

Self-awareness and the structure of authority. Doing justice to the Other as a political *aporia*

Abstract

The objective of this essay is to formulate a broad definition of *authority* and of the functioning of this figure in the contingent and intersubjective environment by which the personal self is constituted. The coincidence of the formulated concept with the figure of the “other” to whom Derrida claims to grant an unconditional sacrifice will show the dangerous lack of political difference between Derrida’s attitude and the logocentric attitude he intends to deconstruct. Both of these attitudes appear, in fact, as a way of simply relying on the tastes, desires and bargaining power of some privileged authorities, without further investigating whether there is a more preferable allocation of resources. Afterwards, I will propose an alternative approach to maximize the “justice to the Other”, which aims at optimizing every individual’s capacity to be useful and claim reciprocity rather than aiming at relying on a supposedly “more reliable” authority’s values. The enhancement of every individual’s capacity to be useful and claim reciprocity will be considered as being the way to optimize every consciousness’ satisfaction within a social web, that is to say the way to “maximize the justice to the Other”.

Keywords: Jacques Derrida; Authority; Dialectics; Reciprocity; Political ethics

Definition of “authority” and its connection with significant related notions

The concept of authority can be investigated by means of a precise methodology which deliberately privileges the side of this phenomenon which concerns the “vital power” of the involved subjects. This power is intended as the degree of capacity, which these subjects have, to fulfill their desires and to make their environment fulfill these latter. From this point of view, authority is here understood as any structure of forces whose power contributes in shaping and determining the power of the subject who recognizes or accepts such a structure of forces as “legitimate”. This acceptance is due to the fact that accepting such a power is seen as coincident with the preferable way to fulfill perceived needs and desires or, in other words, to fulfill a perceived naturalness.

The particular meaning given here to the word *authority* diverges both from the empirical classification realized by Max Weber and from claims of a supposed condition of an “authentic” and sovereign authority made, for instance, by Carl Schmitt and George Bataille.

Weber, in effect, initially presents a definition of “domination” and “authority” which may appear to be compatible with the one above. In *The Types of Legitimate Rule* he writes that

domination is defined as the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons. It thus does not include every mode of exercising “power” or influence” over the persons. Domination (“authority”) in this sense may be based *on the most diverse motives of compliance*: all the way from simple habituation to the most purely rational calculation of advantage [...] every genuine form of domination implies [...] an *interest* (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience.¹

Since Weber highlights the always present assessment of a convenience of the acceptance of an “external” force as the underlying structure of any authority, the definition of this latter as springing from “the

¹ Max Weber, “The Types of Legitimate Rule”. In *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era: Text and Readings*, ed. Laura Desfor and Edles Scott Appelrouth, 217-223 (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2014), 217. Emphasis added.

preferable way to fulfill perceived needs and desires” seems to be compatible with his analysis. Weber, nevertheless, is interested in classifying the ways in which a *culturally determined* form of “commanding authority” or “valid authority” manifests itself. For this reason, he does not include «every mode of exercising power or influence over other persons» in his definition. He does not include the case in which, for instance, «a monopolistic position permits a person to exert economic power, that is, to dictate the terms of exchange to contractual partners»² because it does not represent «an immediate relation of command and obedience such that [an actor] can give orders to the others with the claim that they shall, and the probability that they will, be obeyed regardless of particular content, with their carrying out supervised»³. The form of explicit authority investigated by Weber is the typology whereby an individual feels compelled to obey either a «legal authority», or a «traditional authority», resting on «an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions» or, lastly, to a «charismatic authority»⁴. The analysis of the present essay is not interested either in making a similar classification or in limiting itself to these three kinds of commanding authorities as they – according to Weber, at least - stand out within a historically determined vocabulary when one talks about a “founded domination” – however useful such an analysis may be from a sociological perspective.

The scope of this text is to examine the way in which the power of a structure of forces “shaping and determining the power of the subject who recognizes or accepts such a structure as legitimate” can structurally make the perceived desires and convenience of this subject herself *arbitrary* in comparison to a route toward a maximization of her satisfaction and happiness. The description of such a structure will serve, then, as a theoretical foundation in order to expose perplexities about Derrida’s ethical proposal to “do justice to the Other’s singularity”. This will be philosophically relevant because Derrida’s proposal claims to make decisions pass through a stage of “undecidability”, that is to say a stage which would suspend any reliance on a preceding form of knowledge and “reasonability”⁵ – namely, on any “established authority” – reducing in this way the above arbitrariness.

Once this is established as the scope of the present essay, the only character of an “authority” which is theoretically pertinent is in the dynamics of power-shaping said authority triggers in the related subjects, a dynamics which is describable in the case of “a monopolistic position which permits a person to dictate the terms of exchange to contractual partners” in an identical way to the case of “legal authorities”. The non-relevance of other cultural, legal or psychological secondary characters makes the pertinent concept of authority reducible to a “structure of forces whose power contributes in shaping and determining the power of the subject who recognizes or accepts such a structure of forces as ‘legitimate’” (with *legitimate* meaning “having an accepted power because of a pragmatic, rational foundation”). Such general concepts of authority and “legitimate” cannot be clearly restrained neither in legalistic acceptations nor in a topology recalling only charismatic or traditional authorities. Such a general meaning, which refers “legitimate” to the perceived reasonable and pragmatic attitude of the agent confronting herself with an authority, concerns “every mode of exercising power or influence over other persons”. The meaning of “legitimate” is here utilized in its broad sense which, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, ascribes the meaning of «being reasonable and acceptable» and not necessarily of being «allowed by law» to this term.⁶

The degree of possible arbitrariness which the power of an authority triggers in a subject’s attempt to achieve her self-realization is not influenced, likewise, by whether such an authority responds to an established constitution and set of norms or to an absolute decision as in the dynamics of the state of exception described by Schmitt⁷. In fact, no element in a contingent, “Derridean” perspective – the one with which the present discussion will start off - can guarantee that the established norm is less at odds with a singular consciousness’ actual and potential aspirations than the arbitrariness of an authority’s “absolute decision”.

² Ibid., 219.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 217.

