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TOWARDS A GENERAL THEORY ON THE EXISTENCE
OF TYPICALLY NATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES.
THE PORTUGUESE, THE AUSTRIAN, THE
ITALIAN, AND OTHER CASES REVIEWED*

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The question now is how we are to understand the relationship between nationalism and multiculturalism as two of the most significant forces in the modern world.

R. White

Abstract: The author studies the problem of the existence of typically national philosophies, he shows that it has crossed the history of Western philosophy since the first half of the 19th century until nowadays, and that, at its core, are, not only what philosophers thought to be the relationship between culture and philosophy, but, mainly, what they thought to be the statute of philosophy itself. He argues that, in order to explain what we believe culture and philosophy are, we need a theory on utopia and its connections with ideology. From this point of view, he carefully analyses the concept of “national philosophy” and several historical examples of it, and suggests that we need to enlarge that concept (for instance, regarding multinational philosophies and philosophical traditions). Particularly,

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given the present diversification and complexity of such a concept, we need a typology of it, which would allow us to understand not only what philosophers are trying to say when they speak of their “national/multinational philosophies” or “philosophical traditions”, but also to compare them to each other. The author concludes that, when we have reviewed the problem of the existence of typically national philosophies according to these suggestions, it turns out to be at the top of the 21st century philosophical agenda.

Keywords: culture, Hegelianism, ideology, multiculturalism, nationalism, national philosophies, philosophical traditions, positivism, relativism, universality of philosophy, utopia.

Resumo: O autor estuda o problema da existência de filosofias tipicamente nacionais, mostrando que esse problema atravessou a história da filosofia ocidental da primeira metade do século XIX aos nossos dias, e que, no seu cerne, está não apenas o que os filósofos pensaram ser a relação entre cultura e filosofia, mas, principalmente, o que eles pensaram ser o estatuto da própria filosofia. Argumenta que, em ordem a explicar o que entendemos por cultura e filosofia, precisamos de uma teoria sobre a utopia e as suas conexões com a ideologia. Deste ponto de vista, analisa atentamente o conceito de “filosofia nacional” e vários exemplos históricos do mesmo, sugerindo que precisamos de alargar o seu âmbito (designadamente, às filosofias multinacionais e às tradições filosóficas). Particularmente, considerando a diversidade e complexidade de um tal conceito, necessitamos de uma tipologia a seu respeito, a qual nos permitiria compreender não apenas o que os filósofos querem dizer quando falam das suas filosofias nacionais/multinacionais, mas também compará-las umas com as outras. O autor conclui que, se reapreciarmos o problema da existência de filosofias tipicamente nacionais de acordo com estas sugestões, ele aparece-nos como estando no topo da agenda filosófica para o século XXI.

Palavras-chave: cultura, filosofias nacionais, hegelianismo, ideologia, multiculturalismo, nacionalismo, positivism, relativismo, tradições filosóficas, universalidade da filosofia, utopia.

INTRODUCTION

Reformulating some fundamental concepts

In this paper, I study the problem of the existence of typically national philosophies, which arose mainly in the 19th century, in Europe, in the context of the definition (or redefinition) of national identities. As far as I know, that problem has been studied only in a very partial and limited way. Its historiography lacks a general approach to it, not simply from

the perspective of this or that (supposedly) national philosophy, but as a whole, or systematically. Furthermore, it lacks an historiography that would consider in what sense multinational philosophies and associated philosophical traditions can be taken as (more recent) versions of the old idea that typically national philosophies do exist. In fact, what are the conceptual features that define such philosophies? In what sense can we say that a culture of a given country corresponds to a national philosophy?¹ In general, it lacks a typology of such philosophies analogous to that concerning nationalism and national cultures (as the one which was suggested by Gellner 2006, chap. 7, pp. 85foll.). Finally, and perhaps more interestingly for us here, it seems to lack an approach that would consider the problem of the existence of typically national philosophies in light of the more general problem of knowing in what sense – in the first quarter of the 21st century – can we speak of the “universality of philosophy”.

All of these problems are crucial for contemporary philosophy and for political philosophy in particular. As suggested by some authors: “The question now is how we are to understand the relationship between nationalism and multiculturalism as two of the most significant forces in the modern world.” (White 2005, p. 2) Philosophical nationalisms, in particular, do have strong ideological and political connections, and – as I will suggest when concluding this paper – they seem to constitute, nowadays, a powerful trend which opposes, in our globalized world, to multiculturalism (which is also not immune to such connections). In this sense and given the complexity of the subject, the typology I was referring to would play, essentially, an heuristic role. It would be an indispensable tool not only for analysing what philosophers are saying when they talk about their “national philosophies” and “philosophical traditions”, and for comparing them to each other, but also, eventually, for a new approach to the relationship between philosophy, politics and culture in general.

I suggest that the question of the existence of national philosophies, far from being a located issue of this or that country, and insofar as we consider it as an interpretation of the relationship between philosophy and culture, has crossed the history of Western philosophy from the 19th century until nowadays. Having in mind some known examples of what has been identified in the past with “national philosophies” (as is the Portuguese, the Austrian, and the Italian cases in the 20th century, or the

¹ K. Mulligan wrote a lot of very original and fruitful papers about nationalism and philosophical traditions, without answering these questions. For a bibliography of that author, see Mulligan (2010). For his concept of nationalism, see Mulligan (2001).

German one in the 19th), I hold that at the core of them are, not only the above-mentioned relationship, but also, and essentially, the relationship between utopia and ideology. What we believe to be “culture” in a given society or even in our globalised world, or what we think to be “philosophy” in these contexts (if we consider philosophy a sort of “self-consciousness” of culture), is an expression of an utopian thinking which has always, by nature, ideological presuppositions and implications. In this sense, the problem of the existence of typically national philosophies is not old, but a very recent and contemporary one: we can find some versions of it in the idea that there are “philosophical traditions”, or, according to the postmodern approach (after the sixties of the 20th century), the idea that philosophy can be reduced to a cultural product or artefact. In fact, in the conclusion of my paper, I suggest that what is confusing in the present state of the problem regarding the existence of typically national philosophies is that this latter approach (that I will call the “relativist approach”) allow us to rehabilitate, in some sense, the old claim that such philosophies do, in fact, exist.

I will try to explore all these connections in the following pages. But, considering the reasonable extent of a paper to be published in a philosophical journal, and the complexity of some of the issues at stake, I cannot be wordy and even entirely precise regarding some historical and philosophical details. More information about them can be obtained consulting the bibliographic references (which, in spite of its extent, are far from complete).

1. Preliminary and provisional definitions

I suggest we begin for the time being with the following definitions. – “Typically national philosophies” means the philosophies which are produced in the context of a specific country or nation, and may be identified – according to those who believe such philosophies do exist – not only within the geographical and political boundaries of these nations, but also, essentially, with their language and/or culture in broad terms (including social, economic, political factors, among others). (In fact, as I will see, such boundaries are not essential to the definition, since national cultures, in certain cases, cannot/could not be reduced to them.) In principle, this definition contrasts with the definition of the opposite thesis, according to which philosophy is universal. In other words, philosophy is a supranational heritage – as that which was produced in the Western civilisation since ancient Greece until today –, which was to some extent (an “extent” that we will have to explain), cultur-

ally indifferent, i.e. independent of the specific culture of each nation. (This feature, i.e. indifference towards national culture(s), is absolutely fundamental for some supporters of the idea of typically national philosophies, particularly in the 20th century. However, as we will see, it hardly characterises the issue we are about to discuss.) The latter thesis alone is not generally disputable, that is, there are no objections to the fact that philosophy, from the ancient Greece onwards, is/was universal.² What is discussed and criticized is the presupposition that philosophy, nowadays, could be entirely reduced to such representation. But, of course, typically national philosophies can only be legitimated as “philosophies”, or can only be said to exist as such, if they have at the same time some relevant or substantial connection with the universality of philosophy. And the problem for those who subscribe to the first thesis is just to explain in what sense their typically national philosophies are connected with the universality of philosophy.

Let us call the first thesis the TNP (“typically national philosophy”) thesis; the problem I have just mentioned the TNP problem; and the second thesis the UP (“universality of philosophy”) thesis.

2. The problem of national identities from the 19th century onwards

There are, of course, many issues that can be raised regarding each of these definitions, which I will try to clarify in my paper. To what extent the UP thesis, documented in the history of Western philosophy until the 19th century particularly (when the TNP thesis started developing), is indifferent to national cultures? Is it not true that in several philosophies produced in that period, since Plato and Aristotle, the cultures of the nations of the relevant authors – and even some common features of Western cultures in general – have been, to some extent, expressed? More decisively and interestingly: is it not true that, in certain cases, philoso-

² I mean Western philosophy, not Oriental. This is problematic in some cases, as in the case of Filipino philosophy. Gripaldo (2004) remarks: “The onslaught of Oriental and Western philosophies in the Philippines has marginalized Filipino philosophy. (The term ‘Oriental philosophy’ generally refers to Indian, Chinese, and Japanese philosophies.) A reaction to this marginalisation took three forms: (1) Filipino philosophy in the traditional sense does not exist, (2) if at all there is Filipino philosophy, it is in an holistic cultural sense based on Filipino languages, folksayings, myths, and the like; and (3) Filipino philosophy constitutes the combined Filipino scholarly philosophical writings on Oriental and Western philosophy. Each of these reactions, of course, needs to be clarified.”

phers have identified the aims of philosophy with cultural purposes, which can be interpreted as a sort of reconciliation between the Western and the Oriental philosophical traditions (see Hartmann 1869; and Ribeiro, H. 2004)? This is hardly clear to some views on the TNP problem already in the 20th century, who, in this sense, call the traditional concept of the UP “rational” and “intellectual”.³

Regarding this, we must pay attention to the fact that our subject, i.e., the problem of the existence of typically national philosophies, emerges mainly during the 19th century and, in general, in the context of a more broader or larger problem: the one of the definition of political national identities and what is known as “nationalism” (a problem that I cannot study here, in the present paper).⁴The best known cases are Germany and

³ White (2005, p. 1) says in this respect: “Kant is typical in this regard: his emphasis is on the universal and necessary features of human experience, and he has very little to say about the issue of nationality and particular nations. Kant embraces cosmopolitanism and affirms the necessity of a universal narrative of history that would include the whole of humankind.” White’s approach to the UP thesis is an “internalist” one (defining the universality of philosophy by the intrinsic properties of the philosophical thought), and must be distinguished from the “externalist”, such as that of Haller (1988). This author characterizes that thesis from an institutional (and sociological) point of view: “For many centuries the institutions of schools and of universities formed the proper (most recently in fact the only) realm of historical influence, not only for this, the oldest of sciences, but indeed for practical all disciplines. (...) But, then, precisely because institutions also act as a stablishing force, such that within them the winds of intellectual change blow less strongly than elsewhere, schools and highers institutes of learning not infrequently become the refuge of old and out-dated, petrified theories and traditions. What the obsolete and petrified taste of an established audience signifies for the daring and spirit of an artist protesting against traditional forms and contents, namely an icy lack of understanding or an angry resistance, is not infrequently proffered by the republic of scholars and by institutes of learning to complete new scientific ideas and theories. The history of the arts, as of the sciences, is to a large extent nothing but a collection of examples of this relationship.” (p. 2) Haller’s institutional approach to the UP thesis is very pertinent, but, in my view, it is far from being the best one. (For more information about that kind of approach to philosophy, see Cohen 1989.) It helps us to understand historically the UP thesis and even its ideological implications in some contexts; but it is of little use when we try to understand it systematically.

