REIMAGINING TRUTH AND MORALITY: FROM JÜRGEN HABERMAS TO JACQUES DERRIDA

Giorgi Tskhadaia

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Thesis supervisor

Dr. Camil Ungureanu

Department of Political and Social Sciences

Universitat Pompeu Fabra
Barcelona

Contents

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I argue that Jürgen Habermas's neo-Kantian liberalism fails to provide universalistic foundations for truth and morality as it cannot be applied invariably across different contexts. However, this failure does not warrant a renunciation of the universalistic epistemological stance. As I show, the immanentist and contextualist critiques of the neo-Kantian view are not free of universalistic presumptions. Instead, I defend a conception that describes the quasi-transcendental conditions of experience. I propose that Jacques Derrida's deconstruction is such a view as it provides a description of the conditions of experience in terms of paradoxes/aporias. It takes into account both the particularities of a given context and the necessity of context-transcendence. I argue that such a Derridean universalism can be maintained in relation to the questions of truth and morality. I investigate the question of morality at the level of a state (secularism) and an individual (toleranc

INTRODUCTION

The populist resurgence seeks to cast doubt upon the objectivity of truth and the universality of liberal values. The notion of objective, context-transcending truth risks being abandoned in favor of post-truth politics – a worrying trend that is sometimes blamed on certain strands of post-structuralism. For example, Stuart Sim (2019, 104) accuses Jacques Derrida of radical skepticism and argues that the deconstructionists' agenda is fertile soil for the post-truth politics. For Sim, the implication of Derrida's deconstruction is that "truth will always elude us, meaning that we have no basis for value judgement" (Ibid.). Sim proposes an alternative vision of postmodern relativism that focuses on a relative certainty of truth-claims (Ibid., 106). In a similar manner, Lee McIntyre (2018, 138-139) links the right-wing populist denial of scientific facts with postmodern skepticism. According to McIntyre, "even if right-wing politicians and other science deniers were not reading Derrida and Foucault, the germ of the idea made its way to them: science does not have a monopoly on the truth" (Ibid., 141).

As for the question of morality, Badano and Nuti (2017, 6-7) suggest that the certain strands of the populist movement in the West do not so much contest the liberal values as applied to themselves but rather the universality of liberal norms. To put it differently, they do not see their political positions as being opposed to liberalism *per se*, but rather they question the applicability of those values to "others" (Ibid.). In other words, some populists circumscribe the scope of pluralism (Müller 2014, 8; Ferrara 2018, 7-8), which amounts to the rejection of the universality of norms. Liberal values, in this view, are applicable only to those who belong to a given community, but they do not extend to other communities or individuals who are perceived as being fundamentally different.

So, part of the populist movement, the emergence of which has been partially blamed on postmodernism, a) questions the possibility of the universal/objective truth and b) doubts the non-

relative/universal scope of liberal values.[1] Out of the fear of post-truth relativism, one might be tempted to go back to more traditional accounts of truth and morality. However, by examining the debate between Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, I argue that in the face of this populist backlash, we should not resuscitate the traditional realist notion of the mind-independent, universal/objective truth and the neo-Kantian deontological liberalism. Nor should we resort to more "relativistic" solutions. I contend that anti-realist, contextualist, and immanentist alternatives to the Habermasian neo-Kantian liberalism fail to offer plausible accounts of truth and morality. I choose the Derrida-Habermas to show that neither deontological liberal universalism (Habermas) nor its anti-universalistic critique can offer us the solution, and for this reason, we need to chart a middle course between the two.

My wager is that even if truth and morality cannot be defined in the terms proposed by Habermas, we still cannot escape from adopting a universalistic stance. An act of a rejection of traditional metaphysics and ethics can be regarded as having a quasi-transcendental character. For this reason, we need to find such an approach that more or less accurately describes the general structures of experience. With this aim in mind, I endorse the Derridean deconstruction as an alternative to both Habermasian neo-Kantianism and its criticisms. Such an interpretation of deconstruction as a quasi-transcendental endeavor is not new. However, I argue in this thesis that it is best understood in the context of the Derrida-Habermas debate and Habermas's criticisms of deconstruction. To drive home this point, I will first take issue with the problem of truth and then examine the question of universal morality.

Between realist and anti-realist notions of truth

As I've already mentioned, it is tempting to go back to the traditional realist notion of truth to recover its objectivity. According to realists, truth exists in the outside, mind-independent world, independent from of our subjective opinions (Miller 2016). Such truth is universal and cannot be contested once it is discovered. In contrast, anti-realists offer an epistemic account of truth and

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[1] As we shall see later, the ontological distinction between truth and morality is not so clear-cut from the Derridean point of view. Describing truth as objective and morality as universal merely reflects their ontic characteristics – one describes the existing reality, the other prescribes norms. From a Derridean point of view, what is at stake in both cases is the applicability of truth and morality beyond their immediate contexts or particular epistemic constraints.

refrain from any kind of judgement regarding the external world. Anti-realism derives truth via epistemically ideal situations that grant access to it. For example, Hilary Putnam (1981, 55-56) refers to the epistemically ideal situation that warrants an appeal to truth; Jürgen Habermas (1984, 75) refers to the ideal conditions of rational communicative action, namely, truth, truthfulness, and rightness; Robert Brandom (1998, 141) talks about the practice of "giving and asking for reasons", and so on. In all these instances, the finitude of the linguistic practice is considered to be an absolute threshold beyond which it is impossible to assert the truth. Thus, anti-realist truth is not universal and is strictly confined within the epistemic constraints.

Drawing on Habermas's *Truth and Justification* and Derrida's deconstruction, I show that neither of these two metaphysical alternatives holds water. In the case of realism, we are asked to imagine direct access to the outer world. Given the fact that every human activity, be it practical or contemplative, is necessarily mediated by a particular language or languages, one cannot obtain the "raw data" of the mind-independent world. On the other hand, an outright endorsement of anti-realism is no less problematic. For now, the truth is equated with the product of rationalistic procedures, or deliberations, and in this way, everything that is derived by the finite human mind under ideal epistemic conditions is automatically considered to be true. Even if such ideal conditions cannot be easily met, the fact that they are expected to be one day present goes against the infallibility of the finite human mind. Equating the universal/objective truth with an epistemically derived truth would ultimately bring the scientific project and the learning processes to a standstill (Habermas 2003b, 132-152). As Habermas (Ibid., 37) convincingly argues, even his communicative theory of action at its early stages forecloses the possibility of a change, as it does not leave the room for such a conception of truth that cannot be totally subordinated to the epistemic constraints of the human mind.

Confronting with this paradoxical situation, Habermas (2003b, 32) proposes a solution – to leave the gap between the two notions of truth open. However, he later transgresses the self-imposed dualism and oscillates between the realist and anti-realist notions of truth. I argue that in order to stay faithful to the spirit of dualism in relation to truth, we need to turn to Derrida's deconstructive approach, where the aporetic nature of experience is recognized.

On a metaphysical level, Derrida (1993, 17-22; 1994, 32-33; 2002, 55) conceives context-transcendence as being a singular event that is intrinsically tied up with a particular context and

reveals the aporetic structure of experience. Such a conception is distanced both from the realist and anti-realist conceptions of truth. As opposed to the realist belief in the mind-independent world, Derrida (Derrida 1978, 143) argues for the ineluctability of linguistic mediation. He notices that a claim about context-transcendence is manifested itself on a linguistic plane and, for this reason, it cannot evade the epistemic constraints imposed on it by the linguistic practice (1978, 143-144).

On the other hand, anti-realism in Derrida's oeuvre is opposed in two senses. First, Derrida insists on the indispensability of context-transcendence as every particular context, defined by the linguistic practice, needs to be internally split in a paradoxical fashion to allow for a change. However, this is still a weak counter to anti-realism, as on this view, context-transcendence is a singular event, and it cannot be captured in ontic terms. Taking cues from Heidegger (1996, 9-11), I define "ontic" as opposed to "ontological" as referring to something that is expressed in a particular language, be it natural or formal. Ontological, in contrast, describes the conditions of emergence of ontic phenomena. If it were possible to preliminarily determine in ontic terms when or in what form a context-transcending truth would take place, then such an event would not be differentiated from the very context itself. Hence, it would not be context-transcending.

Second, on an epistemological level, the aporetic *conditions* of experience (not a singular context-transcending event itself) should be perceived as having a quasi-transcendental structure. The argument is that one cannot deny occupying a particular epistemological stance when propounding a metaphysical doctrine. This turns deconstruction into a theoretical program – a move that goes against a certain reading of Derrida. However, we arrive at such an interpretation of deconstruction in the context of the Derrida-Habermas debate. Habermas (1987a, 185; 2017, 18) argues that it is not possible to avoid occupying a particular performative stance. In other words, no completely neutral description of the conditions of experience is possible. The corollary is that rejecting the traditional metaphysical accounts of truth and arguing for the necessity of paradoxes/aporias cannot avoid being expressed in ontic terms. As the necessity of the paradoxes is stated on an ontic plane, such an approach assumes a quasi-transcendental character.

Such an interpretation of deconstruction as a quasi-transcendental endeavor has also been propounded by various authors (see Gasché 1986; Rorty 1995b; Bennington 2000; Fritsch 2011; Doyon 2014). In *Paper Machine*, Derrida (2005b, 91) acknowledges that he often invokes certain

quasi-transcendental conditions of experience. In this thesis, I argue that the necessity of quasi-transcendentalism arises as a response to the Habermasian charge of a performative contradiction. As it was already stated above, the contention is that it is unavoidable to occupy a particular performative position in the process of going against a particular philosophical view, even if one is critiquing the Western metaphysics.[2] Adding the prefix "quasi" to the word "transcendental" implies that such a position is universalistic and contingent at the same time.

Based on the foregoing, I argue that not all types of epistemological stances are justified. Those accounts which disregard the aporias inherent to the structure of experience leave less ground for the emergence of truth. In this way, the Derridean deconstruction can provide the minimal universal requirements to secure the emergence of truth across various contexts, even though it cannot predict in what form such truth will arrive (as it cannot predict the ontic characteristics of a singular event beforehand). This means that we cannot and should not recover the traditional notion of the realist objective, mind-independent truth in order to combat post-truth politics, but rather accept the minimal universalistic requirements laid down by deconstruction. Such conditions only preclude various types of fundamentalisms that try to fix the meaning of truth once and for all.

Deconstruction beyond the Habermasian deontological liberalism and its critiques

In relation to the question of morality, I take issue with the Habermasian neo-Kantian deontological liberalism as a paradigmatic example of liberal universalism. I mainly call into question the central tenets of Jürgen Habermas's philosophy. While John Rawls made a considerable contribution to resuscitating and developing the neo-Kantian strand of liberalism, it is in Habermas's works where the purer form of it can be found. Unlike Rawls, Habermas (1998b,

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[2] Thomassen (2017, 12-44) in his recent book, acknowledges that post-structuralism, including Derrida's deconstruction, contains normative implications. However, he falls short of arguing that the whole *approach* itself, with its emphasis on radical contingency and aporias, could be interpreted in such terms. As I already mentioned, there are no absolutely valid principles, but rather the emphasis on the aporetic nature of experience should be interpreted in quasi-transcendental terms. So, if Modood's (2018) accusation that Thomassen's is "too metaphysical a theory" is right, then it that is not necessarily a downside.

85) makes no critical concessions to *modus vivendi* as for him morality as a higher-order form of reasoning should enjoy the unrivaled primacy over various political, cultural or other types of precepts. Moreover, on an epistemological level, Habermas (2002, 107-108) is not wary of making explicit the quasi-transcendental implications of his approach. For this reason, I will mainly discuss Habermas's brand of deontological liberalism, with the exception of the final chapter, where I will complement the discussion of Habermas with the investigation of Rainer Forst's argument for tolerance.

I break down the claims of the Habermasian deontological view into two parts. First, on a moral level, I enquire if the Habermasian neo-Kantian belief in the universality of deontic rightness-claims is justified. Second, on an epistemological level, my question concerns the quasi-transcendental nature of the deontological approach. I am interested in the question whether it is possible to sidestep the quasi-transcendental implication of the deontological view, or any type of philosophical approach in general. I show in this thesis that pre-set deontic precepts cannot be invariably applied in defining secularism and tolerance. However, this is not a sufficient ground to dismiss universalism altogether. I propose that the Derridean weak universalism can sidestep the problems associated with the Habermasian deontological liberalism and its relativistic alternatives. In the case of secularism, I am interested in the application of deontic precepts on a state level, whereas I discuss tolerance as an individual attitude.

Salvaging the universality of secularism through deconstruction

Most often, liberal universalism has been advocated from the perspective of the neo-Kantian deontological liberalism, which offers uniform deontic precepts applicable across different contexts. As I already noted, Habermas's offers a neo-Kantian deontological conception of secularism that unlike Rawls's political liberalism does not make concessions to *modus vivendi*. It propounds the universalistic principle of the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines. On this view, morality, unlike ethics, is universalizable; ethical doctrines merely represent the values of a particular community or an individual and have no validity on an universal level.

I examine the tenacity of this principle as applied to negative and positive freedoms. The right to abortion and genetic engineering are two types of negative freedoms that Habermas (2003b) considers. In both cases, he readily admits that the state neutrality cannot always be strictly enforced (2003a, 40). There is no neutral principle that can decide which conception of human life is valid. Likewise, Habermas (2006b, 10-11; 2008 130) famously argues that religious citizens, when exercising their positive freedoms, are not supposed to employ religious arguments in the formal political public sphere without taking necessary steps to translate those arguments into a secular language. As I show, the translation undertaken by secular citizens is not neutral. For this reason, the universality of the priority of morality over ethics cannot be maintained.

The contingency based alternatives to the Habermasian deontological secularism are equally deficient in solving the problems that are left after the failure of the deontological approach. For example, Charles Taylor's (2007) contextualist account of secularism a) cannot explain how change occurs in secularist, or religious worldviews and b) denies its own quasi-transcendental implications. William Connolly's (2005) radically pluralist conception of secularism, on its part, a) disregards the need for grounding secularism in particular norms or political constellations, and b) denies the universalistic, quasi-transcendental assumption of its own approach. So, neither of these approaches can successfully replace the deontological view of secularism.

Derrida's (2002) deconstruction of faith and secularism can guide us in charting the third path between deontological liberalism and its contingency-based critiques. Deconstruction does so by a) providing an aporetic conception of ethics that describes the general structure of secularism without offering a uniform, invariant ethical norm applicable to different particular contexts; b) on an epistemological level, it establishes a quasi-transcendental performative stance that helps to extend the aporia behind secularism across different contexts. The Derridean secularism, in this way, is applicable across different societies, but it takes into account the various particularities of the given context. Below, I will show that the same deconstructive approach can be applied to the question of tolerance as well.

The universal appeal of the paradoxes of tolerance

I outline two major paradoxes of tolerance. The first major paradox stems from the fact that, as T.M. Scanlon puts it, tolerance requires an "attitude that is intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and unrestrained opposition." (Scanlon 1996, 226) In other words, a tolerant person is supposed to tolerate something that she strongly opposes but somehow finds permissible to accept. We may call this *the paradox of initial acceptance*. The second major aporia of tolerance is that determining its limit proves to be a difficult task after the opposed doctrine in question has been deemed worthy of acceptance. This is known as the paradox of "tolerating the intolerant," and it poses a problem even for the most liberal approaches. As Karl Popper (2013, 581) argued, "Unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance." We can call it *the paradox of a secondary acceptance* since it arises after a tolerant attitude is already adopted towards something that has been found permissible.

The deontological approach advocated by Habermas and Forst purports to solve the paradoxes with the help of higher-order moral reasoning in the form of deontic precepts of *reciprocity* and *generality.* As I argue in this thesis, the proposal of an ethically neutral conception of tolerance is unpersuasive. Deontological liberalism fails on its terms, and this failure opens up a space for approaches that aim to go beyond the Kantian dichotomies, such as facts vs. norms, or moral vs. ethical. They try to accomplish this without forfeiting the value of tolerance.

There are two prominent alternatives to the deontological of tolerance. The first, "realist" view attempts to dethrone morality from its status as higher-order reasoning. According to realists, tolerance has to be understood as a function of local political arrangements rather than being derived from moral judgement (see Williams 2008; Newey 2010; Gray 2000). But the problem with this view is that giving up on universalism works well in situations where the parties possess similar amounts of material or symbolic resources or have a history of successful co-existence. However, it fails to account for those instances where a tolerant attitude is exhibited towards a worldview that radically challenges the status quo or deeply-held ethical convictions. It turns out that an acknowledgement of the universalistic drive behind tolerance is indispensable.

The second, sensorial alternative, exemplified by Lars Tønder (2013a, b), supposes a much more radical critique of deontological liberalism. It questions the centrality of any normative conception

that, in Tønder's words, stems from the somatophobic attitude characteristic of the mainstream Western ethics. Deontological liberalism is targeted as the most characteristic exemplification of the view which overlooks "sensorially-inflected" life experiences. This includes what Tønder calls "active tolerance." While the realist critics of the deontological conception of tolerance mainly focus on the need to circumscribe normativity within the bounds of a finite context – be it political or cultural, Tønder's criticism reaches an opposite conclusion. As I shall show, for him, the normative dimensions of an act lose their central role in conceptualizing tolerance.

So, on the one hand, the realist alternative to a deontological view on tolerance is too context-dependent to admit of a tolerating behaviour either towards marginal parties or in non-standard situations. On the other hand, I argue that the sensorial conception of tolerance turns tolerance into a floating signifier – an "immanent" practice with no need for grounding itself in particular norms, or principles. Such a conception disregards the "particularist" dimension of tolerance that requires setting limits to it.

Against this backdrop of the failure of both neo-Kantian theories and their opposite alternatives, I argue that a third, Derrida-influenced approach can solve the conundrum not by suspending the paradoxes of tolerance but by acknowledging their permanence. To drive home this point, I follow Derrida's (2000a 147, 2005, 44-45) deconstructive readings of hospitality and forgiveness. Once it is clear that we need both a necessary grounding in the existing normative framework and a mechanism to transcend it in order to accommodate novel situations, the advantages of an aporetic conception of tolerance become persuasive.

Retaining paradoxes as quasi-transcendental structures have practical implications for drawing the limits of tolerance. While it is no longer possible to impose the strict rules of reciprocity and generality, it can still be argued that respecting the paradoxical structure of tolerance acts as a minimal requirement for tolerance. For this reason, those approaches that completely disregard the paradoxical structures and seek to suspend a deconstructive critique completely – for example, different sorts of fundamentalisms that preach violence, deserve less tolerance, than those which are more fallibilistic at heart.

Below, before I discuss the problems of truth, secularism and tolerance in detail, I will first say a few words about the Derrida-Habermas debate in the context of which our discussion will take place.

The Derrida-Habermas Debate – A Partial Rapprochement

The debate between Habermas and Derrida unfolded in two stages. Most of the time, it was a proxy academic war waged by their followers, rather than by the philosophers themselves; Habermas and Derrida themselves only rarely took aim at each other directly.

It is Habermas who fires the opening salvo in the *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, where he depicts Derrida as a mystic whose deconstruction "renews the mystical concept of tradition as an ever *delayed* event of revelation" (Habermas 1987a, 183). Moreover, Habermas (Ibid., 185) levels charge of performative contradiction against Derrida and accuses him of a relativistic denial of truth. This was in line with the prevailing characterization of Derrida as a postmodern relativist who in Habermas's (Ibid., 185) words, resorts to "leveling down the genre distinction between philosophy and literature." Habermas juxtaposes "rhetoric" with "logic" and argues that Derrida placed the former above the latter. According to Habermas (Ibid., 190-207), if we follow Derrida's line of thought, then we sacrifice the problem-solving capacities of the linguistic practice in favor of the capacity for world disclosure. On this view, deconstruction can offer nothing fruitful in a philosophical debate as it is basically deprived of the conceptual means to engage in it. At best, such a position is "mystical" as Habermas dubs it; at worst, it may lead to relativism or even nihilism.