⁵ See Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority’”, *Cardozo Law Review* 11 (1990): 919.

⁶ Cambridge Dictionary, last modified 09 August, 2017, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/legitimate>.

⁷ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology, Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 5-15.

This is why this essay will also imply that Schmitt's considering the capacity to make "exceptional" decision to be the original ground of any authority does not make any pragmatic difference from the appeal to a stable, natural rationality as foundation of law⁸, having this latter the same extent of possible arbitrariness. This lack of pragmatic difference also makes political appeals to make man a "more sovereign authority" (of himself) theoretically indifferent to our ethical and political aim, that is «to do justice to the Other» in a Derridean sense⁹, fulfilling every individual's desires as much as possible. Among these appeals one may quote George Bataille's fostering the awareness of a "general economy" (as opposed to a "restricted economy") as condition of an authentic sovereignty¹⁰.

Because of all this, any reflection about sovereign authority which recalls perspectives like those of Schmitt or Bataille can be read, from the point of view of this paper, as a description of empirically different perceptions of the way in which power is utilized, which do not have any substantial relevance in ethical or ontological discussions about the "existential structure" of the involved agents.

Having completed these preliminary clarifications about the meaning and the scope of the concept of "authority" developed in this essay, it is now possible to start examining the structure in which the powers of the authorities clash and "make agreements" with each other.

Clashes and agreements among authorities and the problem of arbitrariness

It was said earlier that accepting the power of an authority is seen as coincident with the preferable way to fulfill perceived needs and desires or, in other words, to fulfill a perceived naturalness. It is crucial to notice, now, that this preferable attempt of fulfillment is mostly accompanied by a compromise between the naturalness of different individuals (or of different parts of some individuals) which can be read as a compromise between the different powers of persuasion which each individual holds with respect to the other. From this point of view the set of forces consisting in an individual can be read as the authority of other individuals. On the other hand it is coherent to say that even when one's consciousness decides to follow a certain external authority – be it the authority of another individual or of certain values – such a consciousness coincides, by definition, with the "major authority" of the *self* with which it corresponds. That is to say, it becomes the "structure of forces whose power is recognized as legitimate" and appropriate by the individual itself, independent of the fact that such a structure has shaped itself as a reaction and reflection of other "external" authorities.

An authority, therefore, can be considered as founded on the *personal identity*, self-awareness and "will to power" of an individual willing to fulfill its desires (or to avoid damages). Given the complexity of the concept of "personal identity" in an extremely changing and contingent environment – such as the one we need to assume if we want to take deconstructionist philosophy seriously in order to rigorously criticize it – it

⁸ Schmitt's appeal is not pragmatically different from, for instance, Hobbes' claim that the necessity of making natural law prevail leads to the legitimation of the sovereign whose power is, therefore, "grounded" on the stable natural law. On the contrast between Hobbes' and Schmitt's theorization of sovereign authority see Victoria Kahn, "Hamlet or Hecuba: Carl Schmitt's Decision", *Representations* 83 (2003): 69-74.

⁹ See, for instance, Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (London: Routledge, 1994), § 1; Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

¹⁰ See Georges Bataille, *La nozione di dépense – La parte maledetta*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1992), 33-53. The arbitrariness of perceived human values and desires, the consequence of the view of the contingency and continuous self-deconstruction of reality from which this essay starts off, also deconstructs any "substantial" difference between "restricted" and "general" economy. This latter, in fact, would only set up decisions that satisfy perceived needs arising from "general" disequilibria which would be products of historical contingent asymmetries, but without necessarily changing the underlying structure causing such disequilibria and their always different outcomes. This means that an awareness of a "general economy", similarly to a "restricted economy", would reflect a partial and biased set of values and not necessarily a maximization of human authentic ("sovereign") naturalness and potentialities, which can be considered Bataille's "practical" aim. A people's identification with a similar "sovereign" authority would be in danger of being biased, in a way similar to the reliance on any other kind of authority. See, for instance, Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, ed., *The Bataille reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), Part 5; Domenico Cortese, "Filosofie del 'più Europa: Sovranismo di Coscienza e Sovranismo Scientifico'", *Giornale Critico di Storia delle Idee* 1 (2017): 209-20.

would be better to read an “authority” as any fragment of consciousness, or of “will”, which constitutively bargains with the environment or with other ‘will-authorities’ in order to fulfill its impulses. In this sense, a fragment of consciousness regards itself as one of its own authorities, as following one’s own impulses and logic is seen as “coincident with the preferable way to fulfill perceived needs and desires”. A fragment of consciousness may regard “itself” as its only authority or, as is almost always the case, it can also recognize the authority of other wills. Moreover, a lot of authorities can be present and in contrast with one another inside the same individual, as a person’s impulses and ideals can often be varied and contradictory. What stands out from this picture is that the condition of existence of an authority is the awareness of a certain interest in acknowledging a power within a certain context of more or less adverse forces. In other words, we cannot understand the authority without understanding the formation of the personal self, of an identity which is the consciousness of certain needs and desires in a certain environment. As Adam Seligman points out¹¹, though, the opposite is also true: we cannot understand the personal self by separating it from the formation of an authority, that is to say from the recognition of a certain power coinciding with what is desirable and achievable within a context. This seems to be valid even if we consider the extreme view of a no-self theory, whereby the sense of the personal self is only an evolutionary construct which saves time in the conjunctures it evolved for but breaks down in case of memory loss, split personality disorder or brain damage.¹² An awareness of a personal self appears to be an awareness of what is practically desirable to be or to have, and it cannot articulate what its aims and desires are without reacting to a specific configuration of forces and, therefore, without having a confrontation with a certain power whose language game is totally determined by such a contextual configuration. An individual, for instance, shapes her convictions and aspirations by supporting or reacting to existing political ideologies, or by imagining what her economic instruments can offer her in a bargain with other individuals.

In order to illustrate the functioning of an environment formed by authorities in relation to each other, I will have recourse to the concept of “dialectical equivalence” as can be drawn from a reading of Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*¹³. This concept, in fact, can help to explain that an agreement among authorities can structurally take the form of an instauration of arbitrary practical values¹⁴.