⁴ Gentile, E. (2003, p. 2) defines nationalism in the following way: “By *nationalism* I mean any cultural and political movement that bases itself on the myth of nation and that aims to affirm the superiority of the nation. In this case, *nation* means that collective entity that takes form in the organisation of a national State. In this context, the term *nation-State* refers to not only to an institution that governs a given territory, but also includes those sentiments, myths and ideas that give the State and the Nation a fundamental value in the collective civic conscience and that identifies patriotism with loyalty to the nation-State.” Nowhere in Gentile’s book are philosophical explanations

Italy.⁵ However, in the 20th century several versions of TNPs arose in the context of the redefinition of national identities and of the ideological struggles connected with it. This explains the fact that, when defending the TNP thesis, his supporters usually confound it with strong ideological and political presuppositions, which are not, for the most part, entirely clear. The existence of a TNP, in such cases, would give legitimacy to the cultural identity at stake. We must carefully analyse these presuppositions, in order to try to understand what the TNP philosophers intended to say from a philosophical point of view. (This is, of course, essential, but is not widely acknowledged, even on the part of the historians.) I could present as an example of this connection between philosophy and ideology (but not necessarily an example of a TNP according to the definition presented above), Fichte and his *Addresses to the German Nation* (1807) (see Fichte 2009). Meaningfully, some recent defences of the TNP thesis in the 20th century have occurred in countries which are searching for their (new) national identities after the loss of their past ones, as is the case, for example, of Russia, Ukraine and Romania.

3. Culture, Philosophy and Utopia: Ideological Connections of the TNPs

This connection between philosophy, culture and ideology is very important for the study of the TNP thesis, broadly considered. Insofar as it can be ascertained that cultural identities are always, to some extent, more or less ideal, that connection suggests that there is a close link between culture and utopia, which is essentially ideological. My point, here, is that what we mean by “culture” and “philosophy” is not ideological neutral and inoffensive; the interpretations of both concepts have obvious political purposes in social contexts, *which refer to what will or would happen (utopia) only throughout what is supposedly already happening*. (I held this view two years ago in a paper on precisely the concept of utopia. [See Ribeiro 2010].) This means that utopia cannot be reduced to literature and imagination, and does not concern simply what will/would happen, but it is an essential feature of our ties with the world

involved. Regarding the problematic of nationalism, generally with the same limitation, see Alter (1994), Armstrong (1982), Bonifácio (1998), Branco (2012), Dellanoi (1991), Godechot (1946), Hobsbawm (1990), Pearson (1994), Teich (1993), Ventós (1994). About the Portuguese case when compared with the Spanish one, see Molinero (1996). For a philosophical approach to the nationalist problematic, see Baertschi (2001).

⁵ About the Italian case, see Gentile, E. (2009).

and culture in particular. If we accept the current definition of “national culture” as the set of beliefs, values, mores and traditions more or less incorporated in the language of a given nation, and *if we take by “ideology” just its interpretation* (not only, of course, by the political agents but by intellectuals, philosophers, and so on), we can see that utopia is at the core of both (culture and ideology). What we mean by “culture” would be not only ideological, but also utopian in some sense. We can describe and analyse it from a *rhetorical point of view*, as has been suggested by some specialized literature on the subject (see Harris, R. 2005, p. 3 foll.; Ribeiro 2012). I think that, in this regard, we must return to what has been said in the thirties and forties by Karl Mannheim in his book *Ideology and Utopia* (Mannheim 1960) and to some readings of it, including the mine,⁶ like the one of P. Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1997). I will return to this topic later, in my concluding statements.

Regarding the TNP problem, an obvious example of this connection between philosophy and culture, on the one hand, and utopia and ideology, on the other, is the soviet claim – during most part of the 20th century – that a Russian philosophy would exist and could be identified with the soviet political regime (see Lewis [1999]; and Dumain [2011]). The example shows a close connection between utopia and ideology; in fact, it can be understood not strictly as an example of utopia but, more precisely, of dystopia. But as Mannheim and Ricoeur showed, against

⁶ I developed this approach in my paper quoted above (Ribeiro 2010), about philosophy and philosophy of science, in particular. My point, there, is that the object of philosophy (that one which is at stake in the UP thesis and the TNP problem) and the philosophical attitude regarding it, in general, are constitutionally utopian. By that I meant, not that such an object does not exist, but that *it is supposed to exist*, that is to say, to be inter-subjectively recognizable. From this perspective, the philosophical attitude, apparently, is a view from nowhere and literature is closer to the world than philosophy. Nagel (1989) said something on this matter; but he ignores completely the connection between utopia and ideology. In brief, my view is: when philosophy is understood in context, it turns out to be a product of a given social and cultural situation, and ideology is at the core of its connections to the world. However, against contemporary relativism (what I will call further ahead, the “relativist approach”), this does not mean that philosophy, theoretically speaking, can be entirely reduced to such situations, nor that philosophy would be simply a sort of disguised ideology. Reinterpreting Ricoeur (1997), I suggested that it is possible to describe and to characterize, in some sense, the utopian space of philosophy (but not in the phenomenological sense that he, somewhat confusingly, had in mind). It is possible to do that, for instance, regarding Descartes or Husserl utopian philosophical spaces. A rhetorical approach can be a very useful tool for that description (Ribeiro 2012). In the above mentioned paper (Ribeiro 2010), I tried to exemplify through philosophy of science, from Descartes and Kant to Quine and Kuhn, this new approach to the utopian theory.

some interpretations of the concept of ideology like the Marxist-Leninist one, that concept cannot be understood as something negative, a sort of false conception of reality or a perverse manipulation of its representation with political objectives. Its aims are not only to give legitimacy to what we think (our) society and culture *must be*, but also, and mainly, *to what we think that society and culture really are*. The same could be said, in some sense, about the concept of utopia, if we consider, as I suggested above, that utopia cannot be reduced to what would happen, or to what belongs to imagination and fantasy. On the contrary, *in general utopia concerns what is already happening, as is the case of what we believe the culture (or the philosophy) of a given society is*. The main difference between the two concepts is just that legitimating scope that characterizes ideology and which I was referring to.

If we see the TNP problem from this perspective, it is obvious that the example I gave previously, that of Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation*, is also an utopian and ideological example: "utopian" to begin insofar as the "German nation", for Fichte at the time, is a theoretical construction, a problematic ideal to achieve, and "ideological", insofar as it has a legitimating scope regarding the German political situation, the French domination (see Godechot 1956), etc. However, as I will argue in this paper, the same can be said of other versions of the TNP thesis where what is involved is not simply what will/would happen, *but what is (supposedly) happening*. Take for instance the "British empiricist tradition" (Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Russell) according to J. Ayer's theory, presented in the beginning of the thirties of the 20th century (Ayer 1936). As I have suggested in another paper (see Ribeiro 2005), following some previous research on the subject, it is questionable to what extent such tradition has existed or does exist: some of its "members" are doubtfully "British" in the cultural sense of the word (as is the case of Hume, but Ayer, in the forties, included in such tradition, Wittgenstein's philosophy itself), and what Ayer takes to be "empiricism" is a theoretical construction that does not truly correspond to the philosophies of some of the members at stake, as is the case of Russell (see Ribeiro 2002). Nevertheless, that version of the TNP thesis was proposed as *a faithful representation* of British philosophy from the 17th to the 20th century. On the other hand, J. Rée has decisively pointed out to its ideological connections (see Rée 1998).

4. Strong and weak versions of the TNP thesis (examples)

Before moving forward, we need to separate the *weak* from the *strong version* of this thesis. We can support it – without arguing in its favour systematically – from this or that philosophical perspective, or even independently of any such perspective. For example, it is not sufficient to argue that a philosophy from one country is a TNP on the assumption that its language and culture are original and unique, and even superior to others. From the 19th century onwards, this has been claimed often by philosophers with quite different nationalities. Since this argument lacks substance, there is the issue of grounds and systematisation, which is the topic itself of the strong version of the TNP. *The grounds and systematisation are particularly relevant when the TNPs are used with ideological and political objectives.*

The following are two examples of this: the idea that there was a Portuguese TNP, takes us to a strong version; it was presented and developed for several decades of the 20th century;⁷ the same applies to an Austrian TNP, supported by O. Neurath and R. Haller, in the nineteen-thirties and nineteen-seventies, respectively, and to an “Italian philosophy” and a “Russian” one, developed, respectively, by E. Garin, in the forties, and V. Zenkovski, in the fifties of the 20th century. Yet there are several variants (or sub-versions) that arise in the framework of the strong versions, in general, and even of the strong version of each TNP involved. Consider, for the moment, only the first two TNPs. The Portuguese version is different from the Austrian one, to the extent that the former, unlike the latter, concerns more or less the total identification of philosophy with the typically national culture (and, more precisely, with a corporative concept of it), as this was expressed by the Portuguese language, mores,

⁷ The idea of a Portuguese TNP seems to have been first presented (implicitly at least), in 1912, by the cultural movement entitled “Renascença Portuguesa” (“Portuguese Renaissance”). It was developed by the poet Teixeira de Pascoaes and, from a neo-Hegelian point of view, by the philosopher Leonardo Coimbra. This happened shortly thereafter the proclamation of the republican regime in Portugal (1910). [See Pascoaes (1912) and (1978). See Coimbra (2004) and (2005). Regarding the neo-Hegelian connections of the Portuguese philosophy in the 20th century, see Ribeiro (2011).] After Pascoaes and Coimbra, the claim that a Portuguese TNP would exist entered in the Portuguese philosophical and cultural agenda until *nowadays* (this is my claim). (Notice that other versions of a Portuguese TNP have been presented before and after that I was referring to. See, below, notes 13 and 19.) However, according to some hasty remarks made by the official historiography of my problem in this article, such a problem would have been “extinct” (presumably, after the democratic revolution in April 25, 1974). See Calafate (2004, p. 18). I have been suggesting the opposite.

beliefs and traditions.⁸ The main idea is that what was considered during a very large period (and specially in the context of a totalitarian regime) as “culture”, was *in itself* (national) philosophy, configured (as some Portuguese ideologues said at the time) by “God, Fatherland and Family” and focused on the (Portuguese) concept of “saudade” (see Piñero 1984). From this perspective, we can speak of more or less isolated Portuguese philosophers and, essentially, of their ties with the history of Portuguese culture, but *one cannot properly speak of the existence of a “Portuguese philosophical tradition.”*⁹ While in the Austrian version, on the other hand, the TNP apparently involves, inversely, the identification of national culture with philosophy. The main idea, in this case, is that certain features of the thought of some Austrian philosophers (like Bolzano, Brentano, Wittgenstein and the logical positivists) would correspond, in general, to the Austrian culture, and that such TNP would be essentially distinct of other (supposed) TNPs, such as the German one.¹⁰ In both cases, strong

⁸ This applies mainly to the Portuguese TNP of the nineteen-sixties. See Ferreira (1965); and Gomes (1967), (1969). See also Marinho (1976). The views of these authors were supported by several others until today. See Seabra (2006).

⁹ Such a conclusion was drawn mainly by University professors during the regime of O. Salazar (J. Carvalho, D. Santos, M. Barbosa). In general, they defended the UP thesis with some doubts or reservations, which concern the need for a new approach to the TNP problem (*via* the reformulation of the concept of Portuguese culture). We can interpret this, in certain cases (M. Barbosa), as a sort of dubious engagement with that regime. See Torgal (1999) and Ribeiro (2005a, p. 147 foll.).