Before the debate between Derrida and Habermas took to its second stage of a partial rapproachment, there was a radical re-appraisal of Derrida's work undertaken particularly in the Anglo-American academia. At the forefront of this movement were Rodolphe Gasché (1986) and Christopher Norris (1987) who called for the serious engagement with Derrida's work; for them deconstrudction belongs and makes important contributions to the philosophy proper. Especially, Gasché (Ibid., 274) occupies the position according to which Derrida's deconstruction is characterized as having a quasi-transcendenal nature – a claim that is later taken up and criticized

by Richard Rorty (1995b).[3] These latter readers of Derrida partially reversed the trend that depicted Derrida as a postmodern cynic; in the 1990s, their positions were partially adopted by Simon Critchley (1999) who occupied the middle ground between "serious" and "not-serious" versions of Derrida's philosophy.

Yet, the skepticism about deconstruction being a relativistic "theoretical" endeavor persists to this day. Even the rapprochement between Habermas and Derrida was still rife of mutual suspicions. Despite the fact that politically, both Habermas and Derrida occupied similar left-leaning universalistic positions, the philosophical discord between the two remained far from over. Below I will briefly recount this "political" rapprochement and how it does not settle the philosophical controversy.

The most clear example of the rapprochement between the two remains Habermas's joint letter with Derrida calling for a common European foreign policy. In it, the two philosophers express the "Kantian hope for a global domestic policy" (Habermas and Derrida 2003). This is their common philosophical stance which is not artificially contrived for this particular occasion. For example, in the *Specter of Marx*, Derrida (1994, 100-105) calls for the creation of the *New International* that will offer global solutions to some of the problems that are deemed universal. Despite the fact that Derrida (Ibid.) is well aware that supposedly universals norms and values are in fact often exploited by the nation-states to their own gain, he still believes that we should nevertheless salute such universalistic endeavors. Habermas, in a similar manner, acknowledges that the private interests often hide behind the banner of universal rights, or values, but he does not consider this to be an argument against universalism (Borradori 2003, 35-38).

The joint letter was preceded by the fact that Derrida was awarded Theodor W. Adorno Prize in Frankfurt in 2001. As Hent de Vries (2016, 1285) notes, Derrida's earlier visit to Frankfurt on Habermas's invitation prepared the ground for receiving the prize; it indicated Habermas's tacit approval. Habermas (2003a, 113) later called Derrida a "worthy winner of the Adorno Prize" on the grounds that his philosophy continues the tradition of the Frankfurt School.

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[3] For a detailed account of the history of the Habermas-Derrida debate, see Bouretz (2011). For the important contributions to the debate, see Thomassen (2006a).

Notwithstanding such overt rapprochement, it seems that philosophical disagreement between the two remained far from being settled. From today's perspective, one may get an impression that the most substantial differences still persist. For example, we may look at Derrida's response to Simon Critchley, where he takes aim at the phenomenon of the "performative" and criticizes Habermas (Derrida 2000b). He argues that the "ethical overload" that Habermas dislikes in "infinite responsibility" must be preserved at all costs. "Ethical overload has to be overwhelming, it overwhelms, and the arrival of the other is the overload," writes Derrida (Ibid., 467). Apart from his remark on the "ethical overload", Habermas, on his part, almost reiterates his early doubt about the "mystical" nature of deconstruction. For him, an uncertain arrival of the "other" is vague and needs to be normalized to some extent.

In this thesis, I will show that the controversy surrounding the Derrida-Habermas debate can guide us in solving the philosophical issues related to truth and morality. To this end, the debate needs to be reimagined in such a way that the main concerns of both philosophers be taken into account. For example, Habermas is right in insisting that a certain "stabilization" or "normalization" of deconstruction is unavoidable. Based on this insight, I propose to resuscitate and strengthen the quasi-transcendental reading of Derrida. Quasi-transcendentalism, on this view, is needed to avoid the Habermasian charge of the "performative contradiction". Derrida, on his part, rightly argues that aporias of being are ineluctable and can never be completely stabilized. Based on this observation, I will argue that we should not go back to the traditional realist notion of truth, or deontological morality. By charting such a middle path, I will show that both Habermas's and Derrida's analyses can be viewed as being complementary.

Below, in the first chapter of this thesis, I will first tackle the question of truth through the Habermasian and Derridean critiques of realism and anti-realism. Second, I will take issue at the deontological conception of secularism, and finally, I will discuss the paradoxes of tolerance and how they can be accounted for from a Derridean perspective.

1. RETHINKNG TRUTH BETWEEN CRITICAL THEORY (HABERMAS) AND DECONSTRUCTION (DERRIDA): AN IMMANENT CRITIQUE

Abstract

In this chapter, I argue that the traditional realist account of truth does not hold water. Likewise, the anti-realist alternative leads to the metaphysical deadlock. Instead, I offer a particular interpretation of the Derrida-Habermas debate, which shows that the universal/objective truth about reality cannot be expressed in ontic terms. Thus, Jürgen Habermas's initial intention to introduce the dualistic account of truth is well-justified. However, it is only in Jacques Derrida's deconstruction where we witness a full-fledged version of such dualism that evades the problems associated with the realist/anti-realist dichotomy. Derrida describes the aporetic structure of experience that establishes a paradoxical relationship between context-bound and context-transcendent claims. While on a metaphysical level, the truth about reality cannot be expressed ontically, on an epistemological level, the very act of the rejection of the traditional notion of truth should be viewed in quasi-transcendental terms. This is necessary to avoid the Habermasian charge of a performative contradiction. For this reason, we can talk about the quasi-transcendental conditions of the emergence of truth in Derrida. The Habermasian charge of a performative contradiction can be avoided in this way.

Keywords: Truth; Realism; Anti-Realism; Epistemic Theory of Truth; Deconstruction; Quasi-Transcendental Conditions of Truth.

The notion of the universal/objective truth risks being abandoned in the post-truth era (Calcutt 2016; Coughlan 2017). It has been argued that more than thirty years ago academics started to discredit truth as one of the grand-narratives; "instead of 'the truth,' which was to be rejected as naïve and/or repressive, a new intellectual orthodoxy permitted only 'truths' – always plural, frequently personalized, inevitably relativized" (Calcutt 2016). This has resulted in an assertion that alternative scientific theories should not be discarded out of hand (McIntyre 2018, 20). But embracing alternative "science" proves to be especially problematic in the current era of a climate change denial, anti-vexxer movement, and so forth.

The trend of relativizing scientific truth is sometimes blamed on certain strands of post-structuralism/post-modernism. For example, Stuart Sim (2019, 104) accuses Jacques Derrida of skepticism and argues that the deconstructionists' agenda does not contradict the post-truth discourse. For Sim, the implication of Derrida's deconstruction is that "truth will always elude us, meaning that we have no basis for value judgement" (Ibid.). Sim proposes an alternative vision of postmodern relativism that focuses on a relative certainty of truth-claims (Ibid., 106). In a similar manner, Lee McIntyre (2018, 138-139) links the right-wing populist denial of scientific facts with postmodern skepticism. According to McIntyre, "even if right-wing politicians and other science deniers were not reading Derrida and Foucault, the germ of the idea made its way to them: science does not have a monopoly on the truth" (Ibid., 141).[4]

I argue in this chapter, that under the pressure of these accusations and out of the fear of alternative "sciences" we should not retract the relativized notion of truth. Instead, the traditional realist objective truth needs to be renounced. On this realist view, truth is located in the outside, external realm, and we can have access to it. In contrast to it, we need to partially accept some type of anti-realism and conceive truth within the confines of the ever-changing and contextually bound linguistic practice, that necessarily tarnishes the prospect of attaining the universal/objective truth on an ontic plane. Partially drawing on Heidegger (1996, 9-11), I define "ontic" as opposed to "ontological" as referring to something the existence of which can be expressed in a particular language, be it formal or natural. By "ontological," on the other hand, I refer to something the

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[4] Paul Boghossian (2006, 6) locates the problem in what he calls a "social dependence conception of knowledge." According to him, such a view supposes that "whether a belief is knowledge necessarily depends at least in part on the contingent social and material setting in which that belief is produced" (Ibid.). This bears a resemblance to the anti-realist claim that truth is generated by and confined to the linguistic practice.

existence of which cannot be represented in linguistic terms but still can be elucidated with the help of a philosophical reflection. In other words, ontology is concerned with the conditions of emergence of ontic events. In contrast to the realist claim, I argue that the universal truth cannot be expressed ontically.

What needs to be emphasized here is that I am mainly interested in the question of truth as referring to reality as a whole. For example, I do not intend to contest the particular claims such as "Water is H2O", "I am awake", "The table is made of wood" and so on, but instead, my concern is scientific or non-scientific approaches that explain how our reality is structured. I argue that the prospect of defining such objective truth in ontic terms needs to be rejected as it necessarily leads to the metaphysical deadlock. Instead, I contend that locating objective truth even in scientific theories will contradict science's own quest for "game-changing" and paradigm-unsettling discoveries.

However, there are two reasons why I think that a complete relapse into anti-realism should not be endorsed either. First, from a metaphysical perspective, without a prospect of context-transcendence, we cannot explain how such new discoveries come into being that turn on its head well-established scientific paradigms.[5] Such a "game-changing" force is a singular event that arrives unexpectedly and is not defined preliminarily in determinate terms. Admittedly, this is a weak counter to anti-realism, as such context-transcendence is not expressed on an ontic plane and, for this reason, remains largely elusive. Second, while we cannot capture the objective truth in ontic terms on a metaphysical level, we cannot avoid declaring the condition of its emergence as universal on an epistemological level. This is because, from an epistemological point of view, a relativistic position is self-contradictory, or in other words, is subject to a performative contradiction. The reason for this is that it does not acknowledge the fact that the act of rejection of metaphysical realist and anti-realism is necessarily expressed on an ontic level. In other words, it is a performative stance – i.e., expressed by a particular person at a particular time.

Apart from this, I argue that there is no other quasi-transcendental guarantee against "alternative sciences", for example. Embracing some truth about reality as being objective would foreclose the possibility of the learning processes and ever newer discoveries. This would be a far more

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[5] Here, I distinguish between metaphysical and epistemological points of view as it is customary in analytic philosophy. Following Loux and Crisp (2017, xi), I define metaphysics as a discipline that "attempts to provide an account of being *qua* being." Epistemology is defined as a study of the conditions of knowledge (Steup 2018).

damaging development than the proliferation of fake news or alternative "sciences" in the post-truth era.

To drive home this point, I examine the works of Habermas and Derrida - the two philosophers that have much more in common when it comes to the question of truth than it is usually acknowledged. I offer an interpretation of the debate between the two, which brings into view the fact that their approaches are similar, even though Habermas sometimes oscillates between the conflicting conceptions of truth. I argue that this debate ultimately points to the direction of the "middle ground" between realism and anti-realism that I outlined above. For this reason, it needs to be carefully unraveled and scrutinized.

Below, I will first give an account of the Habermasian criticism of the realism/antirealism dichotomy and its limitation. Second, I will offer the Derridean deconstruction as a more sustained critique of the traditional notions of truth. And finally, I will conclude by discussing the implications of Derrida-Habermas debate for the prospect of truth in the post-truth era.

1.1. Habermas's conception of truth

In *Truth and Justification*, Habermas's (2003a) asks two types of questions regarding truth: first, the metaphysical question – what is the truth, or what kind of ontological assumptions does it entail? and second, the epistemological question – what does it mean to assert the truth, or what is the source of our knowledge of the truth? Below I will discuss in turn both of these questions, also drawing on Habermas's discussions in *Between Naturalism and Religion* (2008).

1.1.1. The attempts to reject the realism/anti-realism dichotomy

Habermas's discussions on the nature of truth are mainly focused on the critique of realism/anti-realism dichotomy. At its early stages, his philosophical project was conceived as a critique of realism. In this period, the development of his formal pragmatics ran parallel to the gradual turn

towards anti-realism in analytic philosophy.[6] Only later Habermas decided to take aim at anti-realism. To stay consistent with this chronology, I start with the critique of realism.

Habermas offers two types of arguments against realism. First, he shows that such a position is not internally consistent. Habermas (2003b, 216) maintains that "as we cannot grasp reality except in terms of our concepts, the idea that we could somehow step in between the linguistic realm of concepts and 'naked' reality, purified, as it were, of all subjective components makes no sense" (Ibid.). He sheds light on this point by arguing that the external stimuli can be meaningfully interpreted by different parties as referring to the same object *only* if they coordinate their responses communicatively (Ibid., 118).[7] Concurring with Heidegger and Wittgenstein, Habermas (Ibid., 93) stresses that the external objects that are encountered in the world are not experienced "neutrally", but they are always perceived a) from the perspective of traditions and habits that premediate our understanding, and b) through the communicative use of language that can make sure that if necessary the stated fact is justified before the interlocutors who can object to it.

Second, Habermas (2003b, 217) argues that unapologetic endorsement of realism leads to a metaphysical deadlock. For example, if we start to believe that we have access to the mind-independent reality, then we have to accept the claim that the truth value of at least certain empirical statements (those that refer to the external reality) can be fixed definitely, whether or not someone believes otherwise. But since there is no method with which we can determine which statements are eternally true on the grounds that they correspond with objective states of affairs,

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[6] One of the early critics of realism, late Wittgenstein (1968) develops the use theory of language which assimilates truth-value of each statement to its practical applicability. Another influential critic, Michael Dummett (1978, 145-166) starts somewhat more cautiously and argues that there is a certain class of statements that are not conclusively true or false - these are the statements that violate the so-called law of excluded middle or the principle of bivalence; instead, they are inconclusive, that is, there are not enough inductive arguments in their support. Dummett (Ibid., 148-149) has in mind the statements like: "He was brave," provided that he never had a chance to exhibit his bravery. In this and other similar cases (which he calls the statements of the "disputed class"), we can only learn what is true if there is enough evidence available in their support. Thus, initially, on this conception, there is at least one class of statements that can never be explained by the appeal to the mind-independent reality, and the only hope for us lies in verifying their validity with the best available evidence. However, Dummett (1978, 1982) quickly extends this argument across the board, which results in a wholesale rejection of realism that is also found in philosophers such as Hilary Putnam and Robert Brandom. Now, it is argued that not only inconclusive statements can only be verified by evidence, but in principle, the validity of any statement depends on our ability to justify them either practically or theoretically.

[7] Habermas's argument, here, is reminiscent of Quine's famous problem of the inscrutability of reference. As Quine (2013, 46-66) demonstrates, it is not possible to determine the exact meanings of the words solely on the ground of the sameness of the stimuli. The words can be either singular or general terms; they may denote either the whole or parts of the object and so on.

defining realism in positive terms becomes an impossible task. As Habermas (Ibid.) concludes, summarizing Hilary Putnam's views, one should reject "the model of the world as consisting of objects or facts that exist once and for all independently of our conceptualizations and that impose themselves on our minds so unequivocally as to allow for but one way of representing them." The alternative is to declare certain claims about reality as absolutely true – a move that would invite the suspicion of metaphysics.

After rejecting realism, Habermas (2003b, 37) distances himself from anti-realism as well by admitting that his early theory of communicative action presupposed an epistemic theory of truth that conflated rational warrantability with the objective truth. He finds the latter view to be deeply problematic (Ibid.). As Habermas notices, an anti-realist conception of truth, including his early theory of communicative action, essentially smuggles realism through the back door in the guise of "objective idealism" (Ibid., 201-202). The idealists, in a nutshell, assume that the outside world is structured on the pattern of the human mind and hence, is potentially accessible in entirety. Habermas, especially, in his criticisms of Brandom and Hegel, argues that endorsing idealism, in its full sense, would spell the end to the *learning processes* since it would not be possible to discover anything new about those disciplines that already claim to have certain, veritable knowledge about the external reality (Ibid., 132-152).[8] This would clash with what we know about physics, for example. Not only is quantum mechanics, a battleground for contending scientific claims but even the interpretation of our direct physical reality has changed dramatically from classical mechanics to the theory of relativity. If we take such "idealism" at face value, this would be tantamount to claiming that no further improvement in our scientific knowledge is possible in the future that can radically change our current perspectives. Even discourse ethics, as envisaged by Habermas, cannot, in all cases, guarantee that the outcome of the pertinent procedures will be right in a universal sense. Thus, we have to either declare that all current knowledge obtained under

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[8] Brandom (2000, 357-362), in his response to Habermas, defends the view that idealism – i.e., the claim that the world is "conceptually structured" – does not necessarily imply that the structural correspondence between the outer and inner worlds brings scientific progress to a halt. Instead, he proposes a further differentiation between what is objectively true and our conceptual apparatus that sometimes does not fit well into the existent reality. There is one problem with this position, though - namely, it is unclear why such differentiation is needed at all if, in principle, the two aspects of reality are reducible to each other. We could overlook the distinction and regard it to be a heuristic tool, but its role in Brandom's approach is too salient to ignore. So, if the two epistemic realms do not exactly correspond with each other, then there are no grounds to unite them on a metaphysical level. This brings us back to the very dualism that Habermas advocates.

ideal epistemic conditions is objective – the move that would jeopardize the critique of realism, or admit that access to truth is not guaranteed once and for all.

So, on the one hand, it seems that the anti-realist notion of truth cannot be plausibly upheld unless we are ready to sacrifice the prospect of the learning processes that drive human progress. On the other hand, the realist understanding of truth faces the problem, plus it cannot escape the profound implications of the linguistic turn. It is not possible to assert something that completely sidesteps our cultural traditions, communicatively derived solutions, and so on.

It is with the aim of avoiding such a deadlock that Habermas (2003b, 17) introduces the dualistic notion of truth, which is meant to cut both ways. He intends to demonstrate that there is no unmediated access to the mind-independent truth – hence, no firsthand and unmediated knowledge of reality; yet, the concept of the mind-independent truth is necessary as a corrective mechanism, even if we are not sure that we have access to it. This is to allow further improvements in our understanding of nature and society. It will make possible the learning processes that take place thanks to the fact that the recalcitrant reality constantly goads us to revise our deeply held scientific or other sorts of beliefs (Habermas 2003b, 32). Such a dualism, according to Habermas (Ibid., 16-17) corresponds with the second-person and third-person perspectives. The linguistic practices can be only disclosed from the perspective of participants of communicative discourses, while the observer perspective "objectifies" the outside world (Ibid.).

Elsewhere, in discussing the neurobiological accounts of the human mind, Habermas (2008, 162-166) tries to demonstrate that second and third-person perspectives cannot be conflated. He argues that one should draw a distinction between scientific explanations of the workings of the human mind, or the evolution of cognitive faculties, on the one hand, and the inescapability of the language games, on the other. The first one is external and describable by scientific methods, while the other is grounded in language games and accessible from the perspective of participants of linguistic communications. Habermas avers that the two are not reducible to each other: neither side is able to capture how the other works fully. If the scientific explanations, especially, neurobiological accounts take precedence over inner, "phenomenological" perspective of participants in language games, then we miss the key role reason plays in determining the course of actions. Even the most sophisticated experiments on the human mind cannot provide a plausible deterministic account of human behavior; what they lack are tools to translate scientific data into

inner justifications or reasons effectively (Ibid.).[9] The inner perspective of the participants, on the other hand, cannot explain how the outside world and especially, the biological processes, intervene in human decision-making. Thus, the gap between the two different notions of truth – the one scientific and "objective" and the other "linguistic" and "internal" – needs to be respected.