The concept of dialectical equivalence describes the circumstance whereby a bargain among two or more wills can take the form of

1) A pacific compromise and equilibrium among the arbitrary desires which each authority perceives in response to her particular role. Such an arbitrariness is due to the fact that perceived needs and desires are

¹¹ Adam B. Seligman, *Modernity's Wager: Authority, the Self, and Transcendence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 51.

¹² See, for instance, James Giles, “The No-Self Theory: Hume, Buddhism, and Personal Identity”, *Philosophy East and West* 43/2 (1993): 175-200.

¹³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Routledge2004 [1966]), part Two.

¹⁴ “Arbitrary” in this sense is intended as “unreasonable, rationally unsupported”, it refers to values which, for some reasons, do not necessarily focus on realizing the highest possible satisfaction and naturalness which present and future authorities may achieve in the aggregate. This focus, in effect, seems to be the mainstay on which a definition of “what should be done” relies, the only practice consistent with the following definition: to reach the maximal realization of what is perceived, experienced and evaluated by consciousnesses as suitable, “appropriate”, as the highest awareness, feeling of what is “preferable to be”. In this statement, it is redundant to question whether the verb “should” refers to an ethical obligation or to a pragmatic necessity. In fact, a feeling of what is “preferable to be” or “to do” stays at the basis of both these kinds of commands, since any moral or ethical command comes into existence only as embodied in a “consciousness-of-what-is-preferable-to-be-or-to-do”, indifferently to the reasons why it feels that something is preferable. Nevertheless, if we consider the goal stated above as the fulcrum supporting a discussion on morals and ethics read in a broad sense as “what is suitable to do”, this approach can be understood as an enhancement of Hegel’s statement whereby the basis of the moral point of view and from which inter-subjective dialectics and ethics need to be developed is «the right to want claimed by the single consciousness, the right to the self-determination it claims, the freedom to determine itself as it pleases»(See Georg W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Rights*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 [1820], §57). Such a view of the “ethical end” can be interpreted as consistent, also, to Derrida’s notion of “doing justice to the Other” (which will be discussed in this article), once “doing justice to a singularity” is read as “realizing its aspirations and desires”.

likely to be the result of random past and present social relationships or of random sets of material and cultural instruments available to each authority, indifferently to whether or not these elements correspond to the set of forces producing the most satisfying desires possible.

2) An act of an explicit submission of some authorities under the desires and claims of other ones - due to the prevalence of the bargaining power of the latter – in order to reach a pacific agreement. This can be the result of accepting the lesser evil by subordinating oneself to a violent individual and authority.

In relation to this, a dialectical equivalence indicates the fact that two or more goods or services (in a broad sense, intended also as reciprocal actions or attitudes) are “exchanged” as though they were *equal* in value, in order to achieve a certain satisfaction by the involved consciousnesses. This equivalence is indifferent to whether such a satisfaction is actually much greater in a consciousness than in the other or to whether a generally more suitable exchange may have been created with the same elements. A dialectical equivalence denotes, therefore, an advancement of a socially agreed “rationality”, an advancement which not only may not coincide with “the highest possible progress”, but which also may not coincide with any “progress” whatsoever, if this word means an improvement of the total socially perceived well-being (this may be the case of an economic “extortion” such as, for instance, an employer who forces a worker to revise his wage downwards, a situation in which the worker’s harm may be greater than the employer’s benefit). One can assert that a dialectical equivalence is a dynamics whereby the submission of elements of different value is possible – or “of different pragmatic repercussions” – under the same conceptual category or under an equivalent level of worthiness, either in a legal or in a moral context.

Such an equivalence ensures that these elements can be economically exchanged or even legally treated as equivalent. Some examples of this latter circumstance are: the equivalence of income for different times of labor or for jobs of different degrees of danger and effort; the legal or cultural equivalence of financial loans, independently of whether the borrower is, say, a householder unfortunately excluded from the labor market or a bank performing a financial leverage; the legal equivalence of tax evasion, independently of the type of motive provoking it. A dialectical equivalence is simply, also, the equivalence between a certain amount of wage and the correspondent labor time needed to earn it, or the equivalence between an amount of charged loan interest with the “effort” of granting a loan.

Adorno uses his “negative dialectics” to privilege the awareness of these contradictions detected within the process of formation of cultural or economic values. He claims that in order to do justice to the relentless occurrence of discrepancies of power or of self-fulfillment we need to get rid of the concept of “absolute” or reconciliation typical of Hegel’s conception of dialectics – and represented here by the stages of the dialectical equivalences. Adorno’s dialectics would be wary of any achieved identity:

Such dialectics is no longer reconcilable with Hegel. Its motion does not tend to the identity in the difference between each object and its concept; instead, it is suspicious of all identity. Its logic is one of disintegration: of a disintegration of the prepared and objectified form of the concepts which the cognitive subject faces, primarily and directly. Their identity with the subject is untruth.¹⁵

Hegel, in fact, can be considered the champion of the theoretical attitude which tends to “forget” authorities’ arbitrariness in order to depict a seemingly rational and preferable advancement in the relationships among self-consciousnesses. According to Hegel to talk about a *dialectical* advance for a consciousness means to describe a process of overcoming the perceived contradictions in order to reach a stage in which “being” and “thought” are nearer to coincidence and in which a higher self-realization is achieved.¹⁶ The German philosopher expresses this point also by claiming that «the aim of the spirit as consciousness is to make its appearance identical with its essence, to raise the certainty of itself to truth».¹⁷ Clashing and reaching a

¹⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialectic*, 145.

¹⁶ Claudio Cesa, ed., *Guida a Hegel* (Bari: Laterza, 1997), 5-7.

¹⁷ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1987 [1807]), §333.

compromise among consciousnesses (or better “self-consciousnesses”), then, is the way in which the dialectical process advances within an inter-subjective context.¹⁸

In the light of the observations made earlier in 1) and 2), nevertheless, a dialectical movement such as the one expounded by Hegel is a dynamics which behaves in a completely random way in comparison which a direction towards a maximum self-satisfaction of the involved consciousnesses. In order to close the loop we can say now that an “authority” is nothing but the *operative side* of a consciousness: it is the way in which it “tries” to legitimize (even to itself) the structure of forces coincident with its will; the method of this attempt is to make existent consciousnesses see such a structure as coincident with the preferable way to fulfill perceived needs and desires. Clashes and agreements among consciousnesses are therefore another face of the same mechanism performed by relations among authorities.