¹⁰ See Haller (1979), (1986), Mulligan (1986), and Smith (1996). Neurath (1935, p. 12 foll.) offers a good summary of that identification I am referring to, in particular, of the ideological and political presuppositions of an Austrian TNP. Philosophically speaking, Austrian philosophy in the 18th and 19th century would have avoided what Neurath calls “l’entre-acte kantiste” (p. 12) and German absolute idealism. “En Autriche, he adds, rien de pareil à la philosophie de Fichte, où s’unissait une attitude foncière pour une large part franchement révolutionnaire et une véhémence nationale et métaphysique. Rien de pareil aux spéculations des disciples de Schelling et de Hegel, quelques reflets pâles tout au plus.” (p. 16) This explain, according to him, the emergence of a strong empiricist tradition, mainly in the 20th century, with Wittgenstein and logical empiricism. Such tradition has cultural counterparts: “l’empirisme logique se développe à l’époque de la technique moderne, où le peuple reçoit de la culture et où l’Etat s’engage dans une vie moderne aussi. Il semble exister en tous pays une très étroite corrélation entre ces formes modernes de la vie et une attitude générale empiriste.” (p. 14) In fact, Neurath insists that this kind of correspondence between culture and empiricism can be generalized: “Un rapide coup d’oeil géographique: inscrivons *grosso modo* sur une carte des pays de civilisation occidentale les hommes et les cercles qui peuvent être considérés comme des précurseurs de l’empirisme logique, c’est-à-dire des partisans d’une pensée antimétaphysique, positiviste, utilitariste, pragmatique, matérialiste, sceptique.” (*ib.*) And he gives a list (see *ib.*, pp. 14-15). About Neurath’s philosophy, see Cartwright (1996).

ideological presuppositions and implications are more or less evident; and, again, in both cases the *utopian nature* of the relevant TNPs is obvious. But, whereas the Portuguese version ultimately denies the UP, the Austrian version seeks to highlight the originality of the Austrian TNP in the broader context of the UP.¹¹

As for the variants of each strong version, some followers of the TNP version in Portugal (mainly before the Portuguese totalitarian regime, which goes from 1926 to 1974), supported, albeit separately from the majority of all the others, some aspects of what I have just said about the Austrian version.¹² In fact, such version was criticized from the beginning of its presentation (around 1911-1912), and has been more of a controversial issue, for Portuguese philosophers in general, than an unquestionable and widely accepted paradigm (see Ribeiro, Á. 1943; and Lourenço 1994).¹³ (In the Austrian version too, some important distinctions would have to be made between Neurath's neo-Hegelian interpretation and that suggested by Haller, almost fifty years later.)

Now, if we compare the Portuguese and the Austrian TNP versions with the Italian and the Russian ones, which I mentioned above, there

¹¹ Haller (1988, p. 2) says in this regard: "(...) first, that in the last 100 years there has taken place an independent development of a specifically Austrian philosophy, opposed to the philosophical currents of the remainder of the German-speaking world; and secondly that this development can sustain a genetic model which permit us to affirm an intrinsic homogeneity of Austrian philosophy up to the Vienna Circle and its descendants." That "genetic model" is (as he called it) a "cognitive tradition", conceived in the same terms of Kuhn's "normal science" (p. 1). Haller's aim is that such tradition "stand in need of institutionalisation." As I suggested above, the UP thesis is criticized, in this context, insofar as it would correspond to a "republic of letters, whose geographical location is the totality of universities and their surrogates – academic chambers, editorial offices, salons" (p. 2)

¹² This seems to be the case of L. Coimbra. He has never accepted the main thesis of the supporters of a Portuguese TNP: reduction of philosophy to culture, and, in the end, rejection of the universality of philosophy. See Ribeiro, H. (2005a, p. 140 foll.).

¹³ The opposition to the idea of a Portuguese TNP, such as that defended by Pascoaes (1912 and 1978), arose very soon after its presentation. See Sérgio (1913) and Reis (2002). But, apparently, the claim of the opponents was that a different version of a Portuguese TNP (with another cultural background) would exist – not the one that had been defended by Pascoaes. [See again Ribeiro (2005a, p. 137 foll.) on this.] In both cases, Portuguese philosophy was ideologically reduced to a given concept of the Portuguese culture. In other words: such different concepts were the basis of different versions of a Portuguese TNP. Considering this confusion between philosophy and culture (and the inexistence of any clear delimitation between the respective concepts), in recent years some authors have suggested a reformulation of the concept of "Portuguese culture". See Leone (2005) and Natário (2007).

are some fundamental distinctions to make. The relevant historiographies about the latter are early examples of what we may call today, according to a relativist approach to the TNP problem, “intellectual histories” (Rorty 1991, p. 67 foll.). These historiographies, of course, are interested in studying the existence of the respective philosophical traditions (because such traditions may exist), but they adopt an intermediate position between the two extreme positions (about the connection of culture with philosophy) which are involved, namely, in the Portuguese and the Austrian TNPs: such traditions are interpreted, in general, in cultural terms, even if they are not completely reduced to them (contrary to what happens in the Portuguese case). From this perspective, national cultures would correspond to national philosophies (as happens in the Austrian case), insofar as the latter are more or less conceptually developed, but if we try to define ultimately the idiosyncrasy of a given national philosophy (such as the Italian or the Russian), culture (not philosophy) would be our essential framework.

4.1. The ego-nationalist and the pluralist versions of the TNP thesis.
Examples

Now, although the TNP thesis has been frequently followed in the past and still is in the present, it is obvious, in my view, that when clarified or developed in context its characterisation is much more elaborate and complex than the definition that I began by presenting. From this definition one also draw that each nation that has a cultural identity would have its own TNP, to the extent that it has a cultural identity *sui generis*. The argument gives way to what we could call the *ego-nationalist and the pluralist versions* of the TNP thesis. For clear ideological reasons, supporters focus essentially on the specific culture of their countries, and not on that of others. They are not interested in what we call today “multiculturalism”, nor in modern metaphilosophical questions as those developed nowadays according to the problem of the incommensurability of cultures. Therefore, in principle that argument leads to the first version (the ego-nationalist one) not to the second. This interpretation of the TNP was not widely supported in Europe, although according to some disputable interpretations, some authors of German romanticism, as Herder (see Barnard 1969), seem to have pointed it out at the end of the 18th century.¹⁴ Nevertheless, we must notice that in German romanticism it is culture and

¹⁴ Some authors, as Ergang (1931), see Herder as the founder of German nationalism. Others, see him as the founder of a sort of “ethical nationalism” (White 2005). And others, paradoxically, see him as a supporter of (not what I called “pluralism” but) what we call nowadays “multiculturalism” (see Taylor 1994).

not necessarily philosophy that is involved, that is, it is culture that would configure national identity.¹⁵ Anyway, if we consider the ego-nationalist version *in abstracto* (I emphasize ‘in abstracto’), it seems to have been defended in Portugal when the Portuguese totalitarian regime of O. Salazar was at its peak. Its utopian nature, as well as its ideological presuppositions and implications, are evident. The ego-nationalist version of the TNP thesis entails identifying philosophy entirely with the national culture and, to some extent, even denying the UP, hereby raising serious issues regarding the statute of philosophy itself. This is why, when supported, it was generally endorsed by intellectuals at the service of the political power, and not so much by philosophers.¹⁶ Nevertheless, identifying the version is relevant, given some level of confusion involving the TNP thesis. It seems that it was not this ego-nationalist version that was supported, for example, by German absolute idealism from the end of the 18th century to the first quarter of the 19th, in particular, by Fichte and Hegel.¹⁷ With them philosophy offered its own (essential) contribution to the resolution of the TNP problem. No doubt that they were nationalists in some sense, but, as I will suggest further ahead, they seem to have adopted a sort of reconciliation view between the TNP and the UP theses (this is my claim).

4.2. *The positivist interpretation of the TNP problem. Influence and examples*

Now, surprisingly, we find already in the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, with A. Comte's positivism in France, precisely the inverse of what I have just mentioned, in other words: *the national culture and, generally speaking, western national cultures as a whole, are reduced entirely to a given paradigm of the universality of philosophy*, in the present case that which is embodied by the “religion of humanity” in light of the so called “law of the three stages”. This is the view presented in Comte's books *System of Positive Philosophy* and *System of Positive Polity* (see Comte 1942, and 1875). There, what is meant by “culture”

¹⁵ That philosophy itself would configure such national identity, is the fundamental topic introduced by German absolute idealism (Fichte and Hegel). Such approach is absent in Herder's concept of national cultures. I will return to this matter in the following pages.

¹⁶ This seems to have happened in Portugal with A. Ferro, an ideologue of the dictator O. Salazar, during the nineteen-thirties and forties. See Serrão (1992, p. 401ff.) and Guedes (1997).

¹⁷ Regarding Fichte, see Abizadeh (2005), Ferrer (2000); and regarding Hegel, see Avinery (2010), and Bienenstock (1979). I will come back to this subject further ahead.

(i.e. morality, education, religion, etc.) and “nation-State” is normatively configured by positivist philosophy itself (see Gouhier 1980, p. 72 foll.). It results from Comte’s theories, in the last book, that modern nation-States shall disappear and give way to “free and stables nationalities”, with a cultural, linguistic and territorial basis, more restricted and “natural” (which is, for the most part, the historical one) (see Grange 1996, p. 319).¹⁸ The political regime that Comte had in mind is a “social republic”, conceived as something outside not only the context of the European nation-States, at the time, and of parliamentary democracy, in particular, but also of the relevant “rights” properly called (*id.*)

However, this way of understanding the UP thesis, which is clearly utopian and ideological, does not set aside national cultures entirely and, to some extent, the relevant philosophies, if we consider, as some positivists did following Comte himself, that the culture of individual nation-States already particularises (or reveals) somewhat the universal philosophy in question (see Comte 1875, p. 116 foll.) According to the law of the three stages, the cultural identity of each country would depend on its evolution: some of them would be more or less near the “positive stage”, others would be in the “metaphysical one”, etc. (see Comte 2002, p. 31 foll.). But, considering that in most of the cases, in Europe mainly, there are sort of “mixed stages” (and not simply “pure” ones), as Comte has suggested, the point is that the positivist historian and philosopher would have to clearly distinguish the positivist features of the cultural situation of his own country, in order to see in them just those particularizations and revelations of the positivist spirit throughout the history of mankind, and to regenerate the others (see Comte 2002, p. 41 foll.). This was an interpretation that was put forward in Portugal in the late 19th century, even before the Portuguese version of the TNP mentioned above, by the positivist philosopher Teófilo Braga.¹⁹ (Braga said in this regard, quoting Comte’s *System of Positive Polity*, that “national differences must follow the universal destiny of Western transformation, according to the needs of

¹⁸ Kremmer-Marietti (1980, p. 428 foll.) remarks that, contrary to Aristotle and Hegel, Comte is not a supporter of the nation-States. This explains, perhaps, the universality of Comte’s cultural model; and why this model, contrary to what apparently happens with Hegel’s philosophy, does not give rise to truly national cultures.

¹⁹ Braga was in Portugal the most important supporter of the views of the late positivism in France; and his political philosophy had a significant impact on the proclamation of the Portuguese republican regime in 1910. See some of his positivist readings of the Portuguese culture: Braga (1877), (1880) and (1892). For a criticism of Braga’s views, see Homem (1989, p. 311foll.). For the influence of positivism on the proclamation of the Portuguese Republic, see Catroga (1975).

regeneration.”)²⁰ This was also the interpretation made by some of those who have proclaimed, in 1889, the republican regime in Brazil.²¹ We will see that this way of conceiving the universality vs. particularity relation has some analogy with the Hegelian and neo-Hegelian interpretations of it. In fact, in countries like Portugal in the first quarter of the 20th century they have been closely connected.

4.3. *Hegelian and neo-Hegelian interpretations of the TNP problem. Influence and examples*

Contextualising even further the definition of the TNP thesis that we started with, what seems to happen is that, at some point, this definition becomes somewhat senseless. As we have seen, some followers of the thesis do not reject clearly the UP one. On the contrary, they admit that a given national philosophy (as is the case of their own) can be somewhat an expression or revelation of the “universal philosophy”, thus turning out to be the self-consciousness of the cultural identity of the relevant nation-State. This is just the point of the positivist interpretation of the ties between the TNP and the UP theses.

However, there are others, like the Hegelian or/and neo-Hegelian ones, which, considering their great historical influence until nowadays, deserve particular attention in this paper. If we put aside, for the time being, some controversial readings (to which I will come back further ahead), the main ideas regarding these interpretations are: (a) that *philosophy* is the self-consciousness of the nation-State cultures in general, that is, in Hegel’s terms, of the art, religion and philosophy of the “people’s Spirits” involved; (b) that such self-consciousness is a manifestation of the “world Spirit” or the Absolute (whatever its interpretation, after Hegel)²² along the history of mankind (or, in Hegel’s terms, along the universal world history of the “people’s Spirits”); and, (c) that process is more or less variable according to the nations-States (or the respective “people’s Spir-

²⁰ My translation of Braga (1892, p. 281): “as diferenças nacionais devem secundar o destino universal da transformação do Ocidente conforme as necessidades da regeneração.”