In my view, Habermas's initial intuitions in upholding this dualistic conception of truth are persuasive. Truth is neither a scientifically derived "objective" fact nor something that is achieved via the "use of language." To put it in different terms, the universal/objective truth is not something that can be ontically defined, that is, expressed in any determinate form. Instead, as I show later by drawing on Derrida's deconstruction, truth cannot be defined in ontic terms because there is a gap between different ontic domains.

However, Habermas oscillates between the different attempts to bridge the gap between the irreducible ontic domains. Such deviations from the charted course take two forms: first, Habermas makes at times unwarranted concessions either to the anti-realist or the realist side; second, he makes a problematic distinction between truth and rightness, that is, he argues that unlike truth-claims, rightness-claims do not confront the objective reality as a corrective mechanism. Below, I will describe how such contradictions compromise Habermas's whole critique of the realism/anti-realism dichotomy.

1.1.1.1. Reverting back to realism and anti-realism

Habermas at some points makes a sudden roundabout in his critique of realism by arguing that there must be a continuity between the two domains – one internal/subjective and the other external/objective. According to him, the theory of evolution can assure this continuity. He calls such position "weak naturalism" (Habermas 2008, 152-181). Oddly enough, Habermas (2003b, 28) still continues to argue that the two perspectives have to be fused without taking an ontological position on the difference between them. For example, he claims that "weak naturalism neither incorporates nor subordinates the 'internal perspective' of the lifeworld to the 'external perspective' of the objective world. Rather, it keeps these theoretical perspectives separate,

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[9] By invoking this argument, also put forward by John Searle and Wilfrid Sellars, Habermas (2008, 163-164) rejects epiphenomenalism - a belief that mental states are only the secondary byproducts of the real, neurobiological processes.

connecting them at the metatheoretical level by assuming continuity between nature and culture" (Ibid.). However, it is hard to see how one can evade ontological assumptions if we still remain within the paradigm of the theory of evolution and explain the continuity between culture and nature solely in these terms. The theory of evolution, which is tasked with explaining why language games play such an integral part in human nature, is itself rife with ontological assumptions. For example, neither social processes cannot be totally explained by the theory of evolution nor the workings of the human mind. Hence, there is no smooth continuity between nature and culture. It seems that in this case the gap is bridged from the realist side - the defining role that the inner phenomenological perspective plays in human nature is solely explained by the recourse to the evolutionary processes that take place in the external world.[10]

At times, Habermas seeks to bridge the gap from the opposite, anti-realist side. For example, in *Truth and Justification*, he argues that the external world is guaranteed by the linguistic practice itself. According to this approach, the mutual presupposition of the shared world is a *sine qua non* for a successful linguistic communication (Habermas 2003b, 16, 27-33, 61, 71-78, 118); if there are no shared presuppositions upon which the linguistic practice is founded in the course of jointly determining the truth, then no agreement is possible. Therefore, Habermas concludes that we cannot fix the meanings of the words without some sort of intersubjective linguistic communication, viz. without taking a participant perspective. However, it is unclear how such attempts fit with the critique of anti-realism developed by Habermas. Full access to the objective world cannot be secured via intersubjective communication, as this will foreclose the possibility of the learning processes. The gap between justification/rational warrantability and mind-independent truth needs to be severed on an ontological level, as Habermas himself acknowledges.

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[10] In earlier accounts, for example in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Habermas (1992, 119) alludes to a "relationship of mutual dependence" between normative theory and empirical science. He argues that "not only does moral philosophy depend on indirect confirmation from a developmental psychology of moral consciousness; the latter in turn is built on philosophical assumptions." Such a continuity between "facts" and "norms" may work relatively smoothly when it comes to the interrelationship between psychology and normative theory, but it quickly turns problematic in other cases where natural sciences are at issue. For example, it is hard to see how the theory of evolution or cognitive science can seamlessly overlap with the normative theory. Neither social sciences nor the linguistic practice can be totally explained with the natural sciences. There is a qualitative difference between the two.

1.1.1.2. A problematic separation between the truth-claims and rightness-claims

One more controversy that vitiates Habermas's defense of epistemic dualism is related to the separation of rightness *and* truth claims. In his earlier work, Habermas argued that the distinction arises due to the fact that rightness claims, unlike truth claims, are constructed through the "continual reestablishment of legitimately ordered interpersonal relationships" (Habermas 1992, 61). Later, he realizes that this might pose a threat to the learning processes that occur in human societies. To tackle this problem, he argues that the relation to the objective world that transcends rational justifiability be replaced by the "regulative ideal of the mutual inclusion of the other" (2003b, 248). The argument is that in the realm of morality, the corrective mechanism - similar to the objective, mind-independent reality for truth-claims - can be located in the inexhaustible possibilities of inclusion. In other words, it could always be claimed that not all arguments are considered at all times.

However, it is not clear why the separation between rightness- claims and tuth-claims has such a crucial ontological significance at all if in both cases there are very similar corrective mechanisms at play, and anti-realist conception of truth in both instances needs to be nonetheless replaced with epistemic dualism. As Piet Strydom (2018, 14) observes, "transcendence is a matter of an idealizing thrust beyond, and such idealization is implicated not only in the orientation underpinning a truth claim but likewise in that of a rightness claim." In other words, the distinction between a rightness claim and a truth claim becomes blurred once one assumes that in both cases the learning processes are guaranteed by ever-exhaustive possibilities of truth - i.e., the inclusion of ever newer facts, or moral perspectives.

Because of such ambiguities surrounding the Habermasian communicative theory of action, some critics are not entirely convinced that Habermas fully cast off the metaphysical garb. For example, Lasse Thomassen (2008), in his thorough reading of Habermas's discourse theory, correctly notices that Habermas's theory has a pretension to be a post-metaphysical philosophy; however, Thomassen (Ibid., 129-132) still believes that Habermas should not accord special status to the attempts of "reconstructing" universal/mind-independent truth, even if the realization of the ideal

is forever postponed in the future.[11] Similarly, Camil Ungureanu (2008, 300) contends that "even if Habermas refuses to rely on a moral or formal anthropological foundation, his conception remains tributary to foundationalism in that he 'idealizes' the *Grund* and projects it into the future." Habermas is urged to completely renounce the ambition to express the mind-independent, universal truth as a realizable ideal.[12]

Notwithstanding these objections, as I have shown above, Habermas's certain attempts to reject both anti-realism and realism in favor of epistemic dualism are too conspicuous to ignore. At points, he makes all the efforts to locate truth in the gap that exists between the internal world of participants and the external mind-independent reality. But despite these well-meaning efforts, he does not elaborate much on the nature of this gap and oscillates between conflicting interpretations.

1.1.2. The quasi-transcendental presuppositions of the "use of reason"

The second major question that Habermas asks in relation to truth is related to its epistemological source. His answer to this question is relatively straightforward: his conception should be held on a quasi-transcendental level (Habermas 2003b, 99). There are two basic arguments that Habermas advances to support his approach.

First, Habermas levels the charge of performative contradiction against what he perceives as relativistic approaches. For him, one cannot but occupy a particular performative stance, even if it implies a criticism of the traditional notions of truth and reason. For example, Habermas (1987a, 185) claims that "totalizing self-critique of reason gets caught in a performative contradiction since subject-centered reason can be convicted of being authoritarian in nature only by having recourse

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[11] White and Farr criticize Thomassen on this point and complain that agonistic charge against Habermas, according to which his theory annuls the possibility of conflict, "has become an unquestioned generalization in contemporary social and political theory" (White and Farr 2012, 33). Instead, they argue that Habermas discourse theory of law and democracy is as much based on consensus as on the possibility of no-saying/conflict (Ibid., 36-50). Thomassen (2013, 486-487), on his part, stood the ground and in his reply to White and Farr, maintained that what separates him from Habermas is the difference between Derridean "to-come" and allegedly Habermasian "not yet." As I argue in this chapter, the ambiguities of the original Habermasian position support both readings to a certain extent.

[12] For the calls to further detranscendentalize the Habermasian project see McCarthy (1991), Mouffe (2000), Cooke (2003, 2016), Ingram (2010, 95-115). In this chapter, I attempt to go in the opposite direction.

to its own tools." Later Habermas specifies that renouncing the quasi-transcendental implications of one's own approach is tantamount to rejecting the fact that one is occupying a performative stance (Habermas 2017, 183). This is because an author of a philosophical approach is necessarily engaged in a communicative practice, where he cannot but make certain universalistic assumptions (Ibid., 18). In other words, since every theoretical endeavor necessarily manifests itself on an ontic plane by being expressed in a communicative practice by a particular person, avoiding quasi-transcendentalism seems to be impossible. According to Habermas (2003b, 7), for this reason, the speakers in linguistic communication necessarily resort to some pragmatic idealizations.

To be sure, even such pragmatic idealizations are fallible, instead of being situated beyond space and time (Habermas 2003b, 7). For this reason, I refer to them as "quasi-transcendental." Already in his early works, Habermas made it clear that putting forward a general theory of meaning and action does not carry the transcendental implication characteristic of the Kantian philosophical system. Such a theory does not rely on the assumption that its basic tenets describing the conditions of experience are derived without recourse to a determinate reality as it is experienced by human actors. Instead, one is forced to admit that "a priori experience that is relativized in this sense is valid only for specific, anthropologically deep-seated, behavior systems" (Habermas 1998a, 42-43). In other words, these quasi-transcendental presuppositions are built in the use of language, but they cannot impose their rules on nature. Habermas (2003b, 99) contends, that "a 'transcendental projection' in the weak sense depends on nature 'meeting us halfway.'" As long as such conditions of experience are not located in the realm beyond space and time, "it cannot be ruled out that they are based on an anthropocentrically contingent and perspectivally curtailed view of the world" (Ibid., 9).[13]

Based on the foregoing, I argue that even if we reject Habermas's occasional endorsements of realism or anti-realism, the quasi-transcendental implications of the whole approach are hard to repel. One cannot but occupy a particular performative position when engaged in a philosophical discourse. Instead, we need to find such a metaphysical conception that can be extended universally without generating the same kind of problems as realism and anti-realism do. This does not, of course, mean that we should expect from all sorts of societies and individuals to share the same worldview. There is no transcendental requirement to do so. Quasi-transcendentalism is

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[13] Habermas (2003b, 7) calls this position a "pragmatic epistemological realism."

inherent to the act of entering the discourse and occupying a particular position, even if it entails the rejection of the traditional notions of truth and reason.

So, if Habermas's occasional endorsements of realism or anti-realism are unjustified, this does not automatically mean that from an epistemological point of view, we should forfeit the search for more universally applied metaphysical conceptions. For example, Habermas's dualistic conception of truth could be such a position, if it distances itself from the realist or anti-realist influences. Below, I argue that it is in Derrida's deconstruction where we find a full-fledged version of the type of the dualistic conception of truth that Habermas describes. The latter is a suitable candidate for a quasi-transcendental conception that can be more universally applied.

1.2. Unraveling truth in Derrida's deconstruction

Derrida, much like Habermas, develops a philosophical project that defies the dichotomy of realism vs. anti-realism. Deconstruction has been often construed as a type of anti-realist philosophy that located truth solely in linguistic practice. The detractors of deconstruction often argue that the Derridean brand of anti-realism leads to a refutation of the objective truth (see Rorty 1995a, 174-175). In contrast, some commentators – most prominently, Christopher Norris, advance a relatively marginal view that Derrida, in fact, is a realist philosopher. Repudiating both of these interpretations, I argue that on a metaphysical level, deconstruction puts forwards a notion of truth that rejects both realism and anti-realism without completely disengaging from them. On this view, context-transcendence, rather than being ontically defined, arrives as a singular event out of a particular context and may radically unsettle all the previous certainties. I argue that such a paradoxical relationship between a context-transcending singular event and a determinate context constitutes a quasi-transcendental condition of human experience. This, in turn, has profound implications for defining truth in determinate terms.

1.2.1. Rejecting the realism/anti-realism dichotomy from the Derridean standpoint

In order to grasp how we can avoid the twin pitfalls of realism and anti-realism from the Derridean perspective, we need to look at Derrida's exploration of the way how context-transcendence comes into being. For Derrida, a true transcendence is a singular event that originated from the aporetic impossibility of defining truth in ontic terms, rather than being located in some scientific (i.e., the Habermasian claim of the continuity between nature and culture), or mystical domain.

We may talk about transcendence at least in three senses. First, transcendence can be derived from the fact that every particular context necessarily retains the vestiges of the previous context in order to be understood. Simply put, in order to grasp something, we need to refer it back to what has been already comprehended. This is a "linguistic," anti-realist sense of transcendence. We may call it the "transcendence of the same."[14] As we have seen, Habermas (2003b, 16, 27-33) refers to a similar mechanism when he talks about the mutual presupposition of the objective worlds achieved via linguistic practice. However, such "transcendence" is internal to the linguistic practice, rather than being an external force intruding from the outside and disrupting the already well-established beliefs.[15] In other words, it is within the epistemic constraints imposed by linguistic communication.

Second, transcendence can be interpreted as referring to the mind-independent reality completely detached from linguistic practice. This is a realist sense of transcendence. As it was already shown

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[14] Searle (1977, 199) in his famous reply to Derrida's essay on Austin alludes to this concept of transcendence and underscores its triviality.

[15] It is worth noting that Derrida already tackled this type of transcendence in his early criticism of Husserl's theory of meaning. As both Husserl and Searle are mainly concerned with intentionality as a vehicle for transcendence, these two discussions show a striking resemblance to each other. Husserl in *Logical Investigations* distinguishes between indication and expression. The former has no meaning (*Bedeutung*) and only indicates objects, while the latter expresses meaningful intentions. In order to justify his claim, Husserl invokes the image of an inner monologue in which words are not purportedly used to indicate anything, but rather the meaning is entirely self-transparent (Husserl 1970, 183-194). The role of the meaning in this theory is that of an anchor without which it cannot operate on a context-transcendent level. The existence of the meaning guarantees that the expression goes beyond its temporary embodiment, namely, a sign and becomes an ideal. This is precisely the model that Derrida overturns in *Voice and Phenomena*. Derrida shows that indication is a very inner condition of expression (and vice versa), and it is not possible to separate one from the other. Even our inner monologue has something unexpected to offer us, which means that it is not wholly self-transparent. According to Derrida, the upshot of this argument is that it is not the meaning-intention that guarantees transcendence over a particular context, but rather ideality is contingent upon the possibility of a gap between indication and expression, hence, on *différance* (Derrida 1973, 27-52).

above, it leads to the problematic claim that some statements are objectively true as they refer to the objective reality. Scientific progress, on the other hand, is based on the change of paradigms that calls into question the notion that we have veritable access to such a reality. Well-established scientific facts may be overturned at any moment, especially, in the face of the potential advances in quantum physics.

And finally, there is much more radical force of transcendence which makes possible the multiplicity of particular contexts to subsist in time, and it is located in the nonlinguistic, non-conceptual domain. According to Derrida (1982, 11), such transcendence is non-linguistic and non-conceptual in nature because it is an epistemic gap, rather than being an outside force, promising access to the alternative, mind-independent reality. As it is not grounded in any sort of ontic reality, it announces itself as an arrival of a singular event. Such an event is characterized by Derrida as the arrival of the *other* (Derrida 1993, 17-22; 1994, 32-33).

Despite the fact that Derrida (2002, 55) describes this singularity as an absolutely heterogeneous force that cannot be preliminarily described, the heterogeneity in question is not interpreted as something that severs all links with a determinate reality. Instead, it emerges out of the aporetic/paradoxic nature of such a reality. In fact, Derrida (1988, 115-117) claims that without a necessary grounding in a particular reality, such a singular force cannot come to pass. As we shall see below, the argument is that if heterogeneity is fully transcendent, then it should not be expressible in any type of ontic form. As everything is inscribed in particular contexts, or expressed in determinate terms, one cannot avoid a necessary grounding in ontic reality.

Among many terms Derrida uses throughout his career – *différance* stands out as the most popular characterization of deconstruction. It simultaneously describes the processes of differentiating and deferring that are crucial for maintaining the gap in experience. Derrida offers the following explication of the term: "If *différance* ~~is~~ (and I also cross out the "~~is~~") what makes possible the presentation of the being-present, it is never presented as such. It is never offered to the present. Or to anyone. Reserving itself, not exposing itself, in regular fashion, it exceeds the order of truth at a certain precise point, but without dissimulating itself as something, as a mysterious being, in the occult of a nonknowledge…" (ibid., 6). In other words, we cannot express truth in any form – i.e., locate it in some ontic domain or in some mystical place, but instead, we need to maintain a gap between a complete determinateness and a complete transcendence. For this reason, Derrida

coins this new term *différance* to describe the lacuna in an experience that aspires to something neither mind-independent nor determinate/linguistically accessible. The latter two are rejected for the reason that they are grounded in "present," that is, they are ontically expressible. Derrida (ibid., 13) describes such a lacuna in experience in the following terms: "An interval must separate the present from what it is not in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of itself." So, this lacuna in experience is not an entity that is present in the physical or metaphysical world. It defies the whole distinction between the present and non-present. For a reason I will further explicate below, no self-enclosed, independent entity can exist without being internally divided. Apart from *différance*, other terms that Derrida (1997b, 56, 144, 167; 1982, 315; 2005c, 1) uses to characterize the paradoxical structural of experience are the following: *arche-writing, supplement, trace, iterability, democracy-to-come*, and so on.

We may illustrate Derrida's point by calling attention to the fact that the differences between particular contexts are not frozen definitely, but they are amenable to change in time. In other words, we cannot argue definitely that context *a* differs from context *b* in some aspect *c*. As time passes, there emerge other differences such as *d*, *e*, *f,* and so on. Otherwise, it is not clear how change occurs at all. For this reason, no matter how conclusive is our description of the differences, something new always emerges that unsettles the already established beliefs and renders the conceptual determination of *différance* – i.e., the epistemic gap between the particular contexts – impossible. We have already seen that Habermas's dualistic conception of truth also denotes a gap that cannot be expressed in realist or anti-realist terms.

Derrida (1992a, 22-27) contends that the result of this failure to capture the definite differences between particular contexts is an aporetic nature of experience. Aporias or paradoxes arise because the central feature of being – *différance*, cannot be fixated definitely. There is always a gap that bars us from the comprehension of the mind-independent reality. For this reason, every attempt to define a reality necessarily destabilizes itself.[16] For example, Derrida (1993, 21-32) speaks about the "impossibility" of death, and particularly the absurdity of the expression "my death." The same logic applies to such concepts as justice, forgiveness, hospitality, and so on. In each case, we are

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[16] The reason for this is that the truth, as I argue in this chapter, cannot be located in any determinate ontic domains, but rather constitutes a gap within such contexts.

required to imagine something that at the same time, affirms and annuls itself. [17] On this interpretation, aporias mainly concern fundamental ontological, ethical, political, and so on questions, rather than ordinary empirical objects. Particular truths of empirical sciences are not usually called into question but rather the underlying logic behind the whole operation of being is subjected to the relentless drive of deconstruction.

