' connotation of translation, which is always connected with the formal, can also be traced to the discussion of the individual and its realization in the activity in *Phenomenology of Spirit*: «The doing (*das Tun*) alters nothing and opposes nothing; it is the pure form of translating (*die Reine Form des Übersetzens*) *not having been seen* into *having been seen*»[31]. It is curious that here translation seems to function as a non-transformative operation of the mere making visible of something, an exhibition of what is in itself, its pure bringing into light. Yet, how is it possible that activity realizes that which is in itself and at the same time alters nothing? Moreover, why is such a translation defined as «reine Form»? How can something like a realization that brings the individual in contact with the 'impurity' of the objective world be labeled 'pure'? These questions

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[28] W 6, p. 397.

[29] W 7, p. 208.

[30] «Übersetzung ist eine Form» (W. Benjamin, *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 4, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1991, p. 9).

[31] W 3, p. 293; trans. by T. Pinkard, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 227.

are addressed and analyzed in Michael Marder's article *Pure Translation in Hegel's Phenomenology* in view of Hegel's concept of *Wirklichkeit*, translated by him as energy-actuality (see pp. 113-127). Besides other passages from *Phenomenology* where translation is addressed as pure, in his analysis of the figure of conscience (*Gewissen*) Hegel adds a slightly new moment: *Handlung* (translated by Pinkard as «Action»), which is realized through translation. This realization, however, «does not mean here that one translates its content from the form of a *purpose*, or from *being-for-itself*, into the form of *abstract* actuality». It is rather a translation «into the form of an *assurance* (*Versicherung*) that consciousness has a conviction about its duty»[32]. As we can see, this moral realization of the conscience is no longer pure making visible, although it nonetheless remains formal. Translation figures here as a recognized translation, a translation that exists for others, and it is not invisible but is also no longer silent.

3. In Hegel's *Lectures*, translation appears chiefly as a creative power that deals with accidentality under its different aspects. In this context, the operational sphere of translation is not limited to the relation between representation and concept but seems to grasp the relation between representation and what is ephemeral, such as life in the human experience of death and finitude (*Philosophy of Religion*), historical events and occurrences (*Philosophy of History*), or the stringing of different philosophies in history (*History of Philosophy*)[33]. Furthermore, this understanding of translation appears in *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* as the concept that Hegel uses to renovate, in a heterodox way, the Aristotelian comparison of historiography and poetry. In the writings of Greek historians,

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[32] W 3, pp. 479-480; *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 377.

[33] W 16, p. 307 ff.; W 12, p. 11 ff. As we will see, in *History of Philosophy* translation can be understood as capable of operating as an interpretative key for understanding its methodological problems and paradoxes, even if this is not stated explicitly in Hegel's text.

«an external phenomenon is thus translated into an internal representation; in the same way the poet operates upon the material supplied him by his emotions, projecting it for the representation»[34].

The activity of the historian, like that of the poet, is a translational activity for two reasons: (1) because it handles external accidentality - in this case the accidentality of events and feelings; and (2) because it already finds on its path pre-established narrations and a consolidated language, which are the «ingredients» of translation[35]. We insist on these two aspects of translation in the next paragraphs, focusing on *Lectures on Aesthetics* and *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where translation serves as a productive interpretative key for inquiring into Hegel's thought.

In *Aesthetics*, near some observations ascribable to the field of 'translation criticism', we find one of the few passages where Hegel explicitly addresses translation as the transposition of a written text from one historical language to another. What Hegel argues for is very unusual. First, he defines tempo, rhythm, and euphony as «accidental externality (*akzidentelle Äußerlichkeit*)». Then he asserts the absolutely unproblematic translatability of poetry.

> Ideas, intuitions, feelings, etc., are the specific forms in which every subject-matter is apprehended and presented by poetry, so that, since the sensuous side of communication always has only a subordinate part to play (*nur Beiherspielende*), these forms provide the proper material which the poet has to treat artistically. […] Consequently in the case of poetry proper it is a matter of indifference whether we read it or hear it read; it can even be translated into other languages (*in andere Sprachen übersetzt*) without essential detriment to its value, and turned from poetry into

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[34] W 12, p. 11; trans. by J. Sibree, *The Philosophy of History*, New York, Dover Publications, 1956, pp. 14-15. Translation modified.