Arbitrariness as always present possibility of *madness* in a “rational” discourse. Derrida and the authority of the *Cogito*

The pragmatic power of an authority hinted so far by means of economic examples can also manifest itself through seemingly mere “intellectually” imposed forms of rationality. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Horkheimer and Adorno famously denounced how the cultural attitude which was supposed to free human beings from the authority of myth and superstition, the rationality of Enlightenment, has revealed itself to be founded on a similarly biased and partial set of values in order to assess the “truth” of a proposition or the worthiness of a form of life. Modern and contemporary rationality ends up being “speculative” and even “totalitarian” despite its assuming «the form of the sober matter-of-factness by which it purported to distinguish itself from Hegel and from metaphysics in general»¹⁹ In the first chapter of their book, the authors elucidate the authoritarian character typical of such a form of reason:

enlightenment is totalitarian as only a system can be. Its untruth does not lie in the analytical method, the reduction to elements, the decomposition through reflection, as its Romantic enemies had maintained from the first, but in its assumption that the trial is prejudged. When in mathematics the unknown becomes the unknown quantity in an equation, it is made into something long familiar before any value has been assigned. Nature, before and after quantum theory, is what can be registered mathematically; even what cannot be assimilated, the insoluble and irrational, is fenced in by mathematical theorems. In the preemptive identification of the thoroughly mathematized world with truth, enlightenment believes itself safe from the return of the mythical. It equates thought with mathematics. The latter is thereby cut loose, as it were, *turned into an absolute authority*. [...] Thought is reified as an autonomous, automatic process, aping the machine it has itself produced, so that it can finally be replaced by the machine.²⁰

To the extent that an advance of knowledge produces results which are determined by a specific, restricted form of rationality – such as mathematics in the case of what Horkheimer and Adorno refer to as “Enlightenment” – it is doomed to exercise a violent authoritarian stance over human conception of truth and “nature”. Modern reason, as opposed to myth, is supposed to uncover the effective structure of nature and human naturalness, in order to become aware of what rules of actions are really preferable to feed human practical spirit. But if such a survey is carried out in function of an arbitrary, abstract rationality – that is a rationality which does not take into account all practical risks and potentialities of a human context, in this case those which cannot be referred to by means of univocal logics such as mathematics – any social and

¹⁸ This basic structure is implicit, in Hegel, to any social institution in civil society, such as market (Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, § 199).

¹⁹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002 [1944]), 18.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18-19. Emphasis added.

political decision following it will be as “irrational” as a superstition. The “irrationality” of modern reason, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, shapes the policies and psychology of today’s individuals.

There is, therefore, a double bind between the formation of an awareness, which we can also name as the formation of a certain piece of “rational discourse”, and the possible constitution of the arbitrariness of authorities. One can notice now that what Derrida puts as a condition of possibility of the rise of any truth and rationality can lead us to cancel any structural difference between a will explicitly coerced by a violent authority and a will compelled by its own desires, such as the one which supports a political authority. In fact, if we call “violence” the act of reducing to silence a potentially legitimate rational position, it cannot be simply identified with the domination of a “violent” person, to which the economic exploitation of human beings by a monopoly can be, for instance, associated. Derrida’s essay *Cogito and the History of Madness* famously illustrates this point.²¹

In this well-known essay the French philosopher shows how, for Foucault, Descartes’s treatment of madness within his *Meditations* is a specific and defined historical event of violence²². In reaching the ground of the Cogito, in fact, Descartes would have excluded from the perils of skeptical self-doubt the possibility of one’s own madness, which would be emblematic of a schism, enacted by Modern thought, which interrupted the dialogue between “reason” and “madness”:

Foucault writes thus: “Descartes does not avoid the peril of madness in the same way he circumvents the eventuality of dreams or of error. Neither image-peopled sleep, nor the clear consciousness that the senses can be deceived is able to take doubt to the extreme point of its universality; let us admit that our eyes deceive us, ‘let us assume that we are asleep’—truth will not entirely slip out into the night. For madness, it is otherwise.” Later: “In the economy of doubt, there is an imbalance between madness, on the one hand, and dream and error, on the other. Their situation in relation to the truth and to him who seeks it is different; dreams or illusions are surmounted within the structure of truth; but madness is inadmissible for the doubting subject.”²³

Described in this way, Cartesian *Meditations* would represent the story of an explicit coercion of a legitimate discourse – the language of madness – by an external authority – the language of what we consider “reason” – a mechanism similar to the explicit violent submission to an economic power.

Derrida’s interpretation of the *Meditations*, though, is much more complex. He notices how Descartes makes the Cogito work *despite* the haunting danger which madness represents – which can be translated, in our discussion, “despite the fact that the content of a certain awareness may become senseless, inadequate due to the structural arbitrariness of any form of accepted reason in comparison with what would be preferable to optimize a person’s satisfaction”. Derrida shows us that what Descartes actually does is not to exclude madness from his argumentations but, rather, to recognize the ubiquitous risk of “madness” – for instance, during the analysis of the possibility of the *perceptual error* – and, consequently, to insure the “rationality” of his own language through a «discontinuity and a transition to another order [or “level”] of reasoning»²⁴, for instance, to the logic of intelligible truths rather than sensible ones. Moreover, «Descartes is concerned not with determining the concept of madness but with utilizing the popular notion of insanity for juridical and methodological ends, in order to ask questions of principle regarding only the truth of ideas»²⁵. That is to say, according to Derrida, Descartes’ hyperbolic project could be distinguished from the specific historically situated Cartesian system of rationality, in the sense that it reflects, rather, on the conditions of possibility of the truth and intelligibility of that – and any other – system of rationality²⁶.

²¹ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, (London: Routledge, 2003 [1967]), 36-76.

²² See Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, (London-New York: Routledge, 2006).