²¹ See Soares 1998. See a philosophical review on this matter ten years after the proclamation of the republican regime, in Bruno (1898).

²² Some neo-Hegelian philosophers, as G. Gentile, do not accept Hegel’s concept of the Absolute, arguing that, for him, the Absolute would be something transcendent, not imminent to its manifestations. See Gentile, G. (1922). This is a criticism very common in the early 20th century (in English, French and German neo-Hegelianism, por instance); it does not have any serious impact on the issue of this paper.

its”) involved (or according to the participation of their “people’s Spirits” in the “world-Spirit”). Therefore, philosophy – the subject of which, by definition, is the universal – is the (universal) framework of the cultural identity of each nation-State (or of the respective “people’s Spirit”), that is, eventually (or according to the process of self-consciousness I was referring to), of each national philosophy. Moreover, insofar as each nation-State has a culture of its own, which is, in Hegel’s terms, the content of the relevant “people’s Spirit” that takes the form of a human community life, there is, to each one, a particular philosophical history of its art, religion and philosophy. This seems to be, roughly speaking, Hegel’s view in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, particularly the interpretation suggested by his concept of “Völkergeist”, when such a concept is applied to the existence of four essential types of nation-States (“welthistorische Reiche”) [see Hegel 2008, p. 200 foll.; and Hegel 2001, p. 16 foll.]. At least, it is the interpretation offered by the remarkable and always pertinent reading of Rosenzweig (1991, p. 372 foll.).²³

Notice that, according to a reading like this, Hegel’s position on the

²³ Rosenzweig remarks that, according to a first schema of Hegel’s philosophy (until the *Encyclopedia* of 1917, and particularly *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*), Hegel “était fort éloigné” of a conception, current in the beginning of the 19th century, according to which the nation-State has a “fondement national-culturel” (pp. 372-373). He adds: “Pour lui, l’État était une organisation éthique, autrement dit un étant lui-même, mais fondé pas sur son être mais sur la volonté humaine.” (p. 373). The shift in Hegel’s philosophy concerns the existence of such a “fondement” and occurs in the books already mentioned. As the author holds, “(...) L’État devint de la sorte le présupposé de la culture; l’art, la religion et la science descendirent de leurs résidences célestes et se résignèrent à prendre place dans la forme historique de la constitution d’un peuple, abandonnant l’élément de leur véritable être-là relevant de l’âme pure et s’installant dans une ‘réalité spirituelle effective dans toute son étendue d’intériorité et d’extériorité’. Hegel nomme désormais l’Esprit du peuple la connexion ainsi ordonnancée – l’État comme forme et la culture comme contenu. (...) l’histoire mondiale, la croissance de l’Esprit du monde à travers les figures des peuples successifs, n’est-elle articulée et développée par le philosophe qu’en fonction de la vie éthique de l’homme singulier, telle qu’elle se parachève dans la vie interne de l’État.” (*ib.*) From this new perspective, the art, religion and philosophy can have a historical meaning not simply regarding the world history of the people’s Spirits, but “quant à son essence”: “ils se transforment en contenu d’un Esprit du peuple dans la forme d’une vie communautaire humaine. C’est ainsi qu’on peut expliquer le fait autrement inexplicable que Hegel ait pu tranquillement élaborer, en même temps que son histoire mondiale universelle des Esprits des peuples, les histoires philosophiques particulières de l’art, de la religion et de la philosophie selon une articulation plus au moins différente – pas pour l’histoire de la religion – de celle de l’histoire du monde.” (p. 374)

question of the existence of national philosophies and, in general, the cultural foundations of the nation-States, from *Phenomenology of Spirit* until the books I mentioned, *was the universalist one*. Granted, in any case, the universal framework provided by Philosophy, the art, religion and philosophy, were not considered as a historical product of a given human community life, belonging to a given nation-State, but as eternal and *a priori* historical forms which, in fact, could be entirely philosophically deduced.²⁴ This fundamental shift in Hegel's philosophy, to which Rosenzweig alludes, would explain, eventually, some misinterpretations of Hegel's reconciliation thesis.

Now, regarding the neo-Hegelians interpretations of Hegel, the concept of nation-State involved is not necessarily or precisely the Hegel's one; for example, contrary to Hegel's view that the aim of the Absolute along the history of mankind is freedom (see Nehouser 2008, p. 226 foll.), one can give to the Absolute other aims or goals (including fascism, as happened with G. Gentile). In my view, this is not very important for us here; the solution that is suggested regarding the TNP problem is basically the same in Hegelian and neo-Hegelian interpretations until (I would like to emphasize) nowadays: *philosophy is universal, insofar as it is the process of manifestation of the Absolute (whatever its interpretation); but national philosophies (that is, philosophies of certain nation-States in certain periods of the history of the Absolute or of mankind) can be conceived as particular expressions or revelations of It*.²⁵ Anyway, two points seems to be clear in Hegel's philosophy of right and Hegel's philosophy of history: (1) contrary to its readings from the second half of the 19th century onwards, *Hegel's views were not nationalist, but they were not entirely (or strictly) universalist either*; (2) also contrary to such readings, for those

²⁴ Rosenzweig (1991, p. 372) remarks that "Jusqu'en 1806 l'histoire du monde était l'Absolu en personne et la fin de la *Phénoménologie* disait indifféremment Esprit du monde – terme plus tardif qu'histoire du monde – et Dieu. Ce n'est plus le cas ensuite, tout au moins à partir de 1817." From this moment onwards, Hegel's views on the philosophy of history change in a decisive way. Even in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, when this book is considered independently of *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, the culture of a given "people Spirit" is philosophically deduced: "Dans le cadre de l'histoire mondiale, Hegel ne concède aucun développement propre à la culture en tant que telle; il pose au contraire pour chaque forme étatique, issue par nécessité dialectique de la précédente, la culture qui lui correspond, se refusant à déduire de celle-ci de son état antérieur, l'art grec de l'art égyptien par exemple." (p. 374)

²⁵ I will suggest futher ahead that *Hegel's "Absolute" can take nowadays other forms beyond the ortodox Hegelian or neo-Hegelian ones*. Those who believe uncondicionally in the UP thesis, and, particularly, in a universality of philosophy (the Absolute) that would manifest itself, at a certain moment in the history of mankind, in this or that national (or multinational) philosophy that matches the best of it, subscribe, in my view, to a neo-Hegelian view.

who take Hegel's philosophy as the most important modern example of the UP thesis (like Garin, in Italy), such a philosophy is not indifferent to culture in general, and to national cultures in particular.

As I suggested above, there is a strong analogy between the Hegelian concept of "Völkergeister" and the positivist concept of the "law of three stages", in spite of all the differences between the philosophies of these authors (see Hayek 1989). That analogy becomes more evident when Hegel's views are projected in the history of philosophy and we have in mind what I called above the "neo-Hegelians interpretations". Like in the positivist interpretation of the "law of three stages", sometimes (but not necessarily) history is represented as a closed process (the "positive stage", in Comte, and the "German empire", in Hegel).²⁶ Moreover, like in that interpretation some nation-States are closer to the Absolute than others; and, eventually, a normative standard of the cultural identity of the nation-State more "developed" can be ideologically deduced in order to legitimate its supremacy over other nations. "Can be", I said, because apparently that was not Hegel's intention (see Fleischmann 1992, p. 355 foll.).

With the neo-Hegelian interpretations of the TNP-UP relationship, we are not strictly in the scope of either the TNP or the UP theses (when considered separately). There is no contradiction, in the end, between the two conceptual positions. *A national philosophy can be itself an expression or revelation of the universal philosophy involved in the UP thesis.* This explains some known confusions regarding the interpretation of the philosophers who have subscribed to those interpretations: some authors arguing that they have been nationalists and even ego-nationalists, others that they have been just the contrary, i.e., "universalists".²⁷

²⁶ Rosenzweig (1991, p. 368 foll.) holds that, in a certain sense, the two interpretations (open and closed processes) can be drawn from Hegel's philosophy of history.

²⁷ Mariano (1868), discussing the question whether a national philosophy in Italy was possible (from a Hegelian/neo-Hegelian perspective), holds that Hegel's thesis on the question of the existence of TNPs was the universalist one, and that, therefore, the German philosopher was clearly an adversary of the idea of national philosophies: "le dogme fondamental de l'hégélianisme est que l'objet de la philosophie est universel, et que cet objet est l'idée." (p. 16, footnote) But, for Mariano, the main reason for denying an Italian TNP was that Italy was not, historically speaking, a nation-State. He invokes, implicitly, Hegel, in defence of such a theory: "La dialectique et l'idée pénètrent dans l'histoire comme en toutes choses; c'est ce qui fait qu'il y a des peuples initiateurs et historiques et des peuples qui n'ont pas d'initiative et qui se meuvent en quelque sort hors de l'histoire. Si l'Italie a cessé d'être une nation historique, c'est précisément que sa pensée a été frappée d'immobilité." (pp. 3-4, emphasis mine) This was, for a neo-Hegelian in Italy and in the second half of the 19th century, a powerful argument, and the pretext for

I suggest that what was proposed by some Italian philosophers from the last quarter of the 19th century onwards regarding the TNP-UP relationship was mainly neo-Hegelian interpretations of it. (When I suggest this I am thinking of a reading of Hegel's views like the one I briefly presented above, in paragraphs a), b), c), and in the summary of it I gave immediately thereafter.) I would include in such philosophers Bertrando Spaventa and Giovanni Gentile,²⁸ but according to a perspective different from that of Garin (2008). My view is that they have subscribed to what I will call later the "reconciliation thesis" (between the TNP and the UP), and that, therefore, they were not, strictly, universalists.²⁹ Anyway,

a criticism of Bertrando Spaventa (the most important Italian neo-Hegelian at the time), who, as Mariano recalls, held that the main task of his historiography was the study of the influence of European philosophy on Italian philosophers, that is, the study of the European features of Italian philosophy: "Mais on dit que pour entendre et s'approprier la pensée d'autrui, c'est-à-dire une pensée philosophique importé, l'étude rétrospective de sa propre pensée, c'est-à-dire encore de la pensée nationale, est chose indispensable: parce que [Spaventa:] 'la conscience de soi n'est pas une marchandise, qu'on puisse acquérir et importer si on ne la possède pas, car cette conscience est nous-mêmes, et par suite nous ne saurions l'acquérir sans nous connaître nous-mêmes.'" (p. 14) Arguing about Spaventa's words, Mariano clearly misinterprets Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* and his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*: "la conscience nationale n'est pas la conscience philosophique, et la sphère de la philosophie n'est point la sphère nationale. (...) On dira peut-être que, par conscience nationale, il ne faut pas entendre la conscience politique, mais la conscience philosophique, par là, et autant que celle-ci se développe de la conscience nationale. Mais la conscience nationale, qui est devenue conscience philosophique, n'est plus la conscience nationale." (pp. 19-20) It is precisely, he adds, "la pensée universelle" (p. 21) which is involved in Hegel's philosophy.

²⁸ See Spaventa (1860) and (1908); Gentile, G. (1928) and (1941). Spaventa' and Gentile's views seem to be that we can find in the development of Italian philosophy the same themes and problems of modern European philosophy, from Descartes and Kant to Hegel. This happened, in general, independently of any precise historical influence, or of any "reception" properly called (such "unconsciousness" is an important point regarding the neo-Hegelian interpretation of the TNP problem). So, the philosophical thinking involved in Italian philosophy was just the universal thinking involved in European philosophy. As Mariano (1868, p. 16, footnote) said about Spaventa: "il n'hésite pas à proclamer que la philosophie italienne contient en elle toute la philosophie moderne; que le dernier degré auquel s'élevée la spéculation italienne coïncide avec le dernier résultat de la philosophie allemande". But both admit, in the neo-Hegelian sense, that Italy's particular conditions as a nation-State (recall that the unification of that country was very recent at the time), or the "Italian national genius", was an important factor of the Italian philosophical development. Therefore, Italian philosophy was a particularisation (the possible particularisation considering the unification I just mentioned) of the universality of philosophy, or of the Absolute ("the universal Spirit").