[35] W 12, p. 12; *The Philosophy of History*, pp. 14-15.

prose, and in these cases it is related to quite different sounds from those of the original[36].

Hegel's statement on translation is a hapax in translation theory. From a diachronic perspective, both the highly theoretical and practical difficulties in translating poetry are among the few fundamental constants of theories and philosophies of translation[37]. From a synchronic perspective, Hegel's haste in approaching translation is almost inexplicable compared with the flourishing debate on translation that emerged during his time, where the actors involved were Schlegel and Novalis, Schleiermacher and Humboldt, and Goethe and Hölderlin, among others[38]. Michele Capasso's contribution is focused on Hegel's and Benjamin's interpretations

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[36] W 15, p. 229; trans. by T.M. Knox, *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Arts*, London, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 964. On this passage, see G. Garelli, *Hegel e lo spirito della traduzione*, in Id., *Dialettica e interpretazione. Studi su Hegel e la metodica del comprendere*, Bologna, Pendragon, 2015, pp. 283-298; M. Farina, *L'idea della traducibilità universale. Hegel su poesia e umanità*, «Anterem», XCIX, 2019, pp. 59-62. Hegel's statement on the translatability of poetry is confirmed by Hotho's transcript of the lectures delivered in 1823 and by the manuscript found in Victor Cousin's library. See Hegel's *Gesammelte Werke*, 28.1, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst*, ed. by N. Hebing, Hamburg, Meiner, 2015, p. 486 and Victor Cousin, *Esthétique. Cahier de notes inédit de Victor Cousin*, ed. by A.P. Olivier, Paris, Vrin, 2005, p. 131.

[37] Paradigmatic is the position of the Italian neoidealist philosopher Benedetto Croce in his *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale. Teoria e storia* (1902), ed. by F. Audisio, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2014. Also, Jacques Derrida, a philosopher who extensively explored the potentialities of translation, tried to preserve the unicity of Paul Celan's poetry from translatability. J. Derrida, *Sovereignties in Question. The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. by T. Dutoit and O. Pasanen, New York, Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 29.

[38] See A. Nebrig and D. Vecchiato, *Kreative Praktiken des literarischen Übersetzens um 1800. Übersetzungshistorische und literaturwissenschaftliche Studien*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2019; A. Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger. Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984; A. Huyssen, *Die frühromantische Konzeption von Übersetzung und Aneignung. Studien zur frühromantischen Utopie einer deutschen Weltliteratur*, Zürich, Atlantis, 1969.

of Romanticism and on the consequences of such interpretations on their different understandings of translation (see pp. 75-94).

It seems that Hegel does not consider literary translation a problem. The material that the poet organizes is made up of interior representations that participate in the universality of the spirit's sphere. The translator of the poetic text ventures into the task of finding in his own language those words and expressions that are capable of reproducing, in the inner sense, the same representation produced by the source text. A fortiori, translating a religious or philosophical text located in the representational or conceptual sphere should be less than unproblematic. This is not the case, however, as Silvia Pieroni's analysis of Hegel's review of Wilhelm von Humboldt's lectures on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* shows (see pp. 19-35).

In the few lines in *Aesthetics* where Hegel addresses the problem of translation, there emerges what Szondi called a «mechanical language theory», according to which language is understood as a vehicle with a universal meaning embodied in a signifier that is nothing but an aesthetic-symbolic rest, simply interchangeable[39]. As expected, translation touches on the core of a philosophical issue that in the last decades gained increasing attention in *Hegel-Forschung*: Hegel's understanding of language[40]. This critical literature helps us relativize Hegel's simple statement within a specific

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[39] P. Szondi, *Hegels Lehre von der Dichtung*, in Id., *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie I*, ed. by S. Metz and H.-H. Hildebrandt, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1974, pp. 269–511, here p. 397. Our translation.