²³ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 56.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 61

²⁶ This clarification by Derrida especially refers to one of Foucault’s reactions to the text of the *Meditations*: «[Descartes writes:] “And how could I deny that these hands and this body are mine, were it not perhaps that writing and difference I compare myself to certain persons, devoid of sense, whose cerebella are so troubled and clouded by the

Such conditions of possibility are recognized, in other words, in the iterability of a code throughout any possible context and despite any danger of radical break – namely, any danger of its reduction to silence due to the “relentless transformation of contextual needs, desires or interests and of the suitability of this code rationality to satisfy them”. The de-contextualization of an idea of rationality – a de-contextualization which can even be radical, so as to holistically transform the total sense of a contextual reason – is seen as the condition of its being “ideal”, understandable. The Cogito would represent, therefore, the instant of hyperbolic and extreme possibility of radical “madness” which the existence of a logos has to face and despite which – given the aporia in the manifestation of madness and “silence” - its sense and its capability of being “communicated” can maintain itself. In regard to this, in fact, Derrida makes us notice that «as soon as Descartes has reached this extremity, he seeks to reassure himself, to certify the Cogito through God, to identify the act of the Cogito with a reasonable reason»²⁷. In other words, once madness and the always (non)-present danger of it is acknowledged, such a madness is necessarily incorporated and made to disappear within a “new” «reasonable reason». The certainty of the Cogito would represent, in its surviving the hyperbolic doubt on the “reality” of one’s own experiences and convictions, the instant of hyperbolic and extreme possibility of radical “madness” which the existence of a logos has to face and despite which its sense and its capability of being “communicated” can maintain itself. Madness, therefore, does not represent for Derrida a precise form of alternative language but, rather, the ever present risk that an embraced rationality may be out-of-place in comparison with potentially preferable choices and the risk, therefore, that such a form of reason may perform a violence, whether such a violence is perceived as a clear act of coercion or not.

The arbitrary self-awareness of an authority as a political *narrative*

Derrida’s interpretation of the *Meditations* is founded on his conception of absolute contingency of any form of “language”. The Derridean philosophy of *dissemination* and de-contextualization reminds us of the completely contingent and random formation of any event of rationality, which disarms the possibility of univocal guidelines in order to perform a maximization of the naturalness of each consciousness. This discloses a scenario in which any authority is in danger of reflecting the requests of an arbitrary rationality²⁸. This is because the contingency and arbitrariness of the configuration of rationality, thanks to which an authority, or a will, perceives the desires to fulfill, ensure that the very fulfillment of these latter coincide with an equivalent arbitrariness in comparison with what is an optimization of a consciousness’s satisfaction. Take, for instance, what we are currently experiencing in Southern Europe. The currently accepted form of rationality among political exponents and technicians has persuaded them that in the past we have borrowed too much and lived beyond our means and we need, therefore, to keep our borrowing under control and to cut our public services in order not to make creditors worry.²⁹ In this story no form of violence by an external authority is recognized or perceived. The dynamic narrated is just that of a sequence of decisions driven by

violent vapours of black bile, that they constantly assure us that they think they are kings when they are really quite poor, or that they are clothed in purple when they are really without covering, or who imagine that they have an earthenware head or are nothing but pumpkins or are made of glass . . .” And now the most significant sentence in Foucault’s eyes: “But they are mad, sed amentes sunt isti, and I should not be any the less insane (demens) were I to follow examples so extravagant» (Ibid., 54-55).

²⁷ Ibid., 70.

²⁸ See, for instance, Jacques Derrida. *Limited Inc.* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1977) and Jacques Derrida. *Speech and phenomena and other essays on Husserl theory of signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

²⁹ On the denunciation of this form of rationality see, for instance, Alberto Bagnai “Unhappy families are all alike: Minskyan cycles, Kaldorian growth, and the Eurozone peripheral crises”, in *Post-Keynesian views of the crisis and its remedies*, ed. Oscar Dejuan, Eladio Febrero and Jorge Uxó (London, New York: Routledge, 2013); Emiliano Brancaccio and Marco Passarella, *L’austerità è di destra. E sta distruggendo l’Europa*, (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2012); as example of this rationality see ECB, *A Fiscal Compact for a Stronger and Economic and Monetary Union*, Monthly Bulletin (2012), accessed 12 -02 -2014, available at http://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/other/art1_mb201205en_pp79-94en.pdf.

different autonomous desires. According to this narrative, we have followed certain authorities because our will was compelled by our perception of necessities and desires and we need now to follow certain other authorities for the same reasons.

Such a model of rationality – and, therefore, of self-awareness and of authority - nevertheless, perfectly reflects the dissemination and de-contextualization which make its sense pragmatically inadequate. The narrative of “living beyond one’s means” can be suitable, for example, within a simply household scenario, abstractly considered: the framework of a family spending too much in comparison with its income. It is quite damaging if it works within a context in which *other factors* have previously taken place such as, in this particular case, an acute weakening of national industry due to a too strong exchange rate and to salary devaluation policies by other nations.³⁰ Relevant empirical studies, for instance, assert that

evidence confirms De Grauwe’s (2011) statement that Eurozone membership has transformed member countries into “developing” countries from a financial point of view. By entering the Eurozone, the countries lose control over the currency in which their debt is issued. As a consequence, the markets can force their governments to default. As Frenkel and Rapetti (2009) put it, the key difference between a developed and a developing country is that in the latter “the set of risky assets includes public bonds and domestic corporate debt, which are all subject to country risk”. But this is precisely what is happening in the Eurozone peripheral countries now, and with precisely the same consequences as outlined by Frenkel and Rapetti: the occurrence of a crisis triggers capital outflows, as a result of domestic and foreign investors “flight to quality”. As shown by De Grauwe (2011), nominal exchange rate flexibility would provide a useful stabilizing mechanism: besides its obvious medium-run effects on price competitiveness [research suggests that this would significantly relax commercial balance constraints to expenditure and growth³¹], a large enough nominal depreciation has the immediate financial effect of inducing foreign investors to buy the currency of the crisis-hit country, which would therefore not experience a massive capital outflow and liquidity crisis. As a consequence, this country keeps control over its interest rate and can finance easily expansionary fiscal policies³²

The presence of *other factors*, which holistically transform the entire pragmatic sense of a situation, makes the quoted model of rationality an abstraction and, in fact, arbitrary. The “ignorance” of these other factors which determine the situation can be “phenomenologically” described as the self-awareness of some authorities whose language (or “rationality”) is randomly shaped by contingencies, in a way that the necessities and desires it reflects do not coincide with measures which would maximize their well-being. The philosophical point here is not that we need to absolutely rely on macroeconomic empirical studies – or, better, on the empirical studies quoted here - in order to make sense of the general pragmatic situation we have to deal with. A similar piece of advice would be a mere absolutization of the power of a certain fallible contingent authority and any interpretation of this sort of this position would completely miss the point. The philosophical point here is simply the structural possibility of non-coincidence between an authority’s *awareness* and the pragmatic elements needed to achieve a significant improvement of its own self-satisfaction.