²⁹ See Garin (2008, p. xlix foll.; vol.2, p. 961 foll.). What Spaventa and Gentile think about the problem "Is a national philosophy possible?", is not evident in Garin's histori-

in general, that is, when considered in the broad context of the history of philosophy, there are important differences among the alluded interpretations, which concern ideological and political matters: depending on the philosophical concept of nation-State that is involved, one can use the neo-Hegelian interpretation to support liberalism and democracy as well as to support fascism (as Gentile did).³⁰ One can use it to represent

ography. He is especially interested in emphasizing the *particularity* and originality of his own version of an Italian TNP, and, at the same time, its connections with the *universality* of philosophy, *independently of Hegelian or neo-Hegelian presuppositions*. His point is that Hegel and the neo-Hegelians would subscribe completely to the UP thesis, and to a sort of “rationalist” and “intellectualist” historiography of national philosophies. Both Spaventa and Gentile would only accept the possibility of an history of Italian philosophy insofar as such history is an expression of the “eternal questions and themes” of the universality of philosophy: “the assumed antinomy between the ‘universality’ of philosophy and the ‘particularity’ of a national thought [an antinomy apparently established by those philosophers] has lost a lot of its intensity as we have come to discover gradually the proper and different significance of the philosophical inquiry, and its essential connection with a specific period of time. (...) [against Hegel and the Hegelians,] philosophies, or the complex of conceptual elaborations called by that name, have a precise connection with definite historical situations, with conditions and limits actually determined or determinable.” (2008, p. liii) But, as I have suggested previously, Hegel’s solution to the TNP problem seems to be precisely a synthesis between the two (apparently) opposite conceptual positions (particularity vs. universality). At least, such a solution was defended by B. Spaventa and Gentile, as Garin himself recognizes regarding the first philosopher (*ib.*): “(...) Bertrando Spaventa who accepted that ‘*the true and concrete life of the universal spirit is not the formal identity of all the nations, but the various and distinct manifestation of its contents in the national differences*’.” (emphasis mine) Clearly, Spaventa’s words cannot be interpreted as a defence of the UP thesis. An important difference between Garin and Spaventa, was that this philosopher (as others neo-Hegelians, like Mariano) could not accept the claim that Italy, along its history, was a nation-State in the same terms that Garin accepted it. Of course, as L. Pompa says in the “Introduction” of Garin’s book, this author is interested not only in a sort of compromise between (in my language) the UP and the TNP theses: “The idea that an identical set of determinate questions and assumptions could arise in different societies in different historical circumstances, without the way in which they did so being affected by the nature of the cultures in question, can only lead to faulty and misleading interpretations of the thought of these societies” (p. xxiv); but also in what we call today (following Rorty and others) “intellectual history”: “he treats philosophy as a cultural product and presents it as such” (p. xxvii). But, in my view, this kind of (early) historiographical approach (in Garin’s book) is not necessarily incompatible with such a neo-Hegelian compromise. All of this explain, in my view, Garin’s insistence, in the prologue of the book (“Is a National Philosophy Possible?”), on his criticism of Spaventa and Gentile’s “universalist” views (p. xxxix foll.).

³⁰ About Gentile’s philosophical and political views on State, see Gentile, G. (1966). About his support to fascism, see Gentile, G. (1925). For a criticism see Moss (2004).

the history of mankind as a closed process, or (apparently, at least) as an open one, as the founder of the history of the Ukrainian philosophy, Chyzhevsky, did in the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties, according to one of his readers (Zakydalski 2003).

(..) at different stages in the development of world philosophy different nations play the leading role in carrying the process forward. This implies that only the philosophy of some nations reveals something new and valuable about the absolute, while the philosophy of other nations fails to do so and has no world-historical significance. (...) it is only when a nation produces a philosophy that marks a significant forward step in world philosophy that that nation fully discloses the distinctive character of its own culture and philosophy.

The Hegelian connections (with *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*) are obvious.³¹ Once again, in Portugal, the same idea was endorsed in the framework of a variant of the strong version of the TNP, which I mentioned earlier (see Coimbra 2005). It is not entirely detached and outside other versions of the TNP in countries which, like Portugal before the 2nd World War, were dominated by conservative and totalitarian ideologies (namely, Germany and Italy). I suggest we call this version of the TNP thesis, *the metaphysical and imperialist version*.³² I say “imperialist”, since – as mentioned before – it can be used to serve the goal of the political and territorial supremacy of one nation over other nations.³³ Actually, this happened in the 20th century in several ways with people who invoked not only Hegel’s “nationalism”, but also Nietzsche’s philosophy (for instance),

³¹ The quoted text follows the no less significant one: “If absolute ideals can be realized only in the limited particular forms (science, religion, morality, law, etc.) of a national culture, and the differences among national cultures manifest different aspects of the absolute, then these differences are important and valuable. Together they constitute a fuller, although never the full, manifestation of the absolute. Viewed from this perspective, philosophy is the self-consciousness of a given culture: it brings out what is distinctive and interesting in a nation's beliefs about reality, justice, and beauty, and in doing so makes the nation aware of itself as a distinct entity; that is, it gives rise to national consciousness.”

³² The term “imperialism” is used, from a neo-Hegelian perspective and not by chance, by Coimbra (2005, p. 127). Coimbra writes about an imperialism which will reconcile the “imperialism of the individual” (“imperialismo individual/do individuo”) with the “racial, social, political, etc. imperialisms” (“os imperialismos raciais, sociais, políticos, etc.). We must not forget that, at the time (1913), Portugal had a vast colonial empire all over the world (in Africa, West Timor, India, etc.).

³³ This is mainly the case of Giovanni Gentile. See Gregor (2001) and Gentile, E. (2003).

and, in particular, his conception of the individual. Note once again that with this version we are no longer strictly in the scope of the definitions of the aforementioned theses (TNP and UP). One may acknowledge the pluralism of the (other) national philosophies, although in reality this pluralism is merely apparent; in the metaphysical and imperialist version, the “national philosophy” in question can be itself the expression or “revelation” of the “universal philosophy” characteristic of the UP thesis.

It is not my aim to discuss in this paper whether Hegel himself endorsed (or not) the metaphysical and imperialist version which I have just mentioned (see Peleczynski (1971); and Wood 2011).³⁴ There seems to be a great confusion in this regard outside specialized literature, motivated mainly by ideological reasons which I mentioned in the beginning of this paper (see Walsh 1971). As I said above, some authors held that Hegel was the most important proponent of the UP thesis and others that

³⁴ Weil (2002, p. 63), making a comment on Hegel’s concept of popular sovereignty, in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (§279), argues that the German philosopher not only did not subscribe to nationalism, but would not subscribe too to the “nationalisme grand-allemand, le même qui a déclenché le mouvement de 1848 et qui a remporté une première victoire, partielle avec Bismark, pour en gagner une autre, totale et passagère, avec Hitler.” This seems to be a hasty and speculative interpretation. The fact is that Weil (along the five lectures published in his book) does not make himself any relevant comment regarding the last part of *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (§341 foll.) where Hegel analyses the “World-history” and seems to defend a sort of “nationalisme grand-allemand”. On the contrary, he remarks “On y rencontre rien de particulièrement intéressant” (p. 74) about the concept of nation-State. I recall the most important passages about the topic of nationalism. The universal spirit, says Hegel, “is self-caused and self-consciousness reason, and its actualized existence in spirit is knowledge. (...) It is, therefore, an unfolding of the spirit’s self-consciousness and freedom. It is the exhibition and actualization of the universal spirit.” (Hegel 2008, p. 200; §342) He applies this view to the concept of stages of development of the nation-States (according to the four types I mentioned above): “Since history is the embodiment of spirit in the form of events, that is, of direct natural reality, the stages of development are present as direct natural principles. Because they are natural, they conform to the nature of multiplicity, and exist one outside the other. Hence, to each nation is to be ascribed a single principle, comprised under its geographical and anthropological existence.” (p. 201, §346) And he adds, *suggesting (what I called) the metaphysical and imperialist version*: “To the nation, whose natural principle is one of these stages, is assigned the accomplishment of it through the process characteristic of the self-developing self-consciousness of the world-spirit. In the history of the world this nation is for a given epoch dominant, although it can be make an epoch but once. In contrast with the absolute right of this nation to be the bearer of the current phase in the development of the world-spirit, the spirits of other existing nations are void of right, and they, like those whose epochs are gone, count no longer in the history of the world.” (p. 201; §347) For an alternative view on these passages, see Wood (2008, pp. 429-430).

he was the most notorious nationalist philosopher in the history of Western philosophy. In fact, as I suggested above, it happens that in the same philosophical school, as the Italian neo-Hegelianism from the second half of the 19th century to the first quarter of the 20th century, some authors held that Hegel was a typical universalist, refusing the possibility of any TNP, and others that he subscribed to what I called the metaphysical and imperialist version of the TNP thesis (what I will call more precisely, later, the “reconciliation thesis”). The confusion occurs when we consider not Hegel’s views in their historical context, but its reception from the second-half of the 19th century to the 20th century. All that I would say in this regard is that, if you interpret his philosophy of history in the way the Ukrainian philosopher (mentioned above) interpreted it in the 20th century, that is, taking national philosophies as revelations or particularizations of the Absolute, and if we assign to that philosophy the presupposition that there was a “spirit of the age” (or “zeitgeist”), as Hegel called it, that inhabited a particular people at a particular time (German people), and that, when that people became the active determiner of history, it was simply because their cultural and political moment had come, then the Hegelian affiliation of this version can be (theoretically) established.

4.4. *The TNP version of the national philosophical traditions (examples)*

I mentioned earlier another version of the TNP thesis, which does not correspond strictly to the classic definition and is apparently a stronger version of the TNP thesis: the version according to which there can be in the framework of a national philosophy a tradition that matches the universality of philosophy, generally speaking. In this version, supporters can put aside metaphysical justifications of the connection between its TNPs and the UP, as happens with the Hegelian and neo-Hegelian ones. When this happens (as in the Italian case, with Garin), it means that the concept itself of the TNP involved is somewhat problematic or controversial. A given TNP would be that (TNP) insofar as the (timeless) issues of the UP thesis are (more or less) embodied precisely by the historical contexts of the respective national culture. And such embodiment, as we have already suggested, can take several forms. So, the task of the historiography would be precisely to study these contexts, enlightening the originality of the TNP and, eventually, its contribution to the broader framework of the UP.

In this version, it is not so much a question of identifying philosophy with culture, but rather the inverse identity of culture with phi-

losophy. Generally, we shift from the former to the latter, while trying to identify in the latter specific characteristics of the former. We have what we may call a “philosophical tradition”, that is to say, a historical and philosophical movement, which, sometimes, is represented as being subordinated to a real research program from the beginning; or, at least, we have some philosophical trends whose developments correspond to those of the country culture. In the late 19th century, the so-called “French spiritualism”, from F. Ravaisson to E. Boutroux, was, apparently, a version of this kind for the philosophers of that school (see Bersot 1868; Ferraz 1887; Ravaisson 1895). I have already mentioned other noteworthy examples of the same kind in the twentieth century: the Neurath-Haller thesis of a (typically) “Austrian philosophy”; and Chyzhevsky’s historiography of the Ukrainian philosophy. But others could be added (it is not my intention, here, to be exhaustive), like the “Hungarian philosophy”, suggested, since the thirties, by the Hungarian philosopher B. Tankó (see Tankó 1934; and Hanák 1990).