[40] On Hegel and language, see G. Lejeune, *Sens et usage du langage chez Hegel*, Paris, Hermann, 2014; J. O'Neill Surber, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language: The Unwritten Volume*, in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. by S. Houlgate and M. Baur, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, pp. 243-261; J. Reid, *Real Words: Language and System in Hegel*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2007; J. Vernon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language*, New York, Bloomsbury, 2007; J. O'Neill Surber (ed.), *Hegel and Language*, Albany, SUNY Press, 2006; B. Lindorfer and D. Naguschewski (eds.), *Hegel. Zur Sprache. Beiträge zu einer Geschichte des europäischen Sprach-denkens*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr, 2002; T. Bodammer, *Hegels Deutung der Sprache*, Hamburg, Meiner, 1969; J. Simon, *Das Problem der Sprache bei Hegel*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1966.

phase of his thought[41] and within a more articulated and complicated understanding of language[42]. Furthermore, even if both Hotho's *Nachschrift* and Cousin's manuscript contain explicit hints at language being a vehicle, Hegel repeatedly underlines the unity of representation and linguistic expression in the creative process, where the logical priority of representation does not correspond to a chronological priority.

Nevertheless, approaching Hegel's philosophy from the perspective of translation can also support and lead to less common interpretations, such as the interpretation line that stresses the role that accidentality plays in Hegel's philosophy. If the poet works on representations as the sculptor works on marble, the material on which the translator works cannot but be the «akzidentelle Äußerlichkeit» of language. Accidentality is substantial for the translator and becomes substantial as soon as we assume her perspective. The translator undoes the text that she finds in front of her and from which her activity takes its first steps, interiorizes the «akzidentelle Äußerlichkeit» and recreates another exterior, accidental being that is one with the representation. The latter, transformed into its accidents, will end up being the same, but also unavoidably not the same, as itself.

It is again in the Logic of *Wirklichkeit* that Hegel refers to the «creative power» of «translating» the possible into the actual, whereas the «reduction» of the actual into the possible is the reverse («destructive power»)[43]. This power, whose unitary moment is called «absolute power» by Hegel, is the unity, the reciprocal co-implication and predominant relation of substance and accidents that has to be thought in beings, not before or beside them. Also

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[41] See M.N. Forster, *German Philosophy of Language. From Schlegel to Hegel and Beyond*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 142-250.

[42] See D. Thouard, *Hegel und die „göttliche" Natur der Sprache*, «Hegel-Jahrbuch» (Sonderband 13: *Schleiermacher / Hegel*), 2020. Szondi himself relativizes his position, prizing Hegel's intuitions on metaphors and similitudes (*Hegels Lehre von der Dichtung,* p. 398 ff.).

[43] W 6, p. 220; *Science of Logic*, p. 491.

to be noted is that Hegel's original appropriation of the traditional metaphysical categories of substance and accidents that takes place in these paragraphs has important implications on the movement of the «speculative proposition»[44]. It is not only that Hegel's logical categories can shed light on the elusive process that translation is; also, reversely, if the core of dialectical pulsating can be found in Hegel's understanding of accidentality, as suggested for instance by Malabou[45], translation will again end up taking part in the motive force of Hegel's thinking, or at least in a specific moment in the Logic of Essence that exemplifies a characteristic aspect of Hegel's method: «the immanent, presuppositionless *self-transformation* of the concepts under consideration»[46].

4. Translation as a conceptual tool for working on Hegel's thought can keenly intervene in the paradoxes of *History of Philosophy*, as suggested by Nuzzo[47]. The translational move is located in the very curving that Hegel, with an almost previously unknown gesture, drives on philosophy, forcing it to bend toward its own history with a conceptual investigation. We again see here a reflexive movement that assumes the identity between the object studied by the history of philosophy and philosophy itself. The first paradox to emerge in this being «wholly the same and not the same» is

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[44] On a speculative proposition with attention to the problem of translation, see E. Caramelli, *Lo spirito del ritorno. Studi su concetto e rappresentazione in Hegel*, Genova, il melangolo, 2016, particularly pp. 57-85 and the third paragraph of Garelli, *Hegel e lo spirito della traduzione,* pp. 289-292.

[45] C. Malabou, *L'avenir de Hegel*, Paris, Vrin, 1996; trans. by L. During, *Future of Hegel*, London-New York, Routledge, 2005.

[46] S. Houlgate, *Substance, Causality, and the Question of Method in Hegel's Science of Logic*, in *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel*, ed. by S. Sedgwick, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 232-253, p. 246. On self-transformation, see A. Nuzzo, *Translation, (Self-)Transformation, and the Power of the Middle*, «PhiloSophia», III (1), 2013, pp. 19-35.