³⁰ See, for instance, Florence Jaumotte and Hanan Morsy.. “Determinants of Inflation in the Euro Area: The Role of Labor and Product Market Institutions”, *IMF Working Paper* (2012), accessed 11-08-2017; Alberto Bagnai., *Il Tramonto dell’Euro*, (Reggio Emilia: Imprimatur, 2012).

³¹ See Antony P. Thirlwall, “Kaldor’s 1970 Regional Growth Model Revisited”, *Discussion Papers* 1311, University of Kent, School of Economics (2013); see also Antony P. Thirlwall, “Emu is no cure for problems with the balance of payments”, *Financial Times*, October 9, 1991; Mark Setterfield, “Endogenous Growth: A Kaldorian Approach”, in *Handbook of Post Keynesian Economics*, vol. 1, ed. Geoffrey C. Harcourt and Peter Kriesler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 231-256; Emiliano Brancaccio, “Deficit commerciale, crisi di bilancio e politica deflazionista”, *Studi Economici* 96 (2008): 109-128.

³² Alberto Bagnai, “Unhappy families are all alike: Minskyan cycles, Kaldorian growth, and the Eurozone peripheral crises”, in *Post-Keynesian views of the crisis and its remedies*, ed. Oscar Dejuan, Eladio Febrero and Jorge Uxó (London-New York: Routledge. 2013), 130-178.

The most sensible methodological suggestion to be drawn from that, if the goal is to maximize every authority's self-realization – to briefly hint the development and the conclusion of the present paper – is to abandon any ethical philosophy which puts some kind of moral privilege on the singular individual's self-determination or on the request of the "singularity" in order to oppose some metaphysical generalizations. Instead a pragmatic, endless investigation on the "contingent regularities" which may favor a maximization of reciprocity and usefulness among individuals and, therefore, *a maximization of the authorities' well-being in an inter-subjective life* should be an attitude more consistent with a non-simplistic way of «doing justice to the other's naturalness», of optimizing the general feeling of what is "preferable to be", given the necessary structure of relationships among authorities explained above. The same necessary structure which conveys the inevitable danger of arbitrariness of relying on some individual-authorities' requests give us the push toward the pragmatic method which only can satisfy the same objective sought by such a reliance. Empirical studies would be a helpful instrument among others in order to scrutinize the practical success of certain socio-economic tools in order to create reciprocal good expectations and high mutual utility or bargaining power.

The paradox of the authoritarian deconstruction

In the wake of these last observations the question I want to address now is "why should the awareness represented by singularity-of-the-Other to which Derrida solicits unconditional sacrifice follow a different path than this in its formation? Does not any formation of a will coincide with an authority?". Derrida's quasi-transcendental motivation for his commitment is that any contingent rule shaped by the singular event of the Other's coming would *aim at* an unconditional act of justice, unconditional because it would not have as *condition* of its performance the guidelines of a commonly accepted arbitrary model of rationality. Its only basis would be the sense of responsibility towards the demand of a singularity.³³ This act, in other words, would not need to be justified by an external ethics. Of course, according to the French philosopher, we need to be conscious of contextual social values in order to do justice to the Other. But they would come after a calculation which takes into account the fact that the question whether to immediately apply them or not is undecidable, as he says in the essay *Force of Law*. It is undecidable because these values are born from and pass through the dissemination which makes them random in comparison with our potentially best choice. Only by going through this undecidable moment and by finally breaking it, Derrida claims, we can tend to a non-conditioned justice to the other's contingent "naturalness":

The undecidable remains caught, lodged, as a ghost at least but an essential ghost, in every decision, in every event of decision. Its ghostliness deconstructs from within all assurance of presence, all certainty or all alleged criteriology assuring us of the justice of a decision, in truth of the very event of a decision.³⁴

Derrida is so extreme in his criticism to "simple present", idealized notions of a *person* and a *self* with a determined character that he rejects even theoretical positions, such as Levinas' one, which attempt to build a first philosophy founded on the face-to-face encounter with the other person, seen as prime condition of human communication and of relational experience, at the expense of universal concepts such as God or the world.³⁵ To situate first philosophy in a reflection on such theoretical ideas would be, for Levinas, to betray the first condition of our apprehension of human reality and of human relationality: to conceive the other as a person, as a similar being addressing me, calling to me with its singular identity not dominated by universal ideas. According to Derrida, though, to try to simply unhinge the perception of the *person* from its being

³³ See, for instance, Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Jacques Derrida, *Given time: I. Counterfeit money* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

³⁴ Derrida, "Force of law", 253.

³⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 187-240.

embedded in its contextual self-deconstructing conceptualizations is as metaphysical as, say, privileging a certain idea of human nature. Once accepted the dynamics of *dissemination*, in fact, no “pure” Other can be conceptualized without considering it already a product of a “totalizing” system of meanings which, nevertheless, de-contextualizes and deconstructs itself. To conceive, to *give meaning* to a certain expression of the “other” is already to construct an identity (a “same”) which explodes in the play of differences. The horizon of violence, therefore, is

a reign in which the difference between the same and the other, *différance*, would no longer be valid, that is, of a reign in which peace itself would no longer have meaning. And first of all because there would be no more phenomenality or meaning in general. The infinitely other and the infinitely same, if these words have meaning for a finite being, is the same.³⁶

Derrida seems to be well aware of the theoretical impasse inherent to the consideration of the singular other person as a “static” idea, that is to say unrelated to a dialectic of continuous self-deconstructing meanings. But can a “dynamic” consideration of it succeed in doing justice to the Other? Is the awareness of the relentless “reduction to the same” re-disseminating itself really sufficient to make a decision tending to the “unconditioned”?