Alternatively, as I said above about the concept of “intellectual history”, one can interpret a given philosophical tradition, of one nation, in cultural terms (without reducing entirely philosophy to culture). In this case, the key-concept is “cultural tradition”. In my view, the “history of the Italian philosophy”, studied by Garin (see Garin 2008, p. XI foll.), and the “history of the Russian philosophy”, conceived by Zenkovsky (Zenkovsky 1953), are examples of this latter version.

From the perspective of those authors who believe that each country, more or less developed, has its own philosophical tradition (a view generally accepted nowadays, given the importance and popularity of what I will call the “relativist approach”), it became current to hold that, in order to know its cultural identity, we must compare such philosophical tradition with others (for example, we must compare the Austrian “tradition” with the Hungarian one, etc.) (see Smith 2011). This is my point of view too, but from the perspective of what I called, in the “Introduction” to this paper, a “typology of national philosophies”. Anyway, in most of the cases, as in the metaphysical version of the TNP thesis, some neo-Hegelian assumptions (more or less obvious in the case of Neurath’s interpretation of the Austrian TNP) can be invoked, and some ideological implications can be sustained. Even if it is true, nowadays, that the concept of national philosophy is increasingly interpreted in the relativist sense, and that it gives rise, not to the classic versions of the historiography of the TNP philosophers, but to the modern ones of the “intellectual histories”, the main idea, along the history of such a concept in the 20th century, was that the “universality” of the UP thesis can be particularized in this or that way (philosophically and culturally) by a TNP. Strictly speaking, with

the TNP version of the national philosophical traditions, we have not yet completely abandoned the traditional framework of the TNPs, nor have we shifted towards the multinational dimension of the philosophical traditions, but, to be precise, we are no longer simply in the context of the former.

4.4.1. *The TNP (early) historiography of the “intellectual histories”*

According to this version of the TNP historiography, philosophical thinking takes place in the broad context of the culture of a given nation, even if that nation has no precise political boundaries as nation-State throughout its history (Italy, of Garin, and the Russia of Zenkovski, are examples of this). Therefore, it cannot be entirely reduced to the more or less eternal themes of the UP thesis (as it is the case of a “rationalist” and “intellectualist” historiography).³⁵ But that does not mean that these themes are senseless. In fact, it may happen that in that nation a philosophical tradition, in the sense of the UP thesis, does exist. Or it may happen that a given national philosopher gives a contribution to philosophy not completely compatible with the traditional themes of the UP thesis. If we try to understand what the philosophy of that nation is supposed to be, we must interpret the philosophical thought of a given thinker in cultural terms, that is to say, we must know its cultural context (the political situation at the time, politics-religion relations, the mores and traditions, the literature, etc.). But other considerations, as the biographical ones, are also very important, because, from this point of view, they are not simply personal. So, the audience of the philosophical thought of that thinker is not the intangible universal audience of the UP thesis, but the people and institutions (culturally, socially and politically understood) of its time. This connection is absolutely essential. There is a lot of philosophy in culture: in poetry, literature, politics, etc. We can interpret them from a philosophical point of view; we can establish links and analogies between them and the conceptual plan of Philosophy itself. When we do that, we are working on what some authors call, nowadays, the “philosophy of culture” or the “semantics of culture”. But, *all of this does not entail that philosophical thought, largely understood, has no universal relevance*, on the contrary. (Such a conclusion cannot be

³⁵ In this sense, see L. Pompa’s introduction to Garin’s book (Garin 2008, p. xxvii foll.). See also Zenkovski’s “Introduction” to his book (Zenkovski 1953, p. 1 foll.). Russian case is, in several aspects, very distinct of the Italian one, given the geographic, historical and cultural specificities of that country. But Zenkovski’s historiographical perspective is very similar to the one of Garin.

drawn from the historiography of Garin and Zenkovski.) In the end, however, if we try to define what the essential features of a given TNP are, it is culture, not philosophy, that is our framework.³⁶

4.5. *The TNP version of the multinational philosophical traditions (examples)*

As I have been suggesting, the TNP thesis is not merely a statement on the nationality of philosophies, i.e., it does not concern merely the geographical and political boundaries of a specific country and culture. As the history of the TNP problem suggests since the 19th century, one can defend the TNP thesis regarding a given national culture independently of its political identification with a given nation-State. On the other hand, one can defend that thesis even when there is more than one nation-State involved. Indeed, in the 20th century this thesis was renewed and it appeared explicitly (particularly, in Anglo-Saxon philosophy) in the form of the multinational philosophical traditions. As in the Austrian and other (national) cases, *these traditions go from culture to philosophy*, but they are also different because, on the one hand, they are not limited by the geographical and political boundaries of a country and, on the other, they are conceived as if each “philosophical tradition” included a real international research programme, which would be, from the beginning, opposed to others, from other countries, less important (and therefore disqualified). For example, “the analytic tradition in philosophy” would be opposed to the “continental” one. This is a very important issue; it shows some obvious ideological presuppositions and implications of the concept of multinational philosophical traditions. As with the Hegelian and neo-Hegelian interpretations of the TNP problem, these traditions are the self-consciousness of the national cultures of the respective countries. For a philosopher, to be part of a given tradition (as is the case of the Anglo-Saxon ones), means not only to be suitably placed in the history of

³⁶ Zenkovski (1953, p. 3) says in this respect: “Russian thought remained at all times connected with *its own* religious elementally, its own religious soil; this was, and is, the chief root of its specific quality, but also of various complications in the development of Russian philosophic thought”. He adds (p. 6): “Russian thought is *historiosophical through and through*, it is concerned constantly with questions of the ‘meaning’ of history, the end of history, etc.” Garin (2008, p. lviii) summarizes his perspective in the following terms: “The great problems, the problem itself of the relation between the world and God were lived within the limits of political experience, and of personal, moral, and religious meditation, rather than being confronted on the ground of metaphysics.”

Western philosophy and to have a unique cultural identity, but also to share values and aims with a multinational community.³⁷ The utopian nature of this representation of the relation between philosophy and culture, as well as its ideological motivations cannot be ignored. The “tradition of British empiricism in philosophy”, developed by J. Ayer and others in the thirties of the twentieth century, in England (Ayer 1936);³⁸ the “analytic tradition in philosophy”, which resumes and develops the terms in which the first was presented from the nineteen-sixties onwards, and was first designed by G. Ryle (see Janaway 1998; and Glock 2008, p. 21 foll.); the tradition of “pragmatism” (Peirce, Dewey, James, etc.) (see Sthur 2009, and SEP 2011); the “American philosophy”, recently defended by Harris, Pratt and Waters (see Harris 2002, p. 5 foll.), for example, in my view, are contemporary reformulations of the TNP thesis in the context of the 20th century. In Portugal, in the 20th century and nowadays, the idea that there is something like an “Atlantic thought” (see Borges 2002) or a “Portuguese-Galician-Brazilian thought” (see Silva 2009) falls, at least partially and in spite of all of its ambiguities, under its scope.³⁹ In all of these cases, there is the same focus on the originality (typical of the TNP thesis) of the idiosyncrasy of a given multinational culture or cultures, interpreted in this or that way. Had I more time, it would have been interesting to have shown and documented case by case that what is in fact at stake is an ideological manipulation of philosophy and culture. I will say something about this in the concluding remarks of my address.

4.6. *Problems with the TNP thesis. Redefining the UP thesis*

Now, all things considered, it seems clear to me that there is no insurmountable opposition between the versions of the TNP thesis which I studied in this paper, on the one hand, and the UP thesis, on the other.

³⁷ Sociologically speaking, and in Kuhn’s terms, it means also to have an institutional framework which gives legitimacy for having an University job, to publish, to do research, etc. This explains why to renounce to a given tradition or to “normal science” (or simply not belonging to one, when such a tradition exists and has social and cultural importance), for a philosopher, can be very problematic sometimes.

³⁸ See a development of Ayer’s views by Bennett (1971). For a criticism of such views, see Ayers (1993, “Introduction”), Quinton (1991), and Ribeiro (2005).

³⁹ In what sense these multinational traditions do in fact exist is a question without answer from the part of the mentioned authors. No doubt that, certainly, we can speak of (for instance) historical and philosophical relationships between Portuguese and Brazilian philosophers. But can we speak of an imponderable “thought” involved in such relationships? Can we speak of an “Atlantic thought”?

A significant part of these versions is open to some form of mediation with that thesis, represented by some kind of reconciliation with it. On this matter, we are very far from finding the necessary philosophical clairvoyance among the TNP philosophers. This is so because their TNPs were (and are) often used in the ideological sense to support or to criticise a certain corporative and political *status quo*.

In my view, it is not because it would be universal by origin or vocation, in other words because it would be apparently indifferent to national cultures, that the UP thesis is questionable, contrary to what is frequently assumed in light of the TNP thesis. This claim is very disputable, and cannot be really attested by the history of Western philosophy. Surely, modern rationalism, from Descartes and Kant to Hegel, was, in a sense, indifferent to national cultures: at least, insofar as these authors were interested in providing the foundations for knowledge and human action as a whole, and such foundations, by definition, are universal. But that does not mean that they (particularly, Kant and Hegel) have completely ignored culture, i.e., cultural differences. Their essential presupposition was that, in order to explain these differences, we need a universal framework. This is the issue that is at stake and that we must discuss; not the supposed indifference to culture from the part of those who have defended the UP thesis (in general, for the TNP philosophers, the Western philosophical tradition as a whole).⁴⁰ It is therefore in this decisive plane that we must focus the discussion on the issue of universality vs. particularity of philosophy, as the “relativist thesis” and postmodernism, in general, show.

It is not, however, only in that plan that we must discuss, nowadays, the UP thesis. As I have been defending, the TNP philosophers, from the 19th century until nowadays, seem to be unaware, apparently, of the essentially utopian nature of their TNPs, and of its ideological presuppositions. *They pretend that they are presenting only neutral and inoffensive philosophical views*, at least so neutral and inoffensive as the rationalist and intellectualist philosophies of the Western tradition were. Even the fact that their views have always been controversial when they have presented them to other philosophers, does not suggest to them that such views were largely ideological.⁴¹ So, finally, it is precisely on this plane of the utopian and ideological origins of our concepts of philosophy and culture that we must approach the issue of the universality vs. particularity of philosophy.

⁴⁰ Rorty (1979), following the best of the so-called “continental” and “analytic philosophy”, and particularly M. Heidegger in the former, seems to have developed precisely this view.

⁴¹ See, in this sense Gellner’s criticism of “English ordinary language philosophy” in the sixties (Gellner 1959).

5. Returning to the reconciliation thesis (RT) between the TNP and the UP theses. Problems with the RT.

As I said previously, about the positivist and the Hegelian/neo-Hegelian interpretations of the TNP-UP relation, in my view there seems to be room for a third thesis besides the two presented at the beginning of this paper. We are not strictly in the scope either of the UP or the TNP theses, although, historically or philosophically, as the ties with German absolute idealism which I mentioned above seem to suggest, this field has, philosophically speaking, more connections with the UP thesis than with that of the TNP. Actually, this is what can be attested by the history of ideas and the examples I gave previously. I suggest that we call this latter thesis the “*Reconciliation Thesis (RT)*”. Its definition shows that the definitions we presented in the beginning are not clear, in particular, what we understand by “(typically) national philosophies” and “philosophy universality” is far from being evident.