[47] Ead., *Geschichte der Philosophie als Übersetzungsprozess,* in *Übersetzung – Sprache und Interpretation*, ed. by W. Büttemeyer und H.J. Sandkühler, Frankfurt am Main et al., Peter Lang, 2000, pp. 25-50.

caused by the plurality of different philosophies aiming at truth and by the presupposed unity of truth. «How do things stand with the unity of truth and the multiplicity of philosophies?» asks Hegel in the Introduction to *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (1825-26 edition based on Karl Gustav von Griesheim's notebook)[48]. The second paradox concerns the temporal dimension of philosophy. With the history of philosophy «we are not dealing with something past but with the present, with thinking, with spirit proper. This is a history that is at the same time no history»[49]. The truth of thinking cannot be but eternal or out of time and this clashes with the succession of different philosophies in time. It is, for this reason, paradoxical to attempt to write a history of what is outside history and of what withdraws itself from changing. Our hypothesis is that translation is not merely a part of a material history for the canon's building but constitutes the self-relation of philosophy with its history that occurs at every different stage of the historical process. Here, the universalistic request of both philosophy and translation works on previous philosophies, and in so doing, revitalizes the conceptual heritage. Each singular philosophy assimilates its tradition, seizes its legacy, and takes part in its doing, historicizing itself in the irreversibility of the process. To this extent, translation is a promising alternative to the concept of *Entwicklung* for explaining the movement of the idea.

This is one of the main contributions that Hegel's philosophy can give to *Translation Studies*: insights on how translation can be thought of and practiced. Hegel induces us to think of translation beyond the binary categories that stress the difference between the original and its translation, that stress the lack of translation compared to its original. Thinking of translation in history and as one of the motive forces of tradition building overturns the

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[48] G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-26. Volume I. Introduction and Oriental Philosophy, together with the Introductions from Other Series of these Lectures*, ed. by R.F. Brown and trans. by R.F. Brown and J.M. Stewart with the assistance of H.S. Harris, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2009, p. 47.

[49] Ivi, p. 62.

relation of subordination because every translation and every philosophical retrieval of tradition will be, in Hegelian terms, more concrete and true than its antecedent. Thanks to the intimate structure of Hegel's systematic thought, the theoretical debate on translation can finally free itself from the mythology of the original and of the origin. Translating will then not mean constructing etymologies oriented at the original meaning but disclosing the truth of every determinate philosophy.

Furthermore, and as a test bed, to what extent can Hegel's own activity on the philosophical tradition be understood as translational activity? More pointedly, what is taking place when Hegel translates, by his own hand, some excerpts of Sophocles' *Antigone*[50] or of Aristotle's *De Anima*[51]? Moreover, to what extent is Hegel translating when, in *Science of Logic*, he discusses previous philosophical positions, appropriating and embedding them in his own discourse? In translating, he is distancing himself from the bequeathed tradition and at the same time laying the groundwork for his own philosophy. To this extent, Hegel's retrieval of metaphysical legacy, with both destructive and foundational intent, seems underpinned by translation. Federico Orsini, in *La filosofia come traduzione in Hegel*, frames the question of translation in the relationship between rationality and historicity, arguing that Hegel's Logic, as 'critical ontology', is a translation of the history of metaphysics (see pp. 129-145).

As philosophical translation can reveal the text and open the path to new traditions, the second section of the issue is dedicated to the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Hegel's translations. Ayumi Takeshima, in her *The Reception and Translation of Hegel in Japan* (see pp. 147-158), reconstructs the germination of Hegelian studies in the Japanese context within the constellation of Buddhism, Marxism, and the Kyoto School. In *Kojève's Dialectique du maître et de l'esclave* (see pp.

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[50] W 3, p. 322; *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 251.

[51] Id., *Nürnberger Gymnasialkurse und Gymnasialreden (1808-1816)*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, 10.2, ed. by K. Grotsch, Hamburg, Meiner, 2006, pp. 517-521.