Thus, contrary to anti-realist conception, Derrida argues that every context-bound truth is necessarily punctured by the possibility of context-transcendence. However, the latter is not entirely captured by a linguistic practice which would provide human actors with the shared objective framework for reaching a mutual understanding. As we have seen, in this case, there will be no room left for the corrective mechanism – the mind-independent realm that does not draw on any type of human practice, including linguistic communication. In contrast to this alternative, Derrida (1982, 175-207) forcefully demarcates the analysis of language from the philosophy of being, much in a similar way as many classical philosophers spanning from Plato and Aristotle to Kant and Hegel, and beyond. He argues that the central force behind deconstruction – *différance* is a "nonconcept in that it cannot be defined in terms of oppositional predicates; it is neither this nor that, but rather this and that (for example, the act of differing and of deferring), without being reducible to a dialectical logic either" (Derrida 2004, 142). Hence, it is impossible to bridge the gap of epistemic dualism by appealing to the context-transcending or integrative function of any human practice, including linguistic communication. The internal perspective of human actors simply does not provide grounds for gaining access to transcendence. As Derrida (1994, 81; 1997a, 13) underscores on numerous occasion, the latter arrives as the *other*, disrupting all rational or other sorts of expectations that humans may have regarding it.

On the other hand, anti-realism with its linguistically bound thrust is inverted in Derrida's deconstruction in such a way that it does not turn into realism. Derrida does not simply argue that the mind-independent reality can be accessed outside of a particular context or a linguistic practice, either in scientific terms (as claimed by Habermas's weak naturalism) or in some mystical ways[18].

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[17] For a recent overview of Derrida's deconstructive approach to various topics see Direk and Lawlor, eds. (2014).

[18] Interestingly enough, one of the early criticisms of Derrida by Habermas (1987a, 183-184) is that Derrida cannot find his way out of the deconstruction of the Enlightenment without succumbing to mysticism. In the same breath, Habermas accuses Derrida, Heidegger, and Benjamin of taking shelter in mystical thought as an alternative to the Enlightenment reason. Even though Derrida's deconstruction is regarded as a "purifier" of mysticism, Habermas still

For example, in his first critical essay on Levinas, Derrida (1978, 143) writes that "the *other* cannot be what it is, infinitely *other*, except in finitude and mortality." As we already mentioned, the "other" is a figure of the absolute transcendence that unpredictably imposes itself upon any particular context. Derrida's argument is that a certain determinateness – a rootedness in a particular context, is always guaranteed by the linguistic practice that necessarily requires that everything has a particular, context-bound character. For example, the term "autre"/"other" itself which is supposed to denote something that cannot be captured in conceptual terms is always expressed in a particular language – in this case, in French and English. "If one thinks, as Levinas does, that positive *Infinity* tolerates or even requires, infinite alterity, then one must renounce all language, and first of all the words *infinite* and *other*," remarks Derrida (Ibid., 142). Similarly, already in his magnum opus *Of Grammatology*, Derrida (1997b, 71) draws attention to the fact that the movement to reduce differences to the transcendent infinity "begins its era in the form of Platonism… ends in infinitist metaphysics." He adds that "only infinite being can reduce the difference in presence." Martin Hägglund (2004) aptly captures this criticism of the absolute transcendence by emphasizing the "discriminating" nature of deconstruction and setting it apart from the Levinasian absolutely unconditional transcendence. He rightly notices that in fact, any type of transcendence requires a certain prior circumcision by a particular context (Ibid.). Such a gesture amounts to discrimination in as much as an act is fitted in a particular, determinate mold, differentiating it from other particular realities. Derrida (1992a, 24-25) himself speaks about the interplay between justice as a transcendent force and any type of rules, laws, or political programs (or even political philosophies) that necessarily constrain it.

In view of the foregoing, I argue that Christopher Norris (2014, 34) misses the point when he contends that "Derrida must be counted a realist as defined by this currently prevailing idea of what constitutes the main point at issue." Norris describes realism as a belief according to which, "we are perfectly justified in claiming to know that the best state of knowledge at any given time (including the present) will fall short of truth in certain unknown or yet-to-be-discovered respects" (Ibid., 32). Given this definition, it is surprising that he later characterizes realism as a doctrine that places trust in scientific methods, rather than language-based practices. (Ibid.) In reality, anti-realists are not hostile to science – the epistemic theory of truth is perfectly compatible with

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believes that this purification is needed to bring back the monotheistic tradition (which Heidegger sought to banish from his thought).

scientific methods (neither early Habermas nor neo-pragmatists such as Brandom or Putnam doubt the epistemic importance of scientific methods). The point of contention is rather the nature of truth, and in this respect, the Derridean deconstruction does not simply overrule anti-realism. Like Habermas, Derrida is also well-aware that the implications of the linguistic turn are too profound to be discarded in one blow. As it is shown above, deconstruction affirms the determinateness of a context as a necessary element in the play of *différance.* It also does not have the ambition to go beyond the linguistic, conceptual or even "sensual" schemata of reality.

Derrida often underscores that what deconstruction entails is not a regulative idea of any sort but rather a set of structural impossibilities/possibilities. His use of the Kantian term regulative idea is not entirely unproblematic and is based on a particular reading of this concept.[19] However, setting aside this possible ambiguity, we can safely assume that when Derrida talks about the regulative idea, he has in mind such ideals that can be in principle realizable in the future. For Derrida (2005c, 84-87), the regulative idea means something that is ultimately possible, yet deferred, while deconstruction encompasses impossibility that is possible, or in other words, an impossibility as a negative precondition of everything possible.

To summarize, Derrida and Habermas share similar intentions at least in their espousal of rejection of both realism/anti-realism. Both of them are at pains to demonstrate that neither of the two alternatives - the uncritical belief in the mind-independent world and the complete renouncement of such a reality, is without its faults. However, as we have seen, while Habermas merely conjures up certain possibilities and draws the limits of both realism and anti-realism, he at times remains still trapped within the confines of the old dichotomies. By defining truth in ontic terms, he sometimes risks jeopardizing his whole project. Derrida, on the other hand, is much more consistent in demonstrating that the gap should be maintained between the ontic realities.

Now the question is if Derrida's deconstruction can avoid defining the conditions of the emergence of a singular truth in ontic terms on an epistemological level. As I have shown, Habermas has strong reasons to embrace the necessarily quasi-transcendental implication of his theoretical

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[19] In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant (1998, 590-591) describes the "Regulative Idea" as something that is merely presupposed rather than actually realizable. He calls such operation an "illusion" (Ibid.). This runs counter to Derrida's use of the term as denoting an actually realizable ideal. Kant contrasts the regulative use of reason with the constitutive one. The latter is principally unattainable as we do not have any means to approach the universal (Ibid., 592-593).

approach. Below, I argue that based on deconstructions own logic, we can also steer clear of a performative contradiction and provide some minimal requirements to define the conditions of truth.

1.2.2. The quasi-transcendental nature of deconstruction

As it was already argued, even if we reject the realist and anti-realist conceptions of truth, it is hard to deny that, on an epistemological level, this rejection itself has a quasi-transcendental character. As Oliver Marchart (2007, 18) puts it, there are two alternatives: Either we give up on the premise that there is no ultimate "ground" or we concede that every contingent situation is characterized with such "groundlessness." The latter scenario has a transcendental bent as it is now held that the impossibility of "ground" is a necessary impossibility (Ibid.). Moreover, according to Marchart (ibid., 25) such a position is quasi-transcendental inasmuch as all transcendental conditions of experience "emerge out of particular *empirico-historical* conjunctures."

If we follow this logic to its logical conclusion, Habermas's main suspicion about deconstruction can be dissipated. Habermas (Thomassen 2006, 127) asks the following question: "Can Derrida leave the normative connotations of the uncertain 'arrival' of an indefinite 'event' as vague and indeterminate as Heidegger does? And moreover, what burden of justifications would follow from our accepting the demand to make those normative connotations more explicit, whatever they happen to be?". In other words, Habermas is interested if the conditions of emergence of an unexpected context-transcending singular event can be fixed without adopting the quasi-transcendental performative stance.

I argue that not only from the Habermasian but also from the Derridean perspective, the quasi-transcendental conditions of the emergence of truth cannot be ignored.[20] For example, if we accept the claim that a singular context-transcending event emerges out of an aporetic structure of experience, we already make a statement that is expressed in a particular form. Such a statement

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[20] Gulshan Khan (2018) correctly points out that the Derridean paradoxes are not inherently solvable, in contrast to the Habermasian contradictions. Khan notices that the "elusive object of philosophical grounding have an essentially aporetic structure, that is, they point to the non-passage or the uncrossable path" (Ibid.,6). However, as I argue in this chapter, the dualistic notion of truth that Habermas initially propounds also leaves the gap open between within the ontic realities.

manifests itself ontically, despite the fact that it seeks to "uncover" the aporetic "domain" of *différance*.[21] From the deconstructive perspective, a necessary grounding in a particular language, or sets of norms is unavoidable.

While it is true that Derrida at points gives an impression that deconstruction is a relativistic approach[22], overall, his philosophy can be interpreted in such a quasi-transcendental light. Often, what concerns Derrida is to maintain the deconstructive critique of transcendental arguments, but this does not necessarily mean that he falls back on relativism. For example, in addressing the charge of a performative contradiction, Derrida is keen on maintaining a certain "performative powerlessness" – an acceptance of a performative contradiction to some extent. This is done to guarantee an "ethical overload" of transcendence and make sure that the play of differences is given a free hand (Derrida 2000b, 467).

However, as Maxime Doyon (2014) shows, this does not warrant a denial of the quasi-transcendental implications of Derrida's philosophy. Doyon (Ibid., 135) directs our attention to the fact that in *Paper Machine*, Derrida admits that the "quasi-transcendental" plays some important role in many of his essays. Derrida (2005b, 91) acknowledges that he often invokes certain quasi-transcendental conditions of experience, but for him, such conditions are that of impossibility, rather than possibility.[23] So, despite the fact that universality of norms or truth is necessarily tainted by a particular context or particular interests, this should not prompt us to give up on it. Instead, Derrida argues that "it is the faith in the possibility of this impossible and, in truth, undecidable thing from the point of view knowledge, science, and conscience that must govern all our decisions" (Borradori 2003., 115). Such a faith in the "possibility of the impossible" alludes

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[21] Recall that Derrida (1978, 143) uses a similar argument against Levinas in arguing that the infinitely other cannot be infinitely other.

[22] In his early works, Simon Critchley sees a certain relativistic bent in Derrida's approach and argues that this poses a problem for developing a proper political theory. According to him, the reason for this lies in the fact that Derrida never specifies what type of singular truth may emerge as a result of the deconstruction, and for this reason, on a political plane, deconstruction is equally fitting for justifying regimes as diverse as National Socialism and liberal democracy (Critchley 1999, 40-42, 199-200; 220-221).

23. Frisch (2011, 454) notices that transcendentalism or a certain a-historicism cannot be avoided in the Derridean deconstruction, but it must "be enabled by logically prior differentiation processes that act, as it were, as the transcendental of the transcendental/empirical divide, hence as what one might call the 'ultra-transcendental'" (Ibid.). For this reason, the Derridean conception is not fully transcendental, in the sense of being located completely beyond time and space, but it acknowledges the radical source of "ultra-transcendalism" that may annul it one day. Recall that Habermas (2003b, 99) also rejects the full transcendentalism as contradicting the lessons learned from the linguistic turn.

to the quasi-transcendental conditions of experience. Elsewhere, in respect to *democracy-to-come* – a cognate of *différance*, Derrida (2005c, 86) argues that "it will *always* remain aporetic in its structure." [italics added] This "always" clearly indicates a certain quasi-transcendental injunction that is applicable across different contexts.

Apart from Doyon (2014), such an interpretation of deconstruction as a quasi-transcendental endeavor has been propounded by various authors in the past (see Gasché 1986, Rorty 1995b, Bennington 2000, Fritsch 2011). Rodolphe Gasché (1986, 146) describes the "structurality of structure" that is at the heart of the Derridean deconstruction. This is a "transcendental of sorts that allows the minor structures to come to the fore" (Ibid.). According to Gasché (Ibid., 156-161) "infrastructures" – i.e. the conditions of possibility and impossibility, are not concept that can be grasped ontically. For these reasons, transcendentality here requires the prefix "quasi" in order to distance itself from the traditional Kantian architectonics of reason. But, even after acknowledging that the conditions of experience are permanent, it is still unclear what role they play on an ontic level, apart from describing the conditions of the emergence of (im)possibility. Habemas's charge of a performative contradiction requires not only that we describe quasi-transcendental conditions of experience, but we also take a performative stance.

For this reason, my contention is not simply that Derrida's deconstruction contains normative implications. For example, Thomassen (2017, 12-44) in his recent book acknowledges that post-structuralism, including Derrida's deconstruction, contains normative implications and is not simply a descriptive program. I go beyond this view and argue that the whole approach itself, with its emphasis on radical contingency and aporias, should be held as theoretically justified on an ontic level as well. The point is that it is unavoidable to occupy a particular performative position in the process of going against a particular philosophical view, even if one is critiquing the metaphysical outlooks. For this reason, deconstruction has strong theoretical implications, especially, when it describes the aporetic conditions of experience.

Acknowledging the quasi-transcendental performative stance neutralizes the charge of performative contradiction as it is now argued that deconstruction articulates a particular worldview – namely, it argues that a gap within the ontic reality is and must remain open in every particular context. As Habermas (1987a, 185) notices, it is not possible to merely describe (or stay on the level of the "constantive"), without taking a particular normative or theoretical position.

Based on this, one can aver that something is closer to the truth if it is respectful of the aporetic structure of experience. For example, any type of fundamentalism precludes the emergence of truth as it obliterates the conditions of its emergence. A doctrine that acknowledges the aporetic structure of being, on the other hand, cultivates the necessary conditions for the emergence of truth as a singular event. The Derridean quasi-transcendelism interpreted in this light is no longer a mere description of the way how truth is generated; instead, it becomes a particular philosophical program.

Conclusion

Shedding more light on Derrida-Habermas debate and its relation to the question of truth helps us to orient ourselves in the age of post-truth. While it is true that fake news and alternative "sciences" pose a substantial threat to the health of our democracies, the solution does not lie in the resuscitation of the traditional realism. In this chapter, I showed that such a move is not justified. On a metaphysical level, we shouldn't express truth in ontic terms, unless we are ready to sacrifice the prospect of paradigm-changing discoveries. As Habermas convincingly argues, it is not possible to go beyond the linguistic matrix and get to the core of "naked reality."

However, this should not prompt to espouse full anti-realism on a metaphysical level. As both Habermas and Derrida show, a certain "non-concept" – a gap in the linguistic practice constitutes a defining condition of experience. For this reason, anti-realist denial of the mind-independent reality does not hold water as well. A singular game-changing, context-transcending event may arrive at any moment, and unsettle the most deeply-held beliefs, derived via the communicative procedures, or ideal epistemic situations.

Does this leave us with absolutely no operative notion of truth? I argue that this need not be necessarily the case. While on a metaphysical level, the truth cannot be expressed in ontic terms, on an epistemological perspective, the whole mechanism that is described on a metaphysical plane cannot be construed without adopting a quasi-transcendental performative stance. So, the rejection of the realist and anti-realist notions of truth is a quasi-transcendental position in itself. This can be utilized as a safeguard against the complete rejection of the prospect of every such truth that is expressed in an ontic form. While it is true that we cannot ascribe a quasi-transcendental status to

scientific theories, or theological doctrines, we may still decide that this act of abstaining itself has a quasi-transcendental character. Based on this, we should profess the image of the public sphere, which promotes the critical re-examination of facts and arguments, and recognizes the aporetic structure of truth. This guarantees a bare minimum of the critical public space for science. Those performative positions - fundamentalisms of all stripes, that obstruct a critical enquiry and the possibility of a radical paradigm-change event should be deemed as hostile to truth and duly rejected. Apart from that, no scientific theory should be regarded as the supreme metaphysical truth, invariant across time and space.

Based on the foregoing, fake news or alternative "sciences" should not be rejected in the name of some supreme truth or scientific doctrine. The rejection of such theories or false facts ought not carry quasi-transcendental implications. The spirit of a never-ending scientific inquiry needs to be maintained to inoculate ourselves against falling back onto metaphysics. As it was argued, this framework of science as an open-ended process will serve as the only quasi-transcendental requirement that should be met in a democratic society.

In the next chapter, I will show that the Derridean deconstruction, in a like manner, can be used to restore the quasi-transcendental presuppositions of liberal norms, in the face of the demise of the Habermasian deontological liberalism. I will argue that the universality of the state secularism is justified, regardless of the fact that it cannot claim to be neutral vis-à-vis particularistic ethical doctrines.

2. CAN SECULARISM BE UNIVERSALISTIC? A DERRIDEAN OUTLOOK

Abstract

In this chapter, I argue that a universalistic thrust of secularism should not be located in a deontological liberal principle of the priority of universal morality over particularistic ethical doctrines as it is advocated by Jürgen Habermas. I show that Habermas cannot plausibly demonstrate that this principle can be invariably applied in different cases. However, the failure of the deontological model should not prompt us to give up on the search for a universalistic drive behind secularism. Concurring with Habermas, I argue that on an epistemological level, one cannot escape from adopting a concrete quasi-transcendental stance. For this reason, we need to look for such accounts of secularism that can be more universally applied and don't deny their own quasi-transcendental implications. I show that the contingency-based alternatives to the deontological conception of secularism cannot meet such requirements. For this reason, I advocate a Derridean critique of religion and secularism as an alternative solution. By deconstructing the Kantian dichotomy of faith vs. knowledge, Jacques Derrida shows that, secularism is, paradoxically, both a concrete socio-political regime and a possibility for a radical change. On an epistemological level, this paradoxical structure of secularism can be read in quasi-transcendental terms. Based on this, I argue that sustaining the aporetic conditions of secularism is the minimal universalistic requirement that is applicable across different contexts.

Keywords: Habermas. Derrida. Secularism. Morality. Faith.

In political philosophy, most often, universalism has been advocated from the perspective of the neo-Kantian deontological liberalism, which offers uniform deontic precepts applicable across different contexts. From the practical point of view, the latter view has two profound shortcoming

when it comes to the question of secularism. First, despite the fact that the stipulation that the state should not give official status to any religious doctrine is considered to be relatively uncontroversial in many liberal democratic countries, until recently it was clearly violated in some mature democracies, like Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, and is still not meticulously followed in England. As a noted sociologist of religion José Casanova (2011, 70-71) observes, even in laicist France, 80 % of the budget of private Catholic schools is allocated from the state funds.

Second, extending uniform secularist principles all across the globe will encounter considerable difficulties, given the variety of political, societal or cultural factors influencing the relationship between the church and the state in different societies. Some commentators argue that there are no universalistic secularist requirements that can be extended to every society (Taylor 2007). Others, such as Parekh (2019, 206), claim that "in order to ensure religious freedom, equality, and social harmony, the state needs to satisfy certain minimum conditions." If such universality cannot be guaranteed, then secularist normative demands cannot be invariably extended to non-hospitable contexts or hitherto unprotected individuals. It will become hard to argue against those arguments that rely on the alleged uniqueness of a particular unsecular culture. For this reason, we are forced to either discard universalist inclinations of secularist principles out of hand (and declare them to be inherently Western) or we should start to advocate for a more flexible secularism. So, if universalism is to be saved, we need to radically rethink it on a theoretical level. Below, I will demonstrate on a theoretic level that another universalistic secularism is possible.