To distinguish it from the ego-nationalist and pluralist versions of the TNP thesis, I would include under the RT the metaphysical version and, in particular, the neo-Hegelian interpretations of it. But these interpretations are not the only ones, as I suggested above regarding the positivist interpretation of the UP thesis. Once again, one should consider weak versions and strong versions of the RT. The interpretations mentioned above refer us, in principle, to strong versions. Now, as I have said too, it seems obvious that there are some connections between the TNP versions of the national and multinational traditions, on the one hand, and the RT, on the other. Insofar as these versions are conceived as historical movements in the broad context of the history of Western philosophy (movements that are the end of it, in some sense, and matching the best of it) and as self-consciousness of the relevant national/multinational cultures, they too are trying to reconcile the universality of philosophy with the existence of national/multinational philosophies.⁴² It was not by chance

⁴² This would not be accepted by those who believe that such multinational philosophical traditions do exist, namely, by analytic philosophers. They have, officially, strong anti-Hegelian presuppositions, even if they clearly embrace Hegelianism when they try to explain the history of their philosophical movements. It was precisely the case of O. Neurath and the Vienna Circle in the thirties (see again Neurath 1935). In general, we must look outside the official doctrines of such movements to understand that. Rorty (1979), tracing the history of analytical philosophy, since Descartes, Locke and Kant, to Quine and others, and announcing its end, offers a sort of (neo-Hegelian) self-consciousness of it. I suggested in some works (Ribeiro 2002 and 2007) that the concept of “analytic philosophy” is mainly an historical construction, and that, as a matter of fact, that is, independently of ideological presuppositions, there is no such thing as a “tradition of

that in certain cases in the 20th century, like the Portuguese, the Austrian and the Ukrainian ones, strong neo-Hegelian presuppositions have been sometimes invoked.

As we saw, some classic versions of the RT (as the neo-hegelian ones) were criticized by the classic supporters of the TNP thesis, and others, because they would ignore national cultures and cultural contexts in general. The objection is that cultures are ultimately reduced to the universality of philosophy and its eternal features; that they are philosophically sublimated.⁴³ In particular, the idea that we must have an universal framework, in order to understand culture, as the one that philosophy would provide, was completely rejected. So, the temptation was great, especially during the 20th century, to approach the problem in a new light.

Philosophers, like Ferrater Mora in Spain in the fifties, wanted to find room for their own TNP; and, as they were unwilling or unable to accept completely interpretations like the neo-Hegelians ones, they were forced to seek a reformulation of the issue of the existence of their TNPs in the light of the reformulation, *not of the concept of the UP thesis, nor even of the RT, but of the concept of culture itself* (see Mora 1951) The same has happened in Portugal with several authors and continues to happen nowadays. This approach to the TNP problem occurs mainly in countries that do not have a “philosophical tradition”. And, of course, for ideological reasons (as the national self-esteem in the international

analytical philosophy” divorced from a “continental” one. Ideologies, of course, do exist, and, *to that extent*, their subject-matters also exist. But there is an important difference between the two claims. The second one concerns, not something existing by itself or independently of its (ideological) interpretation; it concerns, as I said, a construction, historically and philosophically situated, and always more or less controversial. If we do not clearly distinguish between the two claims, one risks being providing arguments for those who believe, for instance, that “analytic” or “continental philosophy” do in fact exist. See Mulligan (2009).

⁴³ In this sense, regarding the idealist historiography in Italy (Spaventa, Gentile and disciples), Garin observes that “Truly, the idealists, in their philosophical historiography, spoke a lot about the Italian national philosophy, but at the end nationality and all concrete and individualizing characters are lost. The major fault, especially of the idealists disciples of Gentile, is to be found in the contradiction intrinsic to their understanding of the concept of the historicity of philosophizing. Even when it was possible to talk of nationality in terms of a history that was wordly and temporal, the history to which the idealists referred and within which they placed the various thinkers, was a history desincarnated, an atemporal ideal eternal history.” (Garin 2008, p. Lii) *There is some exaggeration in Garin’s criticism, as commentator, regarding Gentile*. He was thinking on the defence of a classic formulation of the UP thesis on the part of that philosopher, when, in fact, Gentile seems to have supported what I will call a “reconciliation thesis” (RT) between the UP and the TNP ones.

scene), they must to have one, or something similar to one. The idea was/is to rethink the concept of culture, making it identifiable with an anthropological and existentialist interpretation (such as that poetry, literature, folksayings, etc., suggest), and, more controversial, arguing that there is enough philosophy in culture, so understood, to conclude that, in the countries involved, there was/is truly a philosophical thinking (not necessarily a TNP) which could reach, in some way, an universal relevance. This kind of approach to the relationship between philosophy and culture, is nowadays very common in the context of the cultural relativism which pervades occidental societies.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the result of these essays *regarding philosophy properly called*, at least during the 20th century, was confusion and, in fact, lack of intelligibility, since the TNP problem, as I suggested from the beginning of this article, is just to know how can we continue to do philosophy (which, at any rate, is a highly conceptual enterprise) outside the framework of the UP thesis, not poetry, literature, or something of the like.

6. The relativist version of our problem (existence of TNPs). Examples.

None of the versions of the TNP thesis which I have been discussing leads to the (post-modern) idea of multiculturalism, which is nowadays very popular. The view that different cultures are intrinsically distinct, that no one culture has (intellectual, political, etc.) primacy over others, and that each one should be assessed according to its own standards (to the extent that it is possible, given the issue of incommensurability among them), is relatively recent, as we know. It is also known in academic and cultural circles by the term “postmodernism”, originally introduced by Lyotard (1979, p. 7 foll.). Its philosophical origins, however, date back to the semantic question of holism in philosophy, and, in particular, to the theses of Kuhn, Quine and others in the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies (see Kuhn 1996; and Quine 1994). The main idea is that the search for philosophical foundations, which characterizes the UP thesis from the ancient Greek philosophy (and particularly, from Descartes and Kant) onwards, cannot be accepted anymore, not so much because that search would ignore national cultures (as the TNP philosophers claim) or because Western philosophy in our globalised world would have been only a limited paradigm,⁴⁵ but because that search cannot resist to the assault of the

⁴⁴ See, in this sense, in Portugal, Domingues (2002, particularly, pp. 9-19).

⁴⁵ This seems to be the view of Toulmin (2001, p. 204 foll.) view, to which I will come back in my conclusions.

relativist thesis “on what there is” (as Quine says in the beginning of the fifties). Nevertheless, we know that Quine’s holism in *Ontological Relativity and other Essays* is applied to cultural contexts through the problem of translation of different linguistic conceptual schemas (as Kuhn recognizes and accepts in the “Postface” to *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*), and leads to the idea that such schemes (or such cultural contexts) do not have a firm ontological basis, and philosophy cannot furnish it, that is, they are not commensurable (see Quine 1969). From this it was easy to deduce, independently of Quine’s presuppositions and aims, that the UP thesis and its tradition, according to him and Kuhn, are indifferent to culture and national cultures in particular. This is, in short, the relativist interpretation of the theories of the two great American philosophers. As I said above, such interpretation is at the basis of what Lyotard called in the nineteen-seventies of the past century “postmodernism” (Lyotard 1979). Rorty, more recently, labelled it with the term “relativism” (see Rorty 1991a).

The relativist thesis marks the end of the age-old paradigm of the “philosophy universality” and, to some extent, of the UP thesis itself. We find such thesis, nowadays, presented in several ways, from linguistics and sociology to political theory.⁴⁶ The keyword regarding this subject in my paper is “relativity of cultures”. By that we obviously also mean the relativity of national philosophies. Strictly speaking, however, we are not in the scope of the TNP thesis. As was suggested earlier, that thesis (actually, like the RT) does not lead to the idea of multiculturalism. Having arisen already in the 19th century, as a form of stating ideologically and politically different nationalisms and cultures, which were seeking their own definition, they inherited from the UP thesis the same apparent indifference towards the issue of cultural relativity (not, as I held in this paper, towards culture *per se*).

Let us call the latter form of approaching the relativity of national philosophies within the scope of multiculturalism the relativist thesis (RLT). It entails (once the UP thesis has been abandoned and, in particular, the idea of foundations of human knowledge and action) *identifying philosophy with culture, and more precisely reducing philosophy to culture*. The assumption is that philosophy itself, conceptually speaking (as happens with the UP thesis), is a cultural product, socially produced and built, in this or that context. To say that philosophy can be reduced to culture, means, for the classic supporters of the UP thesis, that to speak of Philosophy, properly called, no longer makes any sense at all.⁴⁷ According

⁴⁶ Regarding linguistics and the problem of translation of German language to English, see Smith (1991).

⁴⁷ Popper (1994, p. 33 foll.) suggests this view, arguing (against the supporters of the RLT) for what we may call a “partial semantic holism”.

to the RLT, one can admit that philosophy is a sort of self-consciousness of culture, as in the RT, but not that it would allow us to explain and to give foundations for culture in general, given the incommensurability of our conceptual schemes. In the RT, philosophy is the (universal) self-consciousness of national cultures, and culture (the particular), conceived in this or that way, is the unveiling or particularization of the universal or Absolute. As I suggested about that thesis, from this point of view we have not abandoned the territory of the UP; in fact, if I am right, we are in the heart of it. This is not the case of the RLT. The (modern and meta-physical) idea that philosophy would provide the foundations of culture (or whatever it is) is no longer relevant. There is no essential difference, from this point of view, between the *philosophy* of an American Indian tribe and the *philosophy* of American pragmatism (with Peirce and others). This is the relativist thesis of a recent book called *American Philosophies* (Harris 2002).⁴⁸

6.1. *Connections between the RLT and the TNP thesis*

With the RLT we have a fourth form of approaching the problem we raised right at the beginning. Now it seems more or less obvious to me that currently in several countries, including mine, there are ties linking the classical thesis of the TNP to its different versions that I mentioned earlier, on the one hand, and the RLT on the other. Considering the relativism of

⁴⁸ Harris's concept of "philosophy" risks contradicting somewhat his relativist premises. He is forced to accept the translation thesis and the commensurability of cultures, when he interprets some cultural concepts of American native tribes in terms of the well-established "rationalist" ones. [See his "Prolegomena to a tradition: What is American philosophy" (p. 5 foll.).] The following are some topics listed by him regarding American multinational philosophies (North and South America) whose origins are prior to Columbus discovery: "(...) polygenetic (separate origins) versus monogenetic (one origin) explanations for the beginning of humanity and different races. There are competing ideals of the universe, such as transcendentalism (*the existence of a universe beyond appearances*) in opposition to naturalism (*the view that world is explained in natural terms*); millennialism (the belief that life will reach its final goal within a given millennium) in tandem with a pessimism about the belief that human life is inclined toward any particular teleology." (emphasis mine) But his concept of "nationalism" is coherently relativist, because "American philosophy come into the existence within the context of a social world fully aware of the presence of new Europeans and African invaders, explores, migrants, and immigrants, with their own daily ways of living and individual philosophies, as well as that of indigenous populations in a new context". It follows that the "American philosophical tradition" is, as Harris writes, "an ongoing creation".

cultures, the legitimacy of any TNP does not raise any issues, apparently. On the contrary, what is questionable is just the UP thesis, that is the thesis that philosophy would be universal and (by nature) indifferent to culture, insofar as culture is, for the supporters of the RLT (as well as, in some sense, for the supporters of the TNP thesis), always contextual. So, each country can have its own national philosophy (or each multinational group of countries its philosophical tradition), and it is not “politically” nor philosophically correct to say that one is superior to the others. And, according to an interpretation such as that of Rorty (1991), each national philosophy can have not only its “intellectual histories” but also other kinds of historiography, including the old “rationalist” and “intellectualist” ones. All of them are equally acceptable and legitimate from a relativist point of view. As I said above regarding the concept of philosophical traditions, it is not only pertinent but also advisable to compare TNPs with each other, in order to develop a more complete knowledge of their relevant cultures. The old supporters of the TNP thesis found in the RLT, from the last quarter of the 20th century until nowadays, a timely and suitable way to continue claiming that typically national philosophies do exist. It was basically for this reason that, without any special debate or discussion in academic and other circles, we shifted from a “Portuguese philosophy” to a “philosophy in Portugal” and a “Portuguese philosophical thought” (see Calafate 2004, p. 18 foll.), while preserving the spirit and methodology of the former (see Ribeiro 2005a, p. 150 foll.).⁴⁹ (Apparently, the Portuguese democratic revolution of April 25, 1974, had no special influence on that shift.) In effect, if the theses that are at the source of multiculturalism are pertinent when applied to philosophy, as R. Rorty holds in several works, there is nothing that can prevent this relativist tie between different paradigms of philosophy and culture (see again Rorty 1991, and 1991a, p. 78 foll., 93 foll.).