159-175), Mariana Teixeira works on Kojève's translation (understood mainly as mistranslation or non-translation) of *Phenomenology* and on the effects of this operation on the French reception of Hegel. Moving from a critical comparison of the four current French translations of *Phenomenology*, in his *À quoi ressemblerait une philosophie hégélienne de la traduction?* (see pp. 177-201), Emmanuel Renault poses some decisive questions on the theoretical problem of translation without avoiding its mostly non-Hegelian aspects. Francesca Iannelli and Alain Patrick Olivier, in *Translating Hegel's Aesthetics in France and in Italy: A Comparative Approach* (see pp. 203-225), revisit the different steps that the translation of *Aesthetics* took through in Italy and France, with both a retrospective and a foreshadowing view. Macha's contribution (see pp. 227-241) revolves around the verb *beiherspielen*, the expression used in the Hotho edition of the *Aesthetics* to indicate the «sensuous side» of language, and on the consolidated and possible translations of *Beispiel* after Derrida's reading of the Hegelian dialectics.

The autobiographical elements present in both the second and third parts of the issue focus on how translation, with its irreversibility, is rooted in a specific history as much as in a personal story, in the needs of a community, and in the historical circumstances of each philosophical language. Here, in the relation between language's projections and the practices of a community, translation distinctly shows its political reality. To this extent, Mirza's personal testimony, *Some Dimensions of Translating or Writing about Hegel in Urdu* (see pp. 243-247), can shed light on the meaning of the first difficult attempts to study and translate Hegel in present-day Pakistan.

The issue's third section is dedicated to six different translation experiences. It presents not only meaningful case studies but also an overview of the different faces that Hegel's philosophy assumed, maybe also allowing a glimpse of the ones it will proleptically assume.

The operation of digging through language that takes place in translation, and the unexpected results of this digging, are shown in several contributions. By translating Hegel's works, the historical

stratifications of Hegel's philosophical German (Faraklas), his systematic terminological choices (Giuspoli), his expositive style (Pankow), the process of text writing (Duque), and what Hegel unintentionally left indeterminate (Kobe), can be made to emerge.

Surprisingly, Hegel's translators distance themselves from the very common preconception about individuating in the noun the simplest translational unity. Hegel's translators are, rather, extremely attentive to syntactic elements, formulations and expressive strategies (Giuspoli), punctuation (Kobe), adverbs (Duque), and rhythm (Di Giovanni) that compose the adamantine net of Hegel's thought. Some of them conserve the normative dimension of classical reflection on translation and share with the reader some precepts that they have collected from their experience as translators. The explication of these norms allows the reader to get a glimpse of an idea (and an ideal) of translation based chiefly on both an inherited, sometimes innovative, understanding of translation and their own praxis of study in and through translation (Faraklas, Di Giovanni, and Pankow).

5. So far, we tried to map an *Übersetzungsbegriff* in Hegel's writings in a reconstructive and non-chronological manner, in order to provide a unitary overview. Starting with Hegel's discourse on the language of philosophy, thematizing the representation-concept relationship, we proceeded toward a conceptualization of translation in Logic, moving thereafter from the logical structure of translation to its representational instantiation in poetry and to the historical development of philosophical ideas. This can only be a first step in articulating a Hegelian theory of translation because the formulation of the concept of translation by virtue of its representation is a decidedly Hegelian move. There are other questions that have emerged during our progression that need to be plumbed, such as the translational characters of dialectics and the dialectical movement of the translational process, the self-transformative logic of translation, the reflexivity of self-translation, and the history of ideas as translation.

To lay out a Hegelian theory of translation, it seems necessary to go beyond Hegel's language with the task of examining Hegel's ideas and comparing them with those of his contemporaries (e.g., Goethe, Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Novalis, and Schlegel) and also with those of the authors of the XX century (e.g., Benjamin, Heidegger, Quine, Davidson, and Derrida), who enlivened the philosophical discussions on translation. In addition, if Hegel's philosophy will have a say in the current debate on translation, involving discussions of different methods and disciplines, it is hoped that it will help close the gap between philosophy and translation studies. Therefore, the aim of this issue is to take stock of the researches conducted so far in this direction, to revive the interest in this research topic, and to open a discussion about the possibility of a Hegelian philosophy of translation with and, if needed, against Hegel himself[52].

During the process of compiling this issue, our invited contributor, Prof. Marcos Lutz Müller, passed away. We want to remember his important contributions to Hegelian scholarship, his public commitment, and his majestic, patient effort in translating Hegel's Philosophy of Right *into Portuguese.*

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[52] Sections 1 and 2 are written by Saša Hrnjez and sections 3 and 4 are written by Elena Nardelli. The general conception of the article and section 5 belong to both authors.