I argue in this chapter that the deontological view of secularism propounded by neo-Kantian liberalism does not live up to its own standards on a theoretical level. In particular, it cannot be plausibly extended invariably across different contexts without compromising its own universalistic thrust. I take Jürgen Habermas's conception of secularism as a paradigmatic example of the deontological approach. Unlike Rawls, Habermas (1998b, 85; 2017, 190-209) does not make critical concessions to *modus vivendi*. [24] Instead, he argues that the Kantian principle of the priority

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[24] Rawls, by departing from the neo-Kantian deontological approach, makes concessions to *modus vivendi*. The latter refers to a peaceful co-existence between the adherents of different comprehensive worldviews, provided that such an arrangement has been achieved for political, or other non-moral reasons. Habermas (1998b, 85), on the other hand, establishes the priority of morality over ethics categorically. Nicholas Wolterstorff (1997) in his debate concerning secularism with Robert Audi, correctly notices that the problem with the Rawlsian argument lies with the fact that it attempts to draw its principles from the cultural repository of a given liberal regime. Rawls (1996, 46) believes that one can locate such principles buried in the political culture of liberal democratic societies, waiting for a political philosopher to "uncover how citizens themselves might, on due reflection, want to conceive of their

of universal morality over particularistic ethical doctrines needs to be maintained as a governing norm of secularism (Habermas 2010, 78-79; 2017, 216).

The priority of universal morality over particularistic ethical doctrines implies neutrality of the state towards various ethical worldviews, including both religious and non-religious systems of belief. Since such a higher-order principle is supposedly devoid of particularistic implications, it can be freely extended to various contexts. Furthermore, since it is not a particularistic ethical doctrine, its imposition on others cannot be viewed as an act of coercion. For coercion implies an act of forcing substantive ethical claims upon others. In contrast, here, it is argued, that what is "imposed" on others is only a principle that professes a neutrality vis-à-vis any types of particularistic ethical worldviews.

Before I show why the principle of the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines as a higher-order form of reasoning is untenable, I break down the claims of the Habermasian secularism into two parts. In the first place, we need to examine the universality of an ethical claim itself. In this case, such a universal principle is the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines. This is a supposedly invariant rule that should be valid in every possible case. In the second place, we need to look at the epistemological nature of a performative claim. Habermas (2002, 107-108) argues that propounding a deontological claim is fraught with quasi-transcendental implications. In contrast to the Kantian transcendentalism, such a view does not locate the conditions of experience beyond space and time, but it still avers that there are certain principles that can be invariably applied across different contexts, even if they are under the constant pressure of revision. I argue that the fact that the concrete ethical principle does not prove itself to be an invariable standard does not invalidate the quasi-transcendentality of a performative stance. For, the rejection of the universality of the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines could itself be a quasi-transcendental act, from an epistemological point of view. Such an act of rejection is expressed on an ontic plane by a particular person. For this reason, we need

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society as a fair system of cooperation over time." Wolterstorff (1997, 97) rightly concludes that the existing liberal democracies, including the United States, do not have a homogenous political culture that would be suitable for deriving unifying principles needed for settling the most serious normative conflicts. Instead, a purely deontological position contends that the neutrality of the state can be propped up by the appeal to the moral principles that are independent of any comprehensive doctrine or cultural practice.

to find a) an ethical conception that better describes the general structure of secularism, and b) does not refrain from occupying a quasi-transcendental performative stance.

The contingency based alternatives to the Habermasian deontological secularism do not meet these requirements. For example, William Connolly's radically pluralist conception of secularism a) disregards the need for grounding secularism in particular norms or political constellations, and b) denies the universalistic, quasi-transcendental assumption of its own approach. Charles Taylor's contextualist account of secularism, on its part, a) cannot explain how change occurs in secularist, or religious worldviews and b) denies its own quasi-transcendental implications. Neither of these approaches can replace the deontological view of secularism.

Derrida's deconstruction of faith and secularism can guide us in charting the third path between deontological liberalism and its contingency-based critiques. Deconstruction does so by a) providing an aporetic conception of ethics that describes the general structure of secularism without offering a uniform, invariant ethical norm applicable to different particular contexts; b) on an epistemological level, it establishes a quasi-transcendental performative stance that helps to extend the aporia behind secularism across different contexts.

a) Derrida (1992a, 23) argues that a context-transcending ethical act is a singular event that cannot be known beforehand. A uniform rule, such as the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines, cannot be universal by definition. Moreover, such a singular universality arises out of a particular context, rather than being completely transcendent. The Derridean faith – *messianicity without messianism* operates at the level of a gap between the universalistic call for the *other* and a particularist grounding in a determinate culture or politics (Ibid., 24-25).

b) Moreover, the Derridean secularism does not circumvent its own quasi-transcendental status. Derrida (2005b, 91) does not refrain from occupying a concrete performative stance. He expresses his preference for Europe as a sociocultural space receptive to the aporias of his deconstructive critique (Borradori 2003, 116-117). So, if the universality of a norm cannot be upheld on an ethical level, due to the fact that such a universal singular force cannot be expressed in ontic terms, the conditions of its emergence can still be advocated from a quasi-transcendental point of view.

In this chapter, I will first show that the Habermasian deontological liberalism cannot provide a plausible universalistic standard that is applicable across different cultural contexts. Second, I will

demonstrate why contingency-based alternatives cannot provide plausible alternatives. And, finally, I will propose the Derridean deconstructive critique of faith as a universalistic solution.

2.1. The two aspects of the Habermasian secularism

While Habermas (2006b, 15) sometimes uses the adjective "post-secular" to describe his brand of secularism, he nonetheless underscores that the priority of morality over ethics is not called into question by any means. The term "post-secularism" reflects the persistent role of religion in public life, rather than a radical critique of deontological liberalism. There are two broad characteristics of the Habermasian deontological model of secularism: first, its insistence on the universality of the principle of the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines, and second, its quasi-transcendentalism, on an epistemological level. In the following, I will discuss both aspects in turn.

2.1.1. The failure of the priority of morality as a universalistic principle

Deontological secularism can be viewed as a convenient framework to address those questions that the state encounters in regulating the lives of people sharing different religious or ethical outlooks. It considers the priority of universal morality over religious or ethical conceptions to be a golden standard that is in principle attainable, even though it is not meticulously observed in many Western countries nowadays. On this view, morality is inherently universal, affecting all possibly contexts invariably, while ethics is particularistic and does not transcend a particular community or an individual. I argue that the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines cannot sustain itself as a universalistic standard. To shed light on this point, I will test the justifiability of this principle as applied to negative and positive freedoms.

2.1.1.1. Universal morality as applied to negative freedoms

The first type of argument against deontological secularism concerns the negative freedoms – freedoms from external constraint, which are supposed to be distributed equally among religious

and non-religious persons. Theoretically, citizens have a right to pursue their versions of the good without interference from the government. However, there are cases where different versions of the good clash in such a way that it becomes impossible for the state to stay neutral. One example, which is also discussed by Habermas, is abortion. In addressing the question of abortion, Habermas starts by arguing that resolving the issue by resorting to a scientific argument about the exact definition of human life is a violation of the principle of the state neutrality. He rightly argues that science, in this case, would act as a metaphysical authority that would determine something far beyond its purview (Habermas 2003a, 31-32). In order to stay faithful to the original ethos of deontological secularism, the state must decide the issue without any recourse to either scientific or non-scientific arguments. The same holds for genetic engineering since what is at stake in both cases is a definition of a human life that cannot be simply left undecided, especially, given the fact that citizens generally hold deeply-held convictions regarding it. In discussing such borderline cases, Habermas (2003a, 40) readily admits that the state neutrality cannot always be strictly enforced, but instead of giving up on the whole principle, he tries to mend it to fit it into his original theoretical mold. Below, I will describe Habermas's solution and argue that it turns deontological secularism on its head, instead of providing a much-needed scaffold to it.

Habermas's strategy for saving the universality of his neo-Kantian conception of morality is to concede just as much ground as he thinks is needed to save his approach. So, what he proposes falls short of a communitarian endorsement of metaphysical, or ethical worldviews; instead, it remains faithful to his universalistic neo-Kantian approach. His ultimate aim is to show that comprehensive doctrines are only significant in the whole philosophical project inasmuch as they provide a much-needed scaffold for deontological secularism to operate.

In developing this watered-down version of deontological secularism, Habermas distinguishes between a "human dignity" and a "dignity of a human life" in the same way as he differentiates between supposedly universal and ethically neutral Kantian morality, on the one hand, and comprehensive doctrines, on the other. The "dignity of a human life," unlike the "human dignity," is an ethical, rather than a moral conception. For example, a fetus, according to Habermas, does not have human dignity, but rather, we may talk about the dignity of a (potentially) human life. To illustrate his point, Habermas recalls the decision by the Parliament of Bremen to regulate the procedures of funerals of stillborn and prematurely born children. He notes that despite the fact

that the Parliament allowed burying fetuses anonymously in collective graves in a cemetery, they still were keen to separate such funeral procedures from traditional ones (Habermas 2003a, 36). In this way, the ethical value of human life was demarcated from the moral value of a human being as an end in itself. Ethical values, according to this well-known classification, can be ranked, that is to say, they are commensurable, while moral norms cannot be measured; they are absolute by nature. The dignity of human life can be juxtaposed against other values - for example, against woman's right to her body, while human dignity cannot be traded in any way.

As a result, the abortion debate cannot be settled from the perspective of human dignity since, according to Habermas, a foetus does not have one, but instead, the state has to resort to taking a stance in ethical disputes. Yet, an ethical conception that the state will adopt must still somehow stay faithful to the priority of morality over ethical doctrines. For this reason, it should be grounded in what Habermas calls an "ethical self-understanding of the species" – i.e., certain essential common traits that humans share across different cultures and societies (Habermas 2003a, 38-41). These basic traits are directly linked to universal morality as long as they imply that human beings perceive themselves as "ethically free" and "morally equal beings guided by norms and reasons" (Ibid., 40-41). The "ethical self-understanding of species" is not a moral norm, but rather its value is derived from a particular comprehensive doctrine. Habermas himself openly admits that this is so (Ibid., 71). While a foetus does not have human dignity, it has a "dignity of a human life," which is a corollary of the former, albeit in ethical, non-moral terms.

The fact that a particularistic ethical doctrine has to save morality, especially in such borderline cases like abortion or genetic engineering, does not prompt Habermas to reconsider his views on the priority of universal morality over particularistic ethical doctrines.

In *Faith and Knowledge* Habermas reiterates his support for the state neutrality towards various comprehensive doctrines and, at the same time, affirms his preference for particularistic ethical doctrines over morality in limited cases, such as genetic engineering, without compromising the whole model of deontological secularism (Habermas 2003a. 105-115).[25] For Habermas (2010,

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[25] In discussing genetic engineering, Habermas starts by drawing a distinction between negative and positive eugenics. Negative eugenics only prevents the occurrence of the diseases and disabilities by not altering the ethical self-understanding of species, while the goal of positive eugenics is to cultivate "desirable" traits that undermine the ethical self-understanding of human beings as free moral persons capable of making autonomous decisions. Habermas claims that on the desirability of negative eugenics future subjects will agree counterfactually, while in the case of positive

82), despite all these inconsistencies plaguing his model of secularism, "a direct link must not be permitted between the universal morality and the respective particular worldviews."

However, I argue that once Habermas admits that an ethical doctrine needs to be introduced into moral theorizing so as to account for the state neutrality, deontological secularism loses its universalistic thrust. Now, it is not clear how the second component of deontological secularism – namely, the state neutrality is supposed to work as a quasi-transcendental principle since it cannot sustain itself without the help of a particularist doctrine. The argument becomes self-contradictory: the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines is based on the features of the common linguistic practice that is shared by the whole humanity and is not derived from particularistic worldviews; however, it cannot sustain itself without making recourse to the ethical self-understanding of species that is also based on the very idea of freedom and morality, but this time derived from the particularistic point of view (see Habermas 2003a, 38-39). So, if the ethical self-understanding of species is a particularistic ethical view, then the whole principle of the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines must also belong to the same category. These seemingly cosmetic changes that Habermas makes, in this way, jeopardize the ontological status of his whole project, by calling into question the universality of the neo-Kantian morality.

2.1.1.2. Universal morality and positive freedoms

The same conclusion can be reached when analyzing Habermas's take on positive freedoms. Habermas (2006b, 10-11; 2008 130) famously argues that religious citizens are not supposed to employ religious arguments in the formal political public sphere without taking necessary steps to translate those arguments into a secular language. This is known as an institutional translation proviso, and it occupies a prominent role in Habermas's discussions on secularism. However, unlike Rawls, Habermas seeks to ease the burden of translation imposed on religious citizens, recognizing that it puts them on an unequal footing with their secular compatriots. Habermas (Ibid.,

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eugenics, future subjects will be unable to treat themselves as morally autonomous and hence, will be deprived of the capacity to give consent even theoretically (Habermas 2003a, 50-74). As we can see here, Habermas once more links ethics and morality to each other in such a way, that the former provides a scaffold for the latter.

10-11) promptly demands from secular citizens to assist religious citizens in the process of translation and to acknowledge the "possible truth content" buried in religious traditions.

Habermas's introduces the institutional translation proviso in order to maintain a neutral, secular public sphere where religious doctrines and other particularistic ethical worldviews do not trump secular, universal reasons. This is done to prevent any doctrine from imposing their dogmas on unconvinced citizens. Translation undertaken by religious and secular citizens is supposed to soften the original metaphysical or ethical implications of religious arguments. As a result, secular citizens would be able to deliberate in the public sphere without being forced to acquiesce with the religious or other sorts of ethical arguments. Religious citizens, on the other hand, would be able to express their religious attitudes even after the translation has taken place. By casting aside their particularistic view, "different communities can develop a more inclusive perspective by transcending their own universe of discourse" (Habermas and Taylor 2011, 66).

However, such a translation will only work if we accept that it can neutrally convey religious attitudes, or feelings, without assigning entirely different meanings to them. If a translation is not neutral in relation to religious attitudes, this means that it cannot guarantee universal moral legitimacy of secular reasons. As Arfi (2015) aptly points out, this is what happens. He notices that Habermas's is not a translation in a conventional sense; it does not translate words from one language into another, matching their meanings more or less accurately. Rather, this is what, following Derrida, can be called an "anasemic translation" which de-signifies truth contents and re-signifies it later, losing its initial kernel in the course of such a transformation.[26] Religious contributions to the secular public discourse forfeit their unique identity in this process. According to Arfi (Ibid., 498), "should Habermas' anasemic translation of religious discourse succeed, the outcome would be a transmutation of the truth contents of the religious discourse into something else which is alien to religious discourse and meaning." Thus, a secular state that is based on

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[26] Andrea Cassatella (2018) rightly points out that translation, in general, should be viewed as a necessarily political act that entails violence and exclusions initiated by the sovereign forces. This argument suggests that potentially, the critics of the deontological perspective can also be subjected to the same criticism that is applied to the deontological secularism. In particular, one may argue that especially, communitarian critics of liberalism do not adequately consider the political implications of the act of translation, often resulting in an incomplete conceptualization of violence and sovereignty.

deontological principles cannot be considered to be a neutral domain if it forces religious persons to give up on their original beliefs.[27]

Now, as Maeve Cooke (2014) notices, this does not necessarily mean that religiously or culturally imbued practices or statements do not possess a context-transcending power. According to Cooke, we may, for example, experience the religious figures as exemplary, not necessarily out of religious reasons, but for the intrinsic value of their behaviour or rhetoric (Ibid., 11-12). In this sense, Habermas is right in claiming that translation is not impossible. Instead, the trouble begins at the moment when one assumes that translation is "transparent"/neutral, and there is no power play involved in the process – no party exerts an uneven influence on it. As can be seen, in fact, translation is not a neutral effort that can possess universal legitimacy.[28]

To sum up, neither negative freedoms nor positive freedoms can be defined solely in accordance with the principle of the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines. For this reason, the latter principle does not sustain itself as a universalistic standard. However, as I argue below, this should not prompt us to reject a quasi-transcendental performative stance.

2.1.2. From transcendental to quasi-transcendental

Regardless of such painstaking efforts to remove metaphysical implications from his principally universalistic project, Habermas (2003b, 85) still admits that the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines cannot be established in entirely non-transcendental terms. Certainly, his position cannot be labelled "transcendental" in a Kantian fashion. But it is not the case that Habermas completely severs all links with the Kantian tradition. The universal conditions

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[27] This criticism also applies to Cristina Lafont's (2009, 2014) take on the issue of translation. Lafont does not require religious citizens to translate all their religious reasons into a generally accessible secular language, as Habermas does. Instead, she requires them to forward generally accessible reasons against the counter-arguments propounded by others (Lafont 2009, 141-142). Such an ambivalent stance does not settle the difficulties with the issue of translation. It is still problematic how such translations will be exactly correspondent with the religious reasons offered beforehand. In other words, my criticism does not so much concern the problem of assigning equal burdens of translation to religious and non-religious citizens, but the claim that a neutral translation is possible, without a radical transmutation of meaning. If the latter is not possible, then deontological secularism cannot claim to be neutral vis-à-vis comprehensive doctrines.

[28] For the recent discussions on the insufficiency of Habermas's institutional translation proviso, see Sikka (2016), Areshidze (2017), Tyler (2018), Ungureanu and Monti (2018).

of communicative action and the principle of the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines are still applicable across different historical periods and cultural contexts. Even if such universalistic principles, gleaned from the ordinary linguistic practice, do not exist beyond space and time, they still serve as possible conditions of experience.[29] Habermas refers to the "ideal presuppositions" that do not possess absolute validity, in the Kantian fashion (Habermas 1996, 44-46). Precisely, for this reason, I describe such principles "quasi-transcendental," rather than "transcendental[30]

For Habermas, quasi-transcendentalism of his approach is needed to avert the danger of a performative contradiction. For example, he claims that "totalizing self-critique of reason gets caught in a performative contradiction since subject-centered reason can be convicted of being authoritarian in nature only by having recourse to its own tools" (Habermas 1987a, 185). Renouncing the quasi-transcendental implications of one's own approach is tantamount to rejecting the fact that one is occupying a performative stance. In everyday communications, we cannot avoid occupying a performative position, as otherwise, we cannot *experience* the normative obligations (Habermas 2017, 18). In his criticism of young Rawls, Habermas (Ibid.,183) notices that "because the moral law claims categorical validity, the transcendental tension is not *abolished* but is incorporated into practical reason." In other words, we cannot escape from putting forwards some universally inclined propositions as long as we do not cease to engage into communicative discourses. Based on this, even if we reject the deontological principle of the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines, this would not amount to a renunciation of the quasi-

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[29] Some of Habermas's most prominent commentators, urge him to undertake the steps towards a thorough detranscendentalization. For example, Thomas McCarthy (1991, 2013) argues that Habermas's efforts to distance himself from transcendental idealism were not sufficient to meet the criteria of a genuinely post-metaphysical philosophy. Maeve Cooke (2003, 2006, 2013), especially in her recent commentaries, urges Habermas to drop all quasi-transcendental elements that underpinned his theory of communicative action and formal pragmatics. For a recent discussion and critique of Habermas's approach to religion and secularism, see Calhoun et al. (2013), Ungureanu and Monti (2017), Hung (2017), Müller-Doohm (2018).