6.2. Problems with the RLT as philosophical thesis. Ideological and political connections of the RLT

I believe that as a philosophical thesis, the RLT is disputable. It is far from being obvious that with that thesis we have a solution to the holistic argument, that is to say, an argument such as the one that Quine

⁴⁹ That spirit and methodology is precisely the one that is involved in the old TNP, which insists on the reduction of philosophy to national culture, and on the isolation of the Portuguese philosophical thinking from European philosophy in general. With few exceptions (J. de Carvalho [1955], F. Catroga [2001] and L. R. Santos [2001]), a kind of historiography like that of Garin (2008), for example, had no followers in Portugal.

has studied in his famous book *Ontological Relativity and other essays*, and which has led him to the indeterminacies of translation and reference. The main reason can be presented in the following terms: the essential presupposition, from the part of the argument, is that we must accept as premise that there is, in fact, a clear separation or divorce between our conceptual schemes (the theory) and the world (the facts); someone who does not accept this, and who has a sort of Hegelian or neo-Hegelian interpretation of the relation that is involved, would not necessarily follow Quine's argument and its conclusions. In truth, someone who adopts that kind of interpretation would conclude, finally, that we need another criterion for analysing the relationship between theory and facts, not the one according to which (the premise) we can distinguish the latter from the former. My point is this: if we admit, from the beginning (as premise), that the reference of a theory is already given, somewhat, in the theory itself, and it is not something different to it, namely, something that exists outside the theory and independently of it (this premise is the conclusion, in some sense, of Quine's argument), our problem turns out to be the problem of having a criterion for such relation, not, of course, the metaphysical one that theory and facts are essentially different or distinct. Such a criterion can be, for instance, a rhetorical or argumentative one, as that which has been suggested by the rhetorical theory in the second half of the 20th century (Perelman and others): reference and objectivity would be therefore understood as a matter of agreement between the people involved in a given discussion or argumentation; what they are, in themselves, can only be determined, in the last analysis, in the cultural, social, and political context where the discussion takes place (Perelman 1989, p. 65 foll.).⁵⁰ This interpretation does not entail, contrary to what happens with Quine's argument, any insurmountable indeterminacy regarding reference and objectivity in general; it does not entail, too, that conceptual schemas are incommensurable. On the contrary: we can (and we must) analyse and compare these schemes in order to understand what people are talking about. Insofar as we are doing that, that is to say, insofar as we study the commensurabilities involved in different conceptual schemes, our territory is as universal as the territory of the UP thesis is. We have not abandoned completely philosophy and its claims of universality. I am claiming not that this is a solution for the holistic argument and for the future of philosophy, but simply that we must be careful and prudent when we consider the presuppositions and consequences of the RLT regarding philosophy and its relations to culture.

⁵⁰ Quine, as other contemporary analytic philosophers, completely ignores the rhetorical and argumentative aspects of our use of ordinary language. See Ribeiro (2012).

Some of these consequences are very problematic. Apparently, there is no ideology nor any utopia in the RLT. But this – that is, the claim that the RLT is dystopic and has no utopian or ideological presuppositions and implications – is already, in itself, an utopian and ideological claim regarding culture and its relations to philosophy. As has been said above, if different cultures are not comparable or commensurable, we must abandon the traditional claim that any culture is inferior or superior to others; and the same, of course, regarding national or multinational philosophies. There are no best or worst examples of them. *As a whole and in the end, they are all essentially identical.* This is, in my view, clearly an utopian and ideological claim. The RLT is, nowadays, the most important theoretical support of a sort of imperialist rationalism which dominates our contemporary world: not that of Descartes, Kant or Hegel, nor even that of what is understood, generally, by “Western civilization”, *but that of a globalized economy and finance.* The markest, in general, need cultural and philosophical neutralities among countries all over the world (or, at least, in the context of each economic block) in order to ensure the best economic and financial results. And, in practice, the RLT does that job. To say that each country has its cultural and philosophical identity, that cultures and philosophies are different from each other, entails that, from the point of view of the markest, they are all essentially identical and homogeneous: a free and open space for investment and economic and financial entrepreneurship. This is the (very conservative) hidden ideological and political agenda of the RLT, independently of its philosophical relevance.

CONCLUSION

The TNP problem: towards a compromise between universalism and relativism

In my view, it is too early to accept the postmodern and relativist theory that the UP thesis is no longer an acceptable paradigm for philosophical research and for thinking the relationship between philosophy and culture; that is, the theory that philosophy, in the old and classical sense of the concept, is death, and that, therefore, we must look, nowadays, for a new concept of philosophy which would be compatible with a new approach to culture. Such a theory has no more than fifty years in the millennial history of Western philosophy. And the presupposition according to which the UP thesis would ignore culture, and particularly culture in context – shared both by the TNP and the RLT philosophers –, cannot be entirely accepted, or, at least, needs further discussion. The

history of Western philosophy, from Plato to nowadays, seems to show the contrary. Of course, as I said, it does ignore multiculturalism and the relativity of cultures, insofar as these concepts are interpreted in the civilisational sense. This limitation suggests that we cannot completely escape from relativism, that is to say, we must accept some of its views while trying to reconcile them with the UP thesis. I will come back to this next. Anyway, my point is that insofar as there are things like mathematics and natural sciences, insofar as we can speak of Western societies and of the relevant cultures as a whole (a whole that can be contrasted with the Oriental one, for example), the search for philosophical foundations cannot be abandoned (see Norris 1997, cap. 3, p. 66 foll.).

Again, it is too early to accept completely and without reservations the postmodern and relativist concepts of philosophy and culture themselves, and its main radical consequence, according to which cultures (insofar as they belong to different paradigms or conceptual schemas) would be incommensurable (a consequence that, by the way, is not endorsed by most of the contemporary relativist approaches to culture, when cultures are analysed and compared to each other, as happens in Harris [2002] book). Therefore, what philosophers (at least in Western civilization) probably meant, in the following decades of the 21st century, by “national philosophies” and “philosophical traditions”, be they the classical or the postmodern ones, cannot dismiss or evade what I called the “TNP problem”, and even inevitably embrace some sort of neo-Hegelian reconciliation or compromise between the universality and the particularity (nationality/multinationality) of philosophy. In fact, *the present state of the art regarding the interpretations of the TNP problem, strongly invites them to clearly analyse and discuss the philosophical premises of their historiographies.*

Presumably, too, in the following decades the controversy about the TNP problem, largely understood, will be at the top of the Western philosophical agenda. On the one hand, contemporary relativism – which became almost a dogma in American and European universities after the last quarter of the 20th century – promotes a generalized suspicion against the UP thesis and emphasizes the importance of national/multinational philosophies and cultures (and the relevant historical traditions). This trend is in accordance with the growing association of nations in economic and political blocs without a real cultural identity *as a whole* (Harris [2002], with his relativist concept of nationalism, suggests that this can be said about America, and North America in particular, and I would say the same thing about Europe),⁵¹ which oppose to others with similar inter-

⁵¹ R. Rorty (1999, pp. 75-107), from a relativist point of view too, has suggested that regarding the USA, which is for him, as for Harris, an “ongoing creation” (Rorty’s

ests, and, at the same time, inside each bloc, with the inevitable affirmation of nationalism.⁵² On the other hand, contemporary relativism cannot obviously respond to our need for a universal framework which would allow us to establish and secure a fruitful dialogue between the national/multinational philosophies and the relevant cultures. (Popper [1994] said enough about that almost fifty years ago.) It became, currently, simply a pretext for cynicism and ideological manipulation, be it from the part of each nation in its relations to others, be it from the part of public opinion itself. If we consider this problem from the perspective of the relationship between the West and the East, between what we assume to be the common features of Western cultures when compared with the Oriental ones, no doubt that the UP thesis, historically speaking, *is the only universal framework we have*. S. Toulmin, whose philosophy cannot be accused of having prejudice against the UP thesis and the RLT, has finally concluded just that, eleven years ago, in his last book, *Return to Reason* (Toulmin 2001, p. 214). There, he suggests, a sort of compromise (“a middle way”) between the two theses.⁵³ This is also my point of view.

concept is “achieving our country”). He argues that American pragmatism can be a sort of cultural identification of American nationalism in the future: “Whitman and Dewey tried to substitute hope for knowledge. They wanted to put shared utopian dreams – dreams of an ideally decent and civilized society – in the place of knowledge of God’s Will, Moral Law, the Laws of History, or the Facts of Science. *Their party, the party of hope, made twentieth-century America more than just an economic and military giant*. Without the American Left, we might still have been strong and brave, but nobody would have suggested that we were good. As long as we have a functioning political Left, we still have a chance to achieve our country, to make it the country of Whitman’s and Dewey’s dreams.” (pp. 106-107, emphasis are mine). Rorty’s views are clearly nationalist, not only regarding the USA, but in general. See Rorty (1999, p. 243 foll.)

⁵² This is already happening in the European community in the beginning of the 21st century. Toulmin (1992, chap. 5, p. 175 foll.) argues pertinently that our modern concept of nation-State is tied to modern rationalism from the 17th century onwards, and, to some extent, to the UP thesis itself. The collapse of rationalism and of that thesis, entails, according to him, the collapse of our concept of nation-State. He anticipates the progressive lack of relevance of such a concept, and, at the same time, the reinforcement of the power and influence be it of independent citizens organisations (such as the ecological groups), or of multinational organisations (such as the United Nations, and others). I am not convinced of Toulmin’s previsions regarding the disappearance of nationalisms. See about this subject Kymlicka (1995, pp. 376-377), who argues that identifying the principle that would harmonise national communities with international ones “is one of the challenges facing theorists of community”.

⁵³ Toulmin identifies the UP thesis with what he calls the “Myth of Stability” or the “Rational”, and the RLT and cultural relativism with “Reasonableness” (that is to say, with all that cannot be interpreted in terms of classic rationalism): “Our first intellectual

Having said this, I would like to emphasize that contemporary relativism led, beyond the questionable consequences which I mentioned above, to other more fruitful results. We learned from it – even if we cannot accept entirely the reduction of philosophy to culture in relativist terms – to understand philosophy itself as a cultural product of a given society, to contextualize philosophy, and, finally, *to deconstruct it*. In our globalized world, we need to rethink our approach to culture not only in relation to Oriental societies, but also regarding our own Western world. For example, a Kuhnian approach to philosophy, as the one developed by K. Mulligan and others, is always pertinent and welcomed. It sheds a new light on our understanding of the UP thesis and philosophy in general. I proposed a similar work of deconstruction in the introduction to this paper, when I suggested that we need an approach to philosophy as an utopian thinking, which has, constitutionally (so to speak), ideological presuppositions and implications. More precisely, I suggested that, from this perspective, culture, as philosophy, can be rhetorically understood. The several versions of the TNPs I analyzed lose their apparently inoffensive and naïve character, and can always be interpreted not only from a point of view which is philosophical *per se* (and even systematic, if we manage to conceptualize a typology of such philosophies), but also from a sociological one, as tools for political conquests in the different levels of a given society (or societies). So, it is not a question of making anyone of such theses, and in particular the UP, more or less “acceptable”. Things are what they are. It is rather just one of being more conscious of those ideological presuppositions which I criticized and to promote, finally, critical thinking on the subject-matter of this paper.

obligation is to abandon the Myth of Stability that played so large a part in the Modern age: only thus can we heal the wounds inflicted on the Reason by the seventeenth-century obsession with Rationality, and give back to Reasonableness the equal treatment of which it was for so long deprived. The future belongs not so much to the pure thinkers who are content – at best – with optimistic or pessimistic slogans; it is a province, rather, for reflective practitioners who are ready to act on their ideals. Warm hearts allied with cool heads seek *a middle way between the extremes of abstract theory and personal impulse*. The ideals of practical thinkers are more realistic than the optimistic daydreams of simple-minded calculators, who ignore the complexities of real life, or the pessimistic nightmares of their critics, who find these complexities a source of despair.” (emphasis mine)

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