In the light of what has been said about the structure of the authority, it is the very existence of the “tension to the unconditional” recalled by Derrida’s writings which can be contested. The reason is that, first of all, the singularity of the other privileged by Derrida cannot help but represent still another authority – even if an “authority of itself”, as we can say in empirical terms – equivalent to any metaphysical one; an authority which exists because it has fulfilled random needs and desires.

To say that the alliance with the Other has to be secret, that is devoid of any justification which recalls an external ethics means that, in the moment of its rupture from such an ethics, the awareness in which the will of the other consists had to recognize an inconsistency between the desires which the context of rationality where she lives accidentally produced and the desires which this same rationality proposes to fulfill. But, even if such a procedure is intended as continuous and dynamic, it does not mean that the new perceived desires aim at an achievement which is less arbitrary than the previous one, *for the very reason that their perception has been produced by the previous, arbitrary discourse.*

For instance, going back to the previous example, a political personality can decide to react to the impoverishment of middle classes in a different way to the accepted one. She can decide that in Southern Europe we do not have to cut our public services and expenditures in order not to make creditors worry, we can simply operate a huge redistribution of wealth from the top 5% of society to the bottom classes and to the State, so to pay a minimum wage and to improve public services without borrowing more. This would respond to the desire of the people and would do justice to their demands of well-being, creating a new logic which would not correspond to the one which is contextually accepted. This move would be ultimately consistent with Derrida’s notion of responsibility. Unfortunately, this mere desire of redistribution of wealth would be produced by the same context of rationality which claims that the problem of these countries has simply been too much borrowing and wasting of resources. An arbitrary rationality in comparison with the best pragmatic route to follow because it ignores other operating factors, such as foreign salary dumping and too strong an exchange rate. Such an ignorance and arbitrariness is transmitted to the new model of rationality which should coincide with doing justice to the Other.

All this demonstrates that the structure of alienation of the will in comparison with potential maximization of well-being functions indifferently to any alleged secrecy of the responsibility toward the other, and also indifferently to a higher frequency in the change of the authority to be relied upon, as the awareness of contingency would suggest to be done. The arbitrariness inherent to an authority, in fact, is not altered by its being considered more or less dynamic, malleable, adapting to the context or indefinite in its borders.

A further point which would be interesting to examine is connected with another reason explaining why deconstruction cannot tend to what Derrida calls “unconditional”. In fact, the very process of deconstruction,

³⁶ Derrida, *Writing and difference*, 160.

which should unveil the necessity to rely on the event of the Other, can be understood and performed as long as the authority of the Other is *recognized*. That is to say that the idea of an absolute contingency of any rational value, as well as being the means we use to illustrate the arbitrariness of the desires which an authority expresses, can only be *conceived* after we concretely experience the possible emergence and existence of other potentially legitimate changing authorities within the area where we used to consider only some authorities. This means that our acknowledging the process of deconstruction is, in the end, our being “conquered” by the performance of these continuous new authorities in their being in contrast with the performance of other authorities, which makes us perceive their being incommensurable to each other, that is their being reciprocally arbitrary.

Derrida himself, in *Force of Law*, defines the conditions of our performing a deconstruction as the awareness of a justice owed to the Other, rather than the other way around:

If there is a deconstruction of all presumption to a determining certainty of a present justice, it itself operates on the basis of an “idea of justice” that is infinite, infinite because irreducible, irreducible because owed to the other – owed to the other, before any contract, because it has come, it is a coming, the coming of the other as always other singularity.³⁷

We have, therefore, the paradox whereby our awareness of the necessity of deconstruction is *nothing more than our being loyal to authorities which may be equivalently alienated*, arbitrary in comparison with hypothetical guidelines for our potentially best actions. This ultimately makes the alleged superiority in openness of a post-structuralist thought or of a philosophy of the event in comparison with a so called “metaphysical system” problematic in its pragmatic significance. It makes Derrida’s thought, paradoxically, as potentially “authoritarian” as the Hegelian dialectic.

A pragmatic way out: endless attempts to find *contingent regularities* in order to maximize reciprocity

At this point, it becomes necessary to elucidate the consequences of this discussion with regards to the method which is useful to approach as much as possible what we call “justice to the Other”. The concept of authority can be read as a useful device in order to make clear the always present danger of relying on arbitrary values. The structure of reciprocal bargaining power among individuals, implicit in any formation of authorities, suggests the path to follow in order to maximize each individual’s identity, at least in fields where the effects of the available instruments can be sufficiently calculated, such as economics. This path involves getting rid of any reliance on a *certain typology* of authority – be it a certain privileged form of rationality, like in the Enlightenment, a certain kind of unquestioned historically determined dominant economic authority or, like in Derrida, a certain kind of “individual”, contingent awareness which is the *Other* in the deconstructive discourse. This attitude would correspond to an arbitrary arrest of the spirit of enquiry. A relentless enquiry on what contextual instruments and regularities are most able to maximize reciprocal bargaining power among individuals may constitute a step forward in our practice, given the formal pragmatic structure which appears to stand out from the analysis.

It is clear that to understand how to maximize somebody’s satisfaction requires a reliance on some arbitrary or idealized values too. The dynamics of reciprocal bargaining power among individuals – and, even more so, its contextually derived pragmatic notions - is itself a historical, “biological” *contingent necessity* and any theoretical reference to it is in fact a philosophical idealization. But

- 1) - We have seen that there is no way to avoid idealizations like the ones produced by considering these regularities, therefore an active commitment to finding out the best way to organize them is always more useful than relying on the desires of authorities which *may not have* such a commitment.
- 2) The very fact of focusing on this maximization rather than just basing one’s assessment on the privilege given to the indications drawn from a *certain specific kind* of structure of forces (or

³⁷ Derrida, “Force of Law”, 254.