[30]." Habermas's intention to detranscendentalize Kantian morality is reflected in his attempts to establish a postmetaphysical philosophy. The latter emerged gradually from Habermas's early writings on the communicative theory of rationality that set the stage for the critique of the Western metaphysics. In contrast to instrumental, means-end rationality, communicative rationality is supposed to guarantee that humans are not geared towards one overarching goal. Instead, it opens up the space for occupying yes and no positions on any kind of issues that become a concern for individuals in the course of their ordinary existence in the lifeworld (Habermas 1984, 115). Later, Habermas readily admits that there is still a substantial affinity between his philosophical project and Kant's transcendental idealism; however, he insists that unlike Kant, he does not aim to establish a priori conditions of existence that lie beyond space and time. Instead, his approach embeds knowing subjects "into the socializing context of a lifeworld" (Habermas 2003b, 88-89).

transcendental performative stance. Instead, we need to find other accounts of secularism that better describes its general structure. To better illustrate this point, below, I will show that the contingency-based critiques of deontological secularism do not propose a plausible account of the general structure of secularism, and also cannot escape from their own quasi-transcendental presuppositions.

2.2. Why contingency-based accounts of secularism don't work

In relation to the question of secularism, I divide contingency-based criticisms of the deontological liberalism into two groups. What unites both of them is their insistence on the radically contingent character of secularism. On this view, secularism does not have context-transcending defining characteristic. Instead, it is grounded in the contingent relations constantly amenable to change.

The first type of approach, which I call "contextualist," is mainly advocated by Charles Taylor. It revolves around the idea of contingency, but it does not necessarily result in decentered politics full of a tumultuous pluralism. This is a version of liberalism more attuned to the mainstream tradition that imagines the secular core of the state as a relatively fixed ground but concedes certain pluralism to accommodate fundamental civil and political rights. The second group of critics advocate a complete renouncement of the logic of transcendence; however, they interpret contingency as an enabler of pluralism and decentered politics. A paragon of this movement is William Connolly, drawing from various philosophical traditions, including Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche, and Deleuze. For the lack of space, I cannot go deep into the details of these two similar approaches. My wager is that in reality, such approaches can neither provide the plausible replacement of deontological liberalism on an ethical level, nor they successfully repel the quasi-transcendental nature of their own stance.

The major problem with the first "contextualist" view is that it cannot explain neither how diverse interpretations of the same historical phenomenon occur nor how a change in such interpretations is possible. Ultimately, this leaves the question of a change unexplained. "Contextualists" seek to demonstrate that secularism emerged as a constellation of unique historical forces that cannot be replicated in different contexts. However, this type of explanation cannot be pursued to its fullest as it would imply that there can be only one correct interpretation of history. Charles Taylor (2007),

who attempts to write the history of Western secularism, avoids such a pitfall by outlining different construals of the secular path. Eventually, he argues that the genuine interpretation of Western secularism is an analysis of the "immanent frame" that ultimately keeps the door open for transcendence (Ibid., 550-594). The fact that one has to select one or some historical explanations that become normatively justified indicates that there is never one context that can be read off in a unilinear manner. Ultimately, the question is not only the already prevalent interpretation can change in the future, but how the existing constellation of political, or cultural forces can undergo a change. Or in other words, how it is possible to reinterpret the existing status quo in the name of a better political model? This general question of context-transcendence remains unexplained in this account.

The second type of critique of secularism has an opposite problem: it cannot dispose of particularism. Usually, even such a radically pluralist account as William Connolly's is forced to admit that an entirely decentered secular public space cannot be sustained. Instead, on an ideal plane, there is always a partially solidified center that bars deep pluralism from full realization. For example, Connolly (2005, 43) writes that "it is necessary to set limits, partly because it is impossible to house every possible mode of diversity in the same regime at the same time." In other words, there are always particular worldviews/comprehensive doctrines that are prevalent at any given moment, and not all marginal views can be accommodated equally well by a given *regime*. So, according to Connolly, there has to be a regime - a political center with particular worldviews that can be included in it, but he does not elaborate much on this claim.

It seems that even deep pluralism can be entrenched as a particular hegemony, to use Gramsci's term, privileging only certain sets of beliefs, or modes of living at any given moment in history. How are we select which worldviews need to be included in such "pluralistic" hegemony? Connolly believes that an ethos that drives deep pluralism does not stem from "a few general premises," but it is rather akin to a "political formation" or a "cultural artifact" (Connolly 1999, 156). But in this case, we get back to the previous problem that plagues the "historicist" account of secularism. At any rate, an appeal to a particular culture, or a political regime seems to be unavoidable. Making such a choice – be it a selection of a particular interpretation, or defending the particular regime, necessarily entails exclusion of some other choices. Thus, deep pluralism

unavoidably confronts the problem of grounding itself into a particular worldview or embracing the concrete political and cultural regime.

Sidestepping particular contexts and defining secularism solely in immanentist terms glosses over the fact that such critique cannot go offer an all-inclusive formal framework encompassing every possible worldview. For this reason, a compelling critique of the Habermasian secularism must depart from neither a necessity of context-transcendence nor a sensitivity to particular contexts. Moreover, on an *epistemological* level, neither of the two types of contingency-based critiques can sidestep the quasi-transcendental implications of their own approaches. For example, Charles Taylor's designation of the "immanent frame" as a correct interpretation of the secularist path indicates that, after all, not all interpretations of secularism hold water in an equal measure. This indicates that there are some external criteria, not entirely dictated by the historical condition, that show the correct path. Such criteria are introduced by the writer himself – in this case, by Taylor, rather being dictated by historical contingency he describes. Historical contingency should not permit parsing out divergent explanations in favour of the others unless one is ready to trade contingency for necessity in the Hegelian fashion. The fact that there is some "external" methodology or even values designated by the author as being correct means that after all, some quasi-transcendental elements are still at play in Taylor's account.

Likewise, Connolly (2005, 43) maintains that deep pluralism needs to be defended against "unitarian movements" that continuously pop up to disrupt its pluralizing logic. What is the force that constrains an unlimited pluralism – i.e., "unitarian movements"? Why do such movements originate? Answering these questions requires propounding a particular account of social ontology. In other words, the fact that the "unitarian movements" emerge from time to time and disrupt "normal" pluralistic state of affairs, indicate a specific ontological structure operating universally across different cultural or political contexts. It seems that there are some quasi-transcendental features that operate in every society, regardless of a particular context. This remark is made by Connolly as a side note, but in fact, it betrays a lurking quasi-transcendental nature of his whole critique of secularism.

To summarize, secularism is neither an entirely contingent historical phenomenon that can be read only in a particular way. Nor it is an all-encompassing regime that professes "deep plularism." Neither of these conceptions gives us the accounts of a general structure of secularism. Moreover,

they deny their own quasi-transcendental implications and cannot avoid the charge of a performative contradiction. I argue that we can redress these flaws by examining Jacques Derrida's critique of secularism and religion, which shows us the third way beyond the deontological universalism and the contingency-based accounts of secularism.

2.3. Deconstruction and the universalistic thrust of secularism

Below, I divide the Derridean critique of secularism and religion into two parts. First, I will show how the Habermasian deontological liberal view of secularism can be plausibly replaced with a more accurate description of secularism. Second, I will show that despite the fact that this new model cannot provide us with an invariant principle that can be applicable across various contexts (like that of the priority of universal morality over particularistic ethical doctrines), we can still interpret the aporetic *conditions* of secularism as having some "thin" quasi-transcendental and universalistic feature. I argue that, for this reason, the Derridean deconstructive critique can provide minimal universal requirements for extending secularism to different contexts.

2.3.1. Secularism beyond faith and knowledge

In contrast to the priority of universal morality over ethical doctrines, deconstruction does not offer a universal principle that would be invariably applicable across various contexts. Instead, Derrida (1992a, 24-25) admits that every particular context necessarily "contaminates" universality of any given doctrine. This claim concerns not only the particularistic ethical worldviews that disrupt the universality of deontological precepts, but also, any type of preconceived rules or principle. According to Derrida, ethical particularism already establishes itself at the very moment something is calculated preliminarily as a program. For example, Derrida (Ibid., 22-23) argues that in order to define justice, we need to separate it from a simple rule-following. However, the difficulty is that the latter includes any type of law or a principle that was set before a particular decision took

place. Moreover, it is not only that many acts of justice are necessarily tainted because of their grounding in some preliminary principle or doctrine, but even if someone delivers a "fresh judgement," it immediately ceases to be a just decision. The reason for this is that after it has been delivered, the decision "has again followed a rule or given itself a rule… it is no longer *presently just, fully just.*" (Ibid., 24)

The force of particularism here resides in the fact that any seemingly absolute standard of justice quickly becomes a particular rule. The latter is circumscribed by various factors, be it cultural, social, political, psychological, or some other. Universal morality that is completely detached from the determinate, particular context or is not predicated upon a preceding cause turns out to be an illusory promise.

This same logic applies to the issues of secularism and religion. According to Derrida, here as well, one is partially confined within the dogmatic core of the religious doctrine. This claim is related to what is called "political theology" after Carl Schmitt's treatise, but it also has much broader implications.[31] For Schmitt's thesis mainly concerns the way how secular concepts are modified theological ones, whereas Derrida analyses the institutional and epistemological nature of religious doctrines, in general, and extends the whole argument to include secularist worldviews as well. The Derridean contention is that every sort of religion is premised upon the inescapable dogmatic core that cannot be easily eliminated in the name of a rational, non-particularistic/universalistic faith. Kant's original separation between knowledge – dogmatic and institutional elements of religion –   and a rational faith is inverted in such a way that faith ceases altogether to be an independent source of religion. Instead, it is replaced by a different type of non-Kantian faith – a *messianicity without messianism*, which defies the original Kantian distinction. Below, I will clarify how the original Kantian thesis is deconstructed by Derrida and how it also applies to the Habermasian argument about secularism.

The distinction between the two sources of religion first arises in Kant's famous work *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Kant argues that there is only one true moral religion, and there are many kinds of ecclesiastic faith (Kant 1998, 116). Moral religion is the one that follows Kant's understanding of morality as a product of practical reason which is unconditional and

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[31] See Schmitt (1987).

universal – i.e., without any grounding in the empirical world which can be experienced with our senses. Ecclesiastic faith is, on the other hand, only temporal, so to say, provisional means to advance the actual cause of moral religion. It exists only because human beings have the "natural need" to draw on their sensual experiences. Kant entertains the possibility that this temporary buttress might vanish in the future when the true moral religion reigns over the whole world (Ibid., 118-125). In the meantime, the goal is to guide the followers of various kinds of ecclesiastic faith in the direction of reason and shield them from the influence of those servants of the church who only perform "counterfeit service", that is, only seek the divine in the domain of the particular, rather than universal truth. (Ibid., 162-166).

Habermas's secularism follows Kant in assuming that a universal morality unalloyed by the particular reality has an unconditional nature, while various religious doctrines only exist as non-universalizable, particularistic truths.[32] The two sources of religion outlined by Kant follow this priority of universal morality over particularistic ethical doctrines. What Derrida calls into question is not the idea that religion has two contradictory sources but rather what we mean by "moral religion" and "ecclesiastic faith[33] While Kant and Habermas offer a "formula" to separate universal morality from particularist truths, Derrida is reticent to delineate the two primary categories in such strict terms. Instead, Derrida argues that everything that is taken as universally valid is suffused by a determinate, particular context. The same mechanism is at work in monotheistic religions as well.[34] In other words, pure universality is hard to sustain in autarkic terms.

In *Faith and Knowledge,* which is a reading of Kant's abovementioned treatise on religion, Derrida (2002, 70-93) makes his own distinction between the two sources of religion. The first source is what he calls "knowledge," which denotes any type of attachment to a determinate reality. Derrida

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[32] It has to be noted that, unlike Habermas who sometimes challenges the priority of morality over comprehensive doctrines (albeit arbitrarily and without any ontological explanation), Kant adopts a radically liberal view, according to which morality has to be purged of any metaphysical remnants entirely in the future; the temporary buttress of ecclesiastic faith will duly vanish in the face of an overwhelming power of reason (Kant 1998).

[33] The conversation between Habermas and Taylor shows that Taylor, in contradistinction to neo-Kantian philosophers, also does not differentiate between morality and ethics (Habermas and Taylor 2009). However, the crucial difference is that Derrida, unlike Taylor, offers a deconstructive reading of ethics, which does not deny that there is a context-transcendent force in every act.

[34] Derrida (2002, 45) is cautious not to extrapolate his deconstruction of monotheistic religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism entirely, to those sets of beliefs that are sometimes hard to characterise as religions. He is well aware that the word religion itself, with its Latin etymology, is strongly tied to a concrete cultural and socio-political setting. On the other, the Derridean analysis is ultimately applicable to other contexts as well, since it assumes that no self-sufficient domain of truth can be accessible.

believes that religion cannot help but attach itself to some place, institution, or ethos (Ibid., 78). It even uses "tele-technoscience" to advance its agenda on a global stage, as we see in the case of tech-savvy religious leaders, or the horrifying global reach of religiously-inspired terrorism (Ibid., 82). The moment religion institutionalizes itself, it loses its appeal to the sacred which has to remain something inaccessible or as he calls it, "unscathed" (Ibid.).

In this way, "knowledge," as Derrida puts it, is different from what Kant and Habermas understand as a particularistic (as opposed to universalistic) truth. In a small essay, *Faith and Knowledge* Habermas mentions Derrida as a "worthy winner of the Adorno prize" and lauds his way of conceiving "messianicity without messianism" (Habermas 2003a, 113). Habermas claims that reason without the aid of metaphysics will struggle in its mission to enlighten society as it lacks necessary semantic resources to do so. By appealing to religious sources, reason makes up for its "scarce resource of meaning" (Ibid., 114). This argument is not a new one about religion and secularism but is repeats Habermas's preceding claim that ethical or metaphysical doctrines have no truth value, but they may have certain semantic efficacy. Derrida, from a Habermasian perspective, is seen as a philosopher who tries to combine the two – reason and metaphysics in order to fulfil precisely this pragmatic purpose. However, I argue in this chapter there is much more to Derrida than Habermas acknowledges. In fact, the deconstructive reading of secularism offers the way out of the impasse in which Habermas finds himself when confronting the aporias of deontological secularism.

From a Derridean perspective, deontological morality itself is a form of knowledge, as it presupposes following a specific rule that bars it from being an absolute standard. Recall that in *Force of Law*, Derrida (1992a) shows that every rule, no matter how abstract and detached it is from a particular reality, is necessarily "contaminated" and circumscribed by a determinate context. In the same manner, based on Derrida, I argue that every type of knowledge loses *eo ipso* its universalistic appeal, and the separation between morality and ethics collapses. So, while Habermas's deontological secularism implies that only those positions that are based on the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines are universal, from a Derridean perspective, morality falls short of providing a neutral standard, and it cannot *completely* sidestep comprehensive doctrines.

Does the foregoing mean that the possibility of context-transcendence is revoked in the Derridean philosophy? We have seen that the failure of the deontological approach forced us in this direction. The priority of morality as a high-order form of reasoning cannot be universally applied across different particular contexts, but does this mean that there could be no "higher-order" moral force? Derrida believes otherwise. While he rightly points out the universalism of the Kantian moral faith is untenable, Derrida (1997a, 21-22) still argues that a pretension to universal justice no political creed, including secularism, or religion can function. However, as was noted, he understands such universality as a singular event arriving in the form of the *other*, rather than a uniform rule that is supposed to work regardless of what particular contexts demand.

In order to get a better understanding of the Derridean argument, it is essential not to conflate two different meanings of faith: the first one is Kantian (and later, Habermasian) faith which is a regulative Idea. It is allegedly wholly detached from any particular context; the second, Derridean faith is something that is intrinsically tied to knowledge but in such a way that it still necessarily overflows it. As Michael Naas (2012, 67) notices in his scrupulous discussion of Derrida's *Faith and Knowledge*, the Derridean faith is directly related to another Derridean concept of the *totally other* (*tout autre*). The idea is that every determinate reality is ruptured from the inside in such a way that it is never self-sufficient; something foreign – a context-transcending *other* always interferes in every contextually circumscribed particular act. The reason for this lies in the fact that determinateness cannot sustain itself without appealing to a heterogeneous force.

However, this is not the type of universal faith that can be determined a priori – i.e., detached from every comprehensive doctrine, as posited by deontological liberals. It is, on the contrary, indeterminable and arises out of every context anew in a singular manner. It deconstructs every self-enclosed system or a set of beliefs because each time something heterogeneous – a leap of faith is required to ground a seemingly self-sufficient, normatively entrenched worldview.[35] For

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[35] Andrea Cassatella's article on the Derridean reading of secularism is a telling example of how this structure can be somewhat misinterpreted. Cassatella (2015, 14) argues that faith is the reason why politics and secularism retain a mystical character. However, he neglects the fact that the same faith submits any "mystical authority" to the unrelenting force of the undecidable, that is, acts as a source of its deconstruction. Such faith goes beyond any knowledge and constitutes a driving force of any relationship between religion and morality. Here, we have to bear in mind that Derrida talks about two conceptions of faith that should not be conflated. One is an "ordinary" faith that is at play in Kant's works, and the other is more primordial, "ultra-faith," that is akin to *différance*. Derrida's two further contentions are the following: first, ordinary faith does not exist without knowledge, and this is why any faith, no matter how rational it is, has a mystical character (because it is always impregnated by knowledge), and

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example, in every religion, there is a mechanism of *undecidability* at work that subjects it to various, sometimes conflicting interpretation. This mechanism makes sure that religious interpretations change depending on time and space. As Derrida (2002, 93) remarks in *Faith and Knowledge*, "one can always criticize, reject or combat this or that form of sacredness or of belief, even of religious authority, in the name of the most original possibility." From a Derridean perspective, such a faith only comes into being when the particularist doctrines exhaust themselves, that is, are exposed to the impossibility of an absolute determinateness. An uncertainty – or what Derrida (1994, 94; 2005c, 88) sometimes calls "perhaps" (*peut-être*), or undecidability– is a universal precondition of any determinate context, since every positing implies the possibility of non-positing.

The fact that one can avoid neither a necessity of context-transcending singular faith nor a necessary rootedness in a particular context leads us to the aporetic conception of secularism (Derrida 2002, 43). Such an aporetic conception cannot produce a definite conception of secularism. In contrast to the deontological view, there is no one clear-cut rule that can be seamlessly applied in every context. So, secularism won't be a homogenous phenomenon but depend on the particularities of space and time. Such a view of secularism does not preclude a change, like its "contextualist" counterpart. Instead a change in interpretation arises due to the fact that context-transcending singular faith always lurks behind the particularities of a given context.

Such a rejection of the deontological view and its contingency-based alternatives cannot escape taking a performative stance. For this reason, even if the context-transcending truth is singular, the conditions of its emergence can be held as universal on an epistemological level. Below, I will describe what kind of universal requirements this may produce.

2.3.2. How to apply secularist principles

In discussing faith and knowledge, Derrida (1994, 93) makes it clear that every founding or initiating act "is a 'performative' event that cannot belong to the set that it founds, inaugurates or justifies." From this perspective, even deontological liberalism cannot escape the fact that its core

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second, an "ultra-faith" is a fundamental force behind this interplay and goes beyond any dichotomy of faith and knowledge.

principles, such as the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines and the state neutrality, are ultimately based on "ethical self-understanding of species" that is itself not neutral. Every knowledge, in a Derridean sense, exists on a precondition of faith, without which it will be impossible to posit a belief or act upon it. So, even deconstruction itself ultimately must refer to some "foundational" principles. Various commentators suggested that deconstruction has strong quasi-transcendental implications.[36] I also argue that it inaugurates a concrete performative stance that corresponds with the quasi-transcendental principles in question.

Derrida himself does not hesitate to adopt a performative stance in relation to various ethical and political issues. For example, in his dialogue with Giovanna Borradori (2003, 116-117) when he discusses the unique role that Europe can play in transforming the international order, Derrida justifies his preference for Europe as a socio-political space by underscoring the separation between political and theological realms that took place in European history as a result of the Enlightenment. He underscores that despite paradoxical nature of universal institutions, or values, we need to refine endlessly and further universalize them "without becoming discouraged by the aporias such work must necessarily encounter" (Ibid., 114).

Recall that Habermas's deontological secularism does not succeed not because of its strong quasi-transcendental implications, but for the intractability of the uniform the deontic rule. Derrida's deconstruction, on the other hand, seems better-suited to serve as a quasi-transcendental principle, as it does not impose one universal rule on any particular context. Instead, from the Derridean perspective, in every context, we may find different particularities that give their own distinct shape to an idea of secularism. Context-transcendence – a reinterpretation of the existing secularist, or religious worldviews arises as a singular event that unsettles the already established certainties, including the deontic precepts.

Only a paradoxical nature of the relationship between knowledge and faith has to be held as a quasi-transcendental, universalistic standard that is applicable across different contexts. Such a standard requires the state to leave the space open for the change of official doctrine. Secularism is better served if this gap is wider, or in other words, if the state can accommodate as many critical perspectives as possible.

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[36] See Gasché (1986), Bennington (1993, 2000), Rorty (1995b), Fritsch (2011), and Doyon (2014).

This does not mean that the state must only profess the belief in the aporetic nature of faith and secularism. As it was already argued, the official secularist ideology of the state will always be a particularist doctrine that violently imposes itself on unconvinced citizens. Such secularism may take different forms, as long as the main requirement – respect for its own aporetic foundations is met.[37]

It may seem that the Derridean secularism offers relatively little grounds for universalism, and for this reason, it can be impractical for serving as a political proposal. One may argue that its main weakness lies in the fact that its quasi-transcendental requirement is too slim. In contrast, I argue that the failure of Habermas's deontological secularism shows that providing a clearly demarcated line between universal morality and particularistic ethical doctrines would not be able to sustain itself, given the fact that the rigorous requirements of the principle of priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines are difficult to meet in crucial cases. Thus, we are left with a relatively modest, weaker quasi-transcendental proposal that only prohibits to annul its paradoxical character. In this way, secularism is defined as a political regime that cannot avoid standing on a particular comprehensive doctrine, but continually destabilizes its own foundation in search of a "better" truth. For this reason, it can be more widely applicable than its above-discussed counterparts.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I've started from the problem of locating the source of universalistic thrust behind secularism. I've argued that the Habermasian deontological secularism fails to meet its own

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[37] Derrida remains mostly ambiguous about his personal religious beliefs; it is not easy to infer whether he is a "radical atheist," as Martin Hägglund (2008, 2015) argues, or a religious thinker, as it was proposed, among others, by John Caputo (1997, 2015). This is the reason why the recent debate between Hägglund and Caputo further obfuscates the problem, instead of clarifying it. In fact, both Hägglund and Caputo are partially right in claiming that the central Derridean contention is that any self-sufficient conception of truth necessarily results in deconstruction. For example, when Hägglund (2015, 187) asserts that "impossible [for Derrida] is what happens all the time since it designates the impossibility of being in itself that is the condition of temporality," he refers to the impossibility of a self-sufficient reality or truth. This agrees with Caputo's (2015, 171) stated intention to deconstruct theology to the point that the God will cease to be a self-sufficient entity, but rather be imagined within the framework of "religion without religion." It seems that neither Caputo's God nor Hägglund's radical atheism is not mainly influenced by what is traditionally understood as theology, or atheism. Instead, both of them follow the Derridean deconstructive approach.

standards, and cannot establish the universality of the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines. However, this fact alone does not warrant a rejection of the universalistic claims of secularism. Contingency-based accounts of secularism fail to provide an accurate description of how secularism works on an ethical level, and cannot escape from their own quasi-transcendental presuppositions, on an epistemological level. Instead, the Derridean critique of faith can be mobilized as a middle ground between deontological secularism and its contingency-based alternatives. On this view, secularism is necessarily grounded in a particular political context, and its characteristics are profoundly open-ended. There is no uniform, universal rule that can be extended across different contexts. On an ethical level, a context-transcending force of secularism resides in a singular event, the contours of which are not known preliminarily.

However, I argued that on an epistemological level, the conditions of the emergence of secularism could be viewed in quasi-transcendental terms. In this case, the aporetic structure that defines secularism can be upheld as a universalistic standard. This gives us some minimum universal requirement that can be extended across various societies. It has two main practical advantages. First, as Derridean secularism does not propound the strict normative requirement that should be uniformly met, it leaves the space open for different variations of secularism in the West. The existing differences between the secularist regimes in the West can no longer look like anomalies that need to be made uniform once and for all. Instead, the appreciation of different secularist regimes can be achieved.

Second, now secularism can be much more easily extended to non-Western societies, without losing entirely its universalistic bite. It is no longer needed to dismiss certain non-Western countries as "non-secular" if they do not fit the mainstream pattern (even if the criteria of secularism in the West are very loose). Different institutional arrangements between the church and the state can exist that do not necessarily contradict the idea of secularism. Instead, a thin Derridean rule can be applied: Only those fundamentalist regimes can be deemed unsecular that obliterate the gap between faith and knowledge and leave no possibility for a radical change. This in turn requires the separation between the church and the state to a certain extent. Determining the exact lines of such separation is beyond the scope of this chapter. As I argued here, the minimum that we should do is to abandon the unwieldy standards of deontological liberalism.

3. THE PARADOXES OF TOLERANCE: TOWARDS A DECONSTRUCTIVE CRITIQUE

Abstract

The neo-Kantian, deontological liberal theory seeks to overcome the paradoxes of tolerance by grounding it in higher-order moral reasoning. I argue that this approach cannot provide a quasi-universal normative standard according to which the paradoxes inherent to the practice of tolerance can be successfully overcome. The critics of the neo-Kantian conception of tolerance, on their part, cannot go beyond the dichotomies that plague the original deontological view. They either tend to annul a context-transcending aspect of tolerance or brush aside the determinate context in which a tolerating act takes place. In both of these instances, tolerance loses its empowering force as a finite yet context-transcending attitude. Moreover, by brushing aside quasi-transcendental nature of moral claims, such critics easily succumb to a performative contradiction. I argue we need to retain the paradoxes of tolerance as its quasi-transcendental foundations, rather than discarding them in the name of higher-order moral reasoning. I draw on Derrida's deconstruction in order to explain the permanence of the paradoxes as quasi-transcendental structures. I argue that retaining paradoxes also has practical implications for tolerance, and can help us to draw its limits in minimal terms.

Keywords: Tolerance, Habermas, Forst, Derrida, Deconstruction

Introduction

Preston King (1998, xii-xiii) makes a distinction between toleration, broadly speaking, and tolerance as a specific subset of it. According to this understanding, toleration can encompass different sorts of attitudes and actions, including, for example, favouritism. The latter entails not only toleration of different worldviews, or ways of life, but also a certain promotional attitude. In

turn, tolerance is an *attitude* that entails acceptance of a worldview that is otherwise explicitly rejected, or may even be disdained.[38]

Tolerance leads to a starkly ambivalent stance and gives rise to paradoxes or aporias, given that it requires a simultaneous acceptance and a rejection of something. Its first major paradox stems from the fact that, as T.M. Scanlon puts it, tolerance requires an "attitude that is intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and unrestrained opposition." (Scanlon 1996, 226) In other words, a tolerant person is supposed to tolerate something that she strongly opposes but somehow finds permissible to accept. What can be tolerated is sometimes a comprehensive doctrine but, in other cases, it could be a way of life or even an aesthetic preference. As the most pressing examples of tolerance involve comprehensive doctrines – including religions, we will be mainly concerned with such cases. But in all instances, the requirement is that a tolerant person has to accept something that has been already rejected. For example, one may find a particular religious doctrine as unacceptable, but she still may find reasons to tolerate its existence. We may call this *the paradox of initial acceptance*.

The second major aporia of tolerance is that determining its limit proves to be a difficult task after the opposed doctrine in question has been deemed worthy of acceptance. To use the previous example, the initially tolerated religious doctrine cannot be tolerated to the extent that it infringes the rights of the tolerating party. This is known as the paradox of "tolerating the intolerant," and it poses a problem even for the most liberal approaches. As Karl Popper (2013, 581) argued, "Unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance." We can call it *the paradox of a secondary acceptance* since it arises after a tolerant attitude is already adopted towards something that has been found permissible.[39]

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[38] King (1998) makes further distinctions as well that cannot be investigated here for the lack of space. For the sake of simplicity, I lump together different meanings or gradations of tolerance as long as the main criterion is met. According to this criterion, something is in principle objected but allowed to flourish in different degrees.

[39] John Horton's (1994) and Rainer Forst's (2013, 19-26) classifications include the third paradox, in addition to the two discussed in this chapter. According to Horton (Ibid., 16-18), the third paradox describes a counterintuitive situation, where it may turn out that a person who has more negative attitudes is more tolerant than the one that is more receptive to other worldviews. Forst (Ibid., 19) discusses this paradox in connection with the first component of tolerance that he outlines - the "objection component." He illustrates the problem by alluding to the paradox of the "tolerant racist." I will refrain from addressing this paradox by simply accepting Horton's solution that tolerance denotes not only an action, but it is, first and foremost, an attitude. For this reason, racist attitudes are excluded from that definition.

An influential version of the liberal theory is required to accomplish two divergent tasks: first, in addressing the first paradox, it has to determine why substantive ethical worldviews need to be overridden by a tolerating attitude; and second, it has to pose at the same time the limit of such tolerance despite the fact that comprehensive doctrines can no longer be endorsed. The prevailing solution to this paradoxical situation has been a reworking of the Kantian deontological liberalism with its emphasis on universal morality in the service of the ethically neutral state. Morality in neo-Kantian theories is understood as a special subset of ethics and is recognized as the cornerstone of human agency. Jürgen Habermas and Rainer Forst are the major proponents of this view, according to which higher-order moral reasoning in the form of deontic precepts of *reciprocity* and *generality* helps us to evade the impasse by defining universally acceptable criteria of tolerance. As I argue in this paper, the proposal of an ethically neutral conception of tolerance is unpersuasive. Most importantly, the principle of reciprocity cannot plausibly explain how tolerance can be practiced in cases where the tolerated party cannot reciprocate properly - for example, due to constraints imposed by the culture or a community. Also, generality

I argue that for these reasons, deontological liberalism fails on its terms, and this failure opens up a space for approaches that aim to go beyond the Kantian dichotomies, such as facts vs. norms, or moral vs. ethical. They try to accomplish this without forfeiting the value of tolerance.

There are two prominent alternatives to deontological liberalism. The first, "realist" view attempts to dethrone morality from its status as higher-order reasoning. According to realists, tolerance has to be understood as a function of local political arrangements rather than being derived from a moral judgement via retaining neutrality towards various comprehensive doctrines. The "realists" do not call into question the normativity as such, but rather abolish the hierarchy between the spheres of justice. Even when some of them, for example, John Gray, acknowledge the necessity of some minimal universal rights, they do not account for the source of such universality. Giving up on universalism works well in situations where the parties involved possess similar amounts of material or symbolic resources or have a history of successful co-existence. However, it fails to account for those instances where a tolerant attitude is exhibited towards a worldview that radically challenges the status quo or deeply-held ethical convictions. It turns out that an acknowledgement of the universalistic drive behind tolerance is indispensable.

The second, sensorial alternative, exemplified by Lars Tønder (2013a, b), supposes a much more radical critique of deontological liberalism. It questions the centrality of any normative conception that, in Tønder's words, stems from the somatophobic attitude characteristic of the mainstream Western ethics. Deontological liberalism is targeted as the most characteristic exemplification of the view which overlooks "sensorially-inflected" life experiences. This includes what Tønder calls "active tolerance." While the realist critics of the deontological conception of tolerance mainly focus on the need to circumscribe normativity within the bounds of a finite context – be it political or cultural, Tønder's criticism reaches an opposite conclusion. As I shall show, for him, the normative dimensions of an act lose their central role in conceptualizing tolerance. On the one hand, the realist alternative to a deontological view on tolerance is too context-dependent to admit of a tolerating behaviour either towards marginal parties or in non-standard situations. On the other hand, I argue that the sensorial conception of tolerance turns tolerance into a floating signifier – an "immanent" practice with no need for grounding itself in particular norms, or principles. Such a conception disregards the "particularist" dimension of tolerance that requires setting limits to it.

Against this backdrop of the failure of both neo-Kantian theories and their opposite alternatives, I argue that a third, Derrida-influenced approach can solve the conundrum not by suspending the paradoxes of tolerance but by acknowledging their permanence. Once it is clear that we need both a necessary grounding in the existing normative framework and a mechanism to transcend it in order to accommodate novel situations, the advantages of an aporetic conception of tolerance become persuasive. I will argue in this chapter how such a conception of tolerance can avoid the deadlock that troubles deontological liberalism and its opposite alternatives.

Retaining paradoxes as quasi-transcendental structures have practical implications for drawing the limits of tolerance. While it is no longer possible to impose the strict rules of reciprocity and generality, it can still be argued that respecting the paradoxical structure of tolerance acts as a minimal requirement for tolerance. For this reason, those approaches that completely disregard the paradoxical structures and seek to suspend a deconstructive critique completely – for example, different sorts of fundamentalisms that preach violence, deserve less tolerance, than those who are more fallibilistic at heart.

In the following, I will first show how the conceptualization of tolerance within the framework of deontological liberalism leads to a dead end. Second, I will discuss those alternative conceptions

that are equally deficient in providing successful solutions to the paradoxes of tolerance. And finally, I will argue that an aporetic approach to tolerance inspired by Derrida proves to be the way to sidestep the impasse.[40]

3.1. Tolerance as a moral principle within the neo-Kantian deontological framework

According to a deontological-liberal stand, there two types of claims. One is normative, and the other is epistemological. I examine both claims in turn and show that the paradoxes of tolerance cannot be resolved within the deontological approach. On an ethical level, deontological liberals argue that a higher-order form of reasoning – morality - takes precedence over particularist ethical doctrines or political expediency. They contend that otherwise, comprehensive doctrines can easily encroach upon the freedoms of those citizens who hold a variety of ethical beliefs. Of central importance is the construction of the domain of morality that is supposed to be legitimate in the eyes of the adherents of various ethical doctrines. This is achieved by making morality devoid of any connection with particularist ethical worldviews. The latter "compromises" the universal character of morality and delegitimize its precepts.

On an epistemological level, the priority of universal morality over particularistic ethical doctrines must not be part of any type of *modus vivendi*, but rather raise independent validity claims. In other words, moral values propounded by a deontological approach have to be right or wrong in a similar sense as truth claims are either true or false. Based on this argument, Habermas (1998b, 85) objects to John Rawls's concessions to *modus vivendi* by arguing against depriving such an epistemic/cognitive status to the claims of morality.[41] Habermas argues that Rawls "must allow

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[40] In *Faith and Knowledge*, Derrida (2002, 59-60) places quotation marks around the word "tolerance." For him, this is necessary to take a distance from the Christian and Enlightenment conceptions of tolerance. In contrast, I retain the concept of tolerance, even if I criticize the different conceptions that profess it.

[41] Habermas (1996, 63) puts forward the following argument against Rawls's political liberalism: "In my view, Rawls must make a sharper distinction between acceptability and acceptance. A purely instrumental understanding of the theory is already invalidated by the fact that the citizens must first be convinced by the proposed conception of justice before such a consensus can come about." Later, he argues that there should be an epistemic relation between the validity of the theory of justice as fairness and its neutral stance towards comprehensive doctrines. In other words, Habermas to a greater extent than Rawls stays faithful to the Kantian project and explicitly places moral reasons above pragmatic or any other types of considerations. From this perspective, a certain type of moral cognitivism is indispensable for a Kant-inspired approach to gain traction. Rawls's concessions to *modus vivendi* necessarily put in danger this prospect.

some *epistemic* relation between the validity of his theory and the prospect of its neutrality toward competing worldviews being confirmed in public discourses" (Ibid., 63). What unites Habermas with another principal theorist of tolerance, Rainer Forst is that for them no concession to practical expediency or ethical worldviews is permissible if it violates the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines. Moral justification is supposed to be the ultimate arbiter of ethical validity claims, superseding all sorts of comprehensive doctrines   (Habermas 1998b, 62; Forst 2012, 93-96).[42] Such a position brings them closer to the original Kantian deontological liberalism than Rawls's political liberalism. On this interpretation, there is a "quasi-transcendental" epistemological ground – or what Habermas (Ibid., 68) calls the "weak transcendental necessity" – under the universal deontic precepts that make it applicable across different contexts, regardless of the fact that it does not transcend the human context (hence, the prefix "quasi") (Habermas 2003, 12-13; Forst 2012, 129-130).[43]

Regardless of such a "strong" epistemic status attributed to the claims of morality, the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines does not result in a reinstatement of metaphysics. Instead, deontological liberalism maintains that morality, in a Kantian sense, is the only adjudicating mechanism that is capable of bridging the gap between ethical doctrines and universal human reasoning that provides means for successful political cooperation.

On this view, tolerance is a moral principle, rather than a part of some particularist and comprehensive doctrine. The gist of this argument is the following: ethical attitudes or inclinations either completely renounce tolerance or admit of differing opinions or dispositions on arbitrary grounds. According to the deontological view, even if a state or a person practice tolerance towards the followers of non-official comprehensive doctrines out of benevolence, this would not be normatively justified. The reason for this is that the tolerating party will only extend tolerance as grace without justifying on normative grounds for doing so. This would be an arbitrary, rather than a normatively justified tolerance. Tolerance, as practiced by benevolent dictators or electoral

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[42] Forst (2012, 96) underscores that Rawls ultimately fails "to explain the moral justification of the political conception: he fluctuates between a form of justification based on an ethical-comprehensive doctrine and a freestanding moral justification." Despite his similar criticisms of Habermas, I believe that Habermas's and Forst's positions are much closer to each other than theirs and Rawls's. I won't delve deeper into these differences for the lack of space.

[43] In the *Right to Justification* Forst (2012) attempts to distance himself from the Habermasian quasi-transcendentalism; however, as Müller Suárez (2013, 1052) points out, he couches the principle of his approach in similar terms.

majorities, is a vivid example of this. (In a similar vein, Goethe's famous "tolerance is offensive" is predicated on this model of a strictly subject-centred, non-universalizable tolerance). To avoid condescending benevolence, it is argued that we need to go beyond comprehensive doctrines or private interests and transpose the problem on a higher-order, moral level. At this moral level, one can deliver universally valid and objective judgements that are neutral with respect to all comprehensive doctrines (Habermas 2008, 258; Forst 2013, 23-36).

Forst lists two main deontic precepts that should guide our judgement of tolerance. The first is the rule of *reciprocity* which means that "nobody can make certain claims (to the validity of norms, to rights or resources) which he denies to others (reciprocity of contents), and that one may not simply assume that others share one's perspective, one's values, convictions, interests or needs (reciprocity of reasons) by claiming to speak in their 'real' interests (and arguing accordingly that, 'reciprocally' speaking, one would be glad to be treated or coerced as they are)" (Forst 2013, 454). The principle of reciprocity would guarantee universality as it supposes that actors consider not only their private interests or values, but what is justified from a perspective of the average rational individual. This perspective is considered to be a universal standpoint and results in an equal benefit to all. An actor is expected to imagine what could be universally valid from the perspective of the second person; Habermas (1998b, 42) calls this a mutual "perspective-taking." Reciprocity is accepted as a major stepping stone for building a universally justified moral theory of tolerance. It requires every citizen not to appeal to a higher truth that is not accessible to others (Forst 2013, 454-455).