“authority”) is what makes the overall investigation *more ample* in comparison with a deconstructionist attitude.

Having clarified that, one can examine in depth the articulations of what has been established as the “contingently necessary” conditions of a discourse on the concept of authority: reciprocal bargaining power can be interpreted as the basic structure of intersubjective agreements founded on what can be defined as an impulse toward reciprocal attraction - explained by the recognition of reciprocal utility. Any human agreement, included the ones arising from honest feelings such as love and protection, in effect, can be interpreted as a recognition of reciprocal instrumental utility – considered in its broad sense – and a consequent attempt to obtain what is desired while giving in exchange something which is desired by the partner in order to build up the relationship. Even if one considers a solitary experience, this can be interpreted as the attempt to obtain what is desired from the environment by doing some actions in order to make it “react” in the desired way. An “agreement” within a certain context can also involve only one consciousness. It does not influence the necessity to provide it with the suitable power in order to “do justice” to all the *self-awarenesses* involved in the scenario. The analysis of authorities as structures of forces, therefore, puts into light that in any conscious act there seems to be no way out of a certain kind of economic calculus about the level of convenience that an action produces by means of an interaction with other (material or immaterial) agents.

The consideration of this pragmatic framework can give rise to a series of potential recommendations about fiscal, monetary, currency and commercial policies. A politician following such a practical approach would not implement a simple redistributive policy as “desired by the majority of social classes”. She would require an empirical analysis about how, for instance, a unique currency among different countries influences her nation’s entrepreneurs indebtedness, earnings and, therefore, future *reciprocal expectations* on their economic usefulness and gains.³⁸ She would investigate how much commercial asymmetries which follow this state of facts can damage reciprocal confidence in the overall continent. She would, also, impose studies on how much the private credit institutions which dominate the European banking system today are suitable to use, in their risk-benefit calculus when granting a loan, a logic which sees credit as

the investment of a society which recognizes the highest productive potentiality of any individual, puts it in relation with the potential necessities and desires of the community and provides the adequate monetary tools so that every economic agent is able to implement the corresponding production and transactions³⁹

which is a definition of credit consistent with the objective of maximizing reciprocal bargaining power in the long term.

If we analyze human activities in terms of recognition of reciprocal bargaining power we can focus on factors such as reciprocal utility, reciprocal confidence, instrumental maximization, expectations and we can

³⁸ Although Amartya Sen is critical of the very term of “individual utility” – so much employed throughout this work – in order to discuss about the preferable allocation of goods within a community, his ideas are consistent with the ones here expressed (even if they are not coincident: see Domenico Cortese “Authorities and naturalness beyond neo-pragmatism and deconstructionism. Optimization of economic distribution and well-being as a means of going beyond dialectical failures”, PhD diss., University of Dundee, 2017). He shows in fact skepticism toward any objective notion of personal “utility”, maybe identified with a specific kind of pleasure, as not taking into account the relative freedom and self-determination which a subject had in order to choose it and to achieve it. In other words, Sen finds it “arbitrary” to assess in itself the pleasure a person presently has, because that does not put it in relation with all unexpressed ways of realizations this person could have reached, maybe even preferably. In order to best take advantage of these potentialities and to do justice to these potential desires, one has to understand social fairness as a maximization of individuals’ “capabilities”. That is to say, their «capacity to convert income and commodities into valuable achievements», which also depends on personal characteristics, cultural factors, social realizations and social relationships (See David A. Clark, “Capability Approach”, in *The Elgar Companion to Development Studies*, ed. David A. Clark, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2006; Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009, 19).

³⁹ Domenico Cortese, “The dominion of means over ends. Modern bank credit and Max Weber’s irrational rationalization”, *The Journal of Philosophical Economics* X: 2 (2017): 74.

examine the best ways to improve these elements in order to achieve a higher “justice” to the Other’s potential desires.⁴⁰ The consequence is that phenomena which may represent a direct or indirect impoverishment of reciprocal usefulness – like “an acute weakening of national industry caused by a too strong exchange rate and to salary devaluation policies by other nations” – due, for example, to the aggregate lack of confidence and stability which power asymmetry brings about are more likely to be considered in the consequences they have for the level of reciprocal bargaining power.

I can conclude by stating what I think is the difference between Derrida’s approach and this one. While the former is more likely to limit an evaluation to what stands out in a certain moment as the solution to a problem perceived by a certain authority, to take into account the factors I exposed may help to investigate whether there may be an even “better” overall allocation of instruments and potentialities – and to analyze in depth the pragmatic structure according to which it would function within intersubjective life. Such an investigation would not forget the essential contingency in the formation of human desires, but it would focus on the telos of maximized production and allocation of instruments to achieve the highest possible recognition and reciprocal fulfillment of desires.

⁴⁰ Such a position may resemble neo-pragmatist positions like Richard Rorty’s. The American philosopher and neo-pragmatism in general, in effect, utilize a sound conception of the contingency of human desires and nature and a sensible focus to the practical sense of any human value in its essential goal to approach happiness in general (See, above all, Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986; Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and social hope*, London: Penguin Book 1999 and Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). On the other hand, nevertheless, it lacks the coherent and “systematic” attitude of focusing - in each determinate cultural, economic social situation – on the calculus of the instrumental distribution which would effectively maximize human happiness. In other words, neo-pragmatism lacks the courage of venturing into an effective scrutiny of what material and intellectual tools would be able, in a certain case, to really optimize mutual utility and benefits among human beings. This does not represent simply an insufficiency of the “application” of pragmatist ideas, it corresponds to a proper theoretical flaw. Such a flaw becomes clear the moment Rorty seeks to identify the “pragmatically adequate” values proper of a context with what is perceived as the most agreeable by the different individuals (Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, 170). There is little preoccupation, in this method, over the possibility that a similar perception may in turn be the product of a very biased allocation of social and economic instruments and that it may, therefore, retrace the features of a preceding arbitrary form of rationality, in a typical metaphysical move. Neo-pragmatism is likely to limit its evaluation to what stands out in a certain moment as the conversationally agreed solution to a problem, without investigating whether there may be an even “better” allocation of instruments and potentialities.