The second deontic precept of *generality* is defined as a requirement to take into account the claims of every single individual, instead of brokering an agreement between the selected parties. Forst (2013, 455) argues that each person has a "moral veto right," that is, everyone can reject the definitions of tolerance that she or he finds unacceptable.

Now, juxtaposing the two different levels of argumentation or the "contexts of justice" (Forst 2002), aims to solve the first paradox of tolerance by introducing the principle of the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines into the domain of politics (Habermas 1996, 459-460). Initially, one accepts the rejected not because it is justified from a subjectivist point of view – i.e., solely, from the standpoint of some ethical doctrine, but because it is neutral towards every such doctrine. Universal morality, with its deontic precepts of reciprocity and generality, must

dictate what to tolerate, and comprehensive doctrines are expected to fine-tune their principles to it (Habermas 2008, 81-84; Forst 2012, 93-96). One should tolerate different political, religious or other sorts of worldviews because from the perspective of reciprocity and generality - i.e., a perspective that is neutral towards particularist doctrines, every view ought to enjoy equal moral status. Ethical worldviews, in contrast, cannot stand the test of reciprocity and generality, since they are only espoused on particularistic grounds, that is, without taking into considerations the claims of the others.

The second paradox of tolerance is solved in the same manner. The neo-Kantian conception of morality, with its deontic precepts of reciprocity and generality, provides a mechanism to regard certain doctrines as intolerable. However, as this is done in the name of universal morality, the exclusion is viewed as morally justified and not as arbitrary. In other words, one must believe that ethical doctrines do not have a say in designating certain worldviews as intolerable, and the act of exclusion is solely based on higher-order moral reasoning. For example, Habermas (1998b, 225-226) argues that the exclusion of fundamentalist worldviews stems from the neutral stance of rational actors vis-à-vis comprehensive doctrines, as opposed to being based on an arbitrary decision. For this reason, Habermas argues that the condescending attitude eluded by Goethe needs to be replaced by a reciprocally shared agreement on the threshold of tolerance. "And as long as this line [of tolerating the intolerant] is drawn in an authoritarian manner, i.e., unilaterally, toleration bears the stigma of arbitrary exclusion. Only the idea of equal freedoms for all and a definition of the domain of tolerance that all concerned find equally convincing can draw the sting of intolerance from tolerance," maintains Habermas (2008, 253). Likewise, Forst (2013, 563) discusses positions that involve "the refusal to relativize one's claims to religious truth either in the moral or in the epistemic sense as required by the use of practical and theoretical reason." He characterizes this position as "fundamentalist" and argues that it is not a fundamentalism *per se* to reject such a view, even if it is rejected without participating in intersubjective communicative action. For Forst, tolerance does not impose any particularist doctrine – for example, a pluralistic, or an atheistic interpretation of the world - but instead, it simply calls for mutual respect (Ibid., 564). Put differently, according to Forst, an exclusion that tolerance requires does not arbitrarily reject one doctrine in favour of the other. Instead, it does so on normatively justified grounds, following the precepts of reciprocity and generality.

To use Forst's terminology, I argue that both Habermas and he develop a conception of tolerance that can be labelled as a "respect conception." At the heart of this conception lies mutual respect between citizens who value each other's autonomy and the rule of law. Moreover, such respect is not necessarily premised on the "formal equality" that radically separates the citizens' private and public lives and confines particularist beliefs to the former. Rather, Forst aims at a "qualitative equality" which will be cognizant of the need to recognize ethical, or religious differences among citizens, rather than ignoring them in the name of neutrality (Forst 2013, 29-31; 535). A similar reworking of deontological liberalism arises in Anna Elisabetta Galeotti's critique of the mainstream liberal conception of tolerance. As Galeotti (2004) shows, sometimes disadvantaged groups do not seek colour-blind equality that might be dismissive of their distinctive identities.. Instead explicit recognition of this distinctiveness is demanded. A case in point is "Don't Ask Don't Tell" – an infamous policy in the U.S. army that barred openly gay persons from military service, but allowed them to serve while staying in the closet. Also, even when "private" differences are allowed to be expressed in the public, there is an issue of structural injustices that makes formal equality among persons an ineffectual standard.

Forst (2013, 524-535) is aware of these criticisms and supports legal means to address the claims raised by various disadvantaged groups that go well-beyond what formal equality may permit. Habermas, on his part, relaxes the requirements of the translation proviso that originally obliged both religious and non-religious citizens to resort to secular arguments - premised on the priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines - in the whole public sphere. Habermas recognizes that religious citizens share a greater burden in maintaining the secular public sphere. For this reason, he believes that secular citizens should help their religious compatriots in easing this burden (Habermas 2008, 112-113). [44] Moreover, Habermas (2008, 299-300) is sympathetic towards the idea of cultural rights and avers that "empowering collective rights do not necessarily conflict with individual rights."

However, redressing such structural injustices do not lead to the renouncement of the general deontological framework within which the issue of tolerance takes shape. Granting certain allowances to various disadvantaged groups is not tantamount to the revocation of the centrality of neo-Kantian morality. According to Forst (2012, 64-67), no ethical good may claim an inherent

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[44] For the critique of the translation proviso, see Cooke (2014), Arfi (2015), Casattella (2018).

superiority over others in a secular public sphere. Nor the value of community may determine what could be deemed just. (Ibid.) Likewise, while Habermas (2008, 299-305) is ready to admit that certain collective rights need to be respected, he is still critical of what he calls "strong multiculturalism." Habermas, sharing Will Kymlicka's argument, contents that group rights cannot be celebrated at the expense of moral rights of individuals unless one is willing to pay a high price of discriminating against disadvantaged individuals within the disadvantaged minorities. As an example, Habermas (2008, 300-301) invokes the case of granting the French language special status in the Canadian province of Quebec – a policy that leads to the infringement of English-speaking citizens' rights which are forced to send their children to French schools. Similarly, Habermas (Ibid., 304-305) argues that conferring a special autonomy on tribal societies in the United States, Canada, and Australia, will inevitably lead to irresolvable conflicts as the illiberal character of these societies is at odds with "the egalitarian principle and individualistic character of 'equal rights for all.'"

In view of the foregoing, as Forst (2013, 31-32; 352) rightly acknowledges, the "respect conception" of tolerance – even the variant that involves qualitative, rather than formal equality, is starkly different from that of an "esteem conception." The latter requires the citizens not just respect of diverse opinions, but also an appreciation of the inherent value of comprehensive doctrines. This may be constructed independently, that is, without being grounded in the priority of individual rights over the good, and poses a threat to deontological liberalism.

I argue that the main problem with this line of thought is that it cannot plausibly demonstrate that in all possible cases, the universal deontic precepts of reciprocity and generality can be uncompromisingly applied. If the universality of the moral rule becomes destabilized in this way, it means that the deontological conception of tolerance draws its force from an underlying comprehensive doctrine that remains hidden from our view. Recall that it can only solve the paradoxes of tolerance if it cancels them out by appealing to the universal force of moral precepts legitimate in the eyes of the wider public. Otherwise, the exclusion that tolerance risks to become arbitrary.

Moreover, if on an ethical level, the neutrality of deontic precepts cannot be substantiated, this undermines the quasi-transcendental epistemological status of the whole approach as well. In other words, if a deontic rule cannot be invariably applied to different particular contexts, this deprives

us of an epistemological ground for claiming that it is justified. Below, I will show why the universality of deontic precepts cannot be sustained

Let us first take a look at the deontic precept of reciprocity. It purports to solve the paradoxes of tolerance by transforming the question of acceptance or repudiation of a foreign ethical doctrine into a question of a reciprocal relation. In so doing, it excludes those ethical doctrines the adherents of which do not accept our positions. The problem arises when it comes to the definition of reciprocity. At first glance, the latter seems to be an innocuously neutral concept that can be fitted into different contexts. In reality, the concept of reciprocity presupposes the concrete definitions of freedom and equality. In other words, for a reciprocal agreement, all parties need to be equal and free. Moreover, in each case, such equality and freedom presuppose different things. For example, in some contexts, the equal distribution of symbolic capital is more important than material equality, or freedom from psychological manipulation needs to be secured more than freedom from physical coercion. Moreover, in certain contexts, reciprocity may require securing unequal, rather than equal conditions among the actors - for instance, when it comes to the question of redressing historical injustices. What's more important, it is not only that reciprocity requires different things in different contexts and the number of potential aspects of it is inexhaustible, but in certain instances, non-reciprocal tolerance might be more justified, given the existence of historical injustice and the educational, or cultural disparities stemming from it.[45] In certain instances, until such equality is achieved to a certain extent, one may still decide on the question of tolerating or not tolerating. For example, if the issue of wearing a Muslim burqa is strongly tied to the problem of gender equality in the particular Muslim community, one may argue that until such an equality is achieved, we may or may not tolerate the practice. In either case, we agree that the conditions of tolerance are not fully reciprocal (in the sense that not all parties consent freely), but still make a decision.

As Lasse Thomassen (2006, 87) aptly summarizes in his thorough critique of Habermas, "tolerance is necessarily inventive; it must invent its own law because there can be no law, no regulative idea or critical ideal, expressing what tolerance is and which we can follow." Thus, what tolerance in

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[45] This criticism also applies to Dan Rabinowitz's (2018) recent argument, according to which reciprocity not tolerance should be the basis of a healthy society. For Rabinowitz (Ibid.), the practice of tolerance implies an asymmetrical relationship between tolerating and tolerated parties. Reciprocity, on the other hand, is based on equality. As I argue in this chapter, such equality is not only infeasible in real life, but it is also not always normatively justified.

certain cases requires is something radically new, something transcending what is already familiar. The principle of generality faces the same kind of problem when applied to the real world. It presumes that all individuals should partake in determining the contours of tolerance. However, who is counted as fully human was historically a matter of controversy. LGBTQ people have been long considered to be less than human in the West, and they still do not enjoy equal formal rights in some European countries. Recently, the issue of transgender rights has become the subject of the same kind of controversy as LGBTQ rights were in the past. There is no guarantee that in the future, what constitutes a "human" won't be up for debate. For this reason, the deontic precept of generality clearly is not universal, but it depends on a particular historical context.

To conclude, a deontological liberal should concede that any conception of tolerance that can be posited before the public, won't be universal in its reach. Instead, in every particular context, there may turn up something unanticipated that can radically unsettle our understanding of tolerance. As it was already mentioned, the failure of the universality of deontic precepts calls into question the quasi-transcendental nature of the deontological approach. For clearly what the deontic rules profess cannot be met in every context.

This failure of the deontological approach prompted some philosophers of tolerance to abandon the neo-Kantian framework altogether, including both its ethical and epistemological presuppositions. On an ethical level, it is argued that the higher-order moral reasoning is unable to establish itself as a supreme standard for adjudicating competing conceptions of tolerance. On an epistemological level, the quasi-transcendentalism of the deontological approach is duly rejected. In the next section, I will discuss these criticisms.

3.2. Tolerance beyond deontological liberalism

The intransigence of deontological ethics renders the project of tolerance as a moral principle untenable. Two alternative approaches come into view that takes an assault on deontological approach from different anti-foundationalist perspectives.

The first approach, which is more radical one, downplays the key role of norms in the practice of tolerance and reframes tolerance chiefly as a question of the human sensorium, rather than a matter

of normative judgements. From this perspective, the particular normative elements of tolerance acquire secondary importance in determining the emancipatory potential of a tolerant act.

The second group of critics questions the universalistic moral ambitions of the Kantian deontological liberalism in favour of more localized, relativized accounts of ethical/normative, or political principles. It does not discard the role of normativity altogether but recasts it either into political or cultural terms. A version of this argument even criticizes the contemporary discourse of tolerance as a façade behind which the Western hegemony and capitalist power relations are concealed.

As it was already mentioned, both of these approaches take aim not only at the ethical side of tolerance but also question the quasi-transcendental underpinnings of the deontological view. Below, I will show that on neither plane, such approaches do not offer plausible alternatives to the deontological view on an ethical level. At the end of this section, I will conclude that disproving deontological on an ethical level does not automatically lead to its rejection on an epistemological level.

3.2.1. The sensorial conception of tolerance

The first line of critique of the deontological concept of tolerance is best exemplified by Lars Tønder's recent work. On an ethical level, it seeks to downgrade normativity to the secondary status from being a cornerstone of human agency. It is critical not only of the failures encountered by the neo-Kantian approach but of the dominance of normativity in the Western tradition of ethics. Tønder (2015) describes the "sensorial turn" in political theory, referring to the works of such philosophers as William Connolly (2002), Romand Coles (2004), Davide Panagia (2009) and others. Among this coterie of authors, Tønder is the one who more extensively engages with the problem of tolerance.

Drawing upon Herbert Marcuse's essay on tolerance and Wendy Brown's critique of normative approaches, Tønder contends that a moral conception of tolerance plays into the hands of the status quo due to its self-complacent abandonment of the corporeal realm. The reason for this is that normative approaches mainly privilege the third-person perspective in the form of higher-order

moral reasoning. Such an approach leaves the sensorial side of tolerance untheorized and in this way, detaches tolerance from the real-world context. According to the neo-Kantian deontological approach, pain is a "private" experience, and for this reason, it cannot be shared reciprocally (Tønder 2013b, 39-42). This leads to downplaying "sensorially inflected experiences as motivation for following procedures of generality and reciprocity" (Ibid., 7). Disregarding the basic motivations for being tolerant has two consequences: (a) it confounds the meaning of tolerance, as the demands for tolerance becomes "too difficult to comprehend or engage in any meaningful way" (Ibid., 23), and (b) the emphasis is placed on the endurance of pain that turns tolerance into a "zero-sum game" where one is obliged to withstand the painful experience brought about by higher-order moral reasoning. The sufferer does not gain anything in enduring such a pain (Ibid., 48).

To Tønder, the alternative is to repudiate the whole idea of normativity as an organizing mechanism. Juxtaposing passive normatively demanded tolerance with active tolerance accomplishes this ambitious goal by concentrating on a sensorial side of a tolerating act. The underlying logic is that pain as a sensorial experience is neither normative nor crudely empirical but rather a phenomenological category that possesses a world-disclosing power. Tolerating pain need not be necessarily a passive experience as demanded by normative approaches, but it has the capacity to turn into a "pleasurable pain." The latter can communicate feelings among participants, enable emancipatory practices, and can be perceived as "plus-sum game," like the pain inflicted on a creative artist, or a political activist (Tønder 2013b, 48-49). Such conception of pain comes into stark contrast with what Tønder calls a "painful pain" which is concentrated on enduring – often for normative reasons – the external forces that constitute the status quo, rather than acknowledging the necessary interdependence of actors, including both tolerators and tolerated (Tønder 2013b, 94-95). Normative judgements, as the argument goes, largely discourage participants from adopting each other's perspectives and seeing the experiences as shared; it prevents actors from revealing future possibilities that will broaden their understanding of themselves.

Tønder tries to demonstrate that the true gist of tolerance lies in its power to encourage contending sides to appreciate the fact of deep pluralism, rather than normatively circumscribing the limits of a legitimate human action – a task that often leaves actors detached from lifeworld experiences

and drains the emancipatory potential of tolerance.[46] Thus, according to this view, foregoing the centrality of normative judgements in defining tolerance can transform tolerance into an emancipatory practice.

That said, Tønder (2013b 110) is still wary of uprooting normative judgements entirely. Instead, he places the sensorial conception of tolerance alongside with normative conceptions of tolerance. But, in the end, it is not clear whether Tønder wants to dispense with this need for a normative standard completely, or he aims only to enrich the existing conception of tolerance that is shaped by normative considerations. The ambiguity is compounded by the characterization of pain according to different criteria that have to determine whether or not a particular instance of a tolerating behaviour has emancipatory potential. He enlists five broad requirements which tolerated pain has to meet in order to serve as a vehicle of empowerment. In it, he ultimately refers to the normatively charged concepts such as "inequality," "exploitation," "unequal privileges," etc., all of which may require a prior grounding in a certain normative principle, be it neo-Kantian, or some other (Ibid., 88). It seems that at this point, the sensorial orientation to tolerance runs up against its own limits. The necessity of grounding tolerance in particular norms, or institutions, cannot be easily discarded, as long as one cannot discard the defining role of particular norms, rules, or institutions.

3.2.2. The "realist" alternative

An alternative path that can be taken is to argue that normative principles in conceptualizing tolerance cannot be easily overlooked, but they have to be relativized to the point at which no recourse to universal morality will be needed. Most prominently, the group philosophers that can be loosely dubbed as "realists" advocate such position.

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[46] This position is Spinozian, as openly acknowledged by Tønder, in a sense that it purports to arrive at a condition where the power of the external causes will be countered without one being forced to either curtail one's own power or depend on somebody losing her power (2013a, 696-697). In connection to Spinoza's immanentist ontology, it is not incidental that Derrida's asserts in *Of Grammatology* that "infinitist theologies are always logocentrisms, whether they are creationisms or not. Spinoza himself said of the understanding -or logos - that it was the immediate infinite mode of the divine substance, even calling it its eternal son in the Short Treatise" (Derrida 1976, 71).

The major thrust of the argument propounded by the second group of critics of the neo-Kantian theories of tolerance is that normativity, while integral to the principle of tolerance, need not be moral in a Kantian sense, but rather simply produce locally-bound, provisional normative, or political principles. For example, Bernard Williams (2008) calls for a non-moral account of tolerance which need not be necessarily non-normative, but be intrinsically linked with different ethical values other than tolerance. Moreover, Williams argues that the best hope for saving tolerance may lie in global political expediency or economic calculations (Heyd 1996, 25-27). Glen Newey (2010, p. 463) similarly argues that normative validity claims are not redundant practically, but they are completely subordinated to discursive processes to the extent that they do not constitute a separate ontological category.[47] While this view may seem similar to Habermas's, the dividing line is that Newey does not share Habermas's belief in universal morality embodied in the principle of reciprocity.[48]

Similarly, John Gray sees the solution in such value pluralism that will guarantee a *modus vivendi* without establishing the official version of the best life for citizens, and humankind, in general (Gray 2000, 22-23). However, Gray allows the imposition of certain universal values as minimal standards on different regimes throughout the globe. He objects to the construction of one "ideal regime" that will establish the correct interpretation of universal rights (Ibid.). There are two reasons why Gray's position can still be deemed not respective of universality as a context-transcending force. First, it is unclear whether such "universal" requirements are derived by putting emphasis on the common traits of the human beings as species, or they are "universal" in the sense

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[47] Newey's past positions were generally critical of the liberal conception of tolerance, which is based on the idea of state neutrality (see Newey 1999). He goes as far as to argue that even *modus vivendi* cannot be accepted as a workable model for tolerance – the thesis which is heavily contested by Gray (2000), and Horton (2010). However, what unites Newey and Williams is the shared belief that the liberal conception is untenable on an ontological level, not simply because it is not properly founded on the idea of the neutral state.

[48] A more radical version of this argument laid out by Wendy Brown does not only attack the Kantian deontological liberalism and its offshoots but also contests the value of tolerance as part of a dominant liberal political discourse. For Brown (2006, 154), Williams is at fault for promoting tolerance as a value deeply rooted in the liberal principle of autonomy (regardless of the fact that he casts aside the Kantian deontological framework). From this perspective, localized normative standards could serve as a veil to cover oppression and exploitation generally perpetuated by the economically and militarily powerful Western societies. In his debates with Forst, Brown underscores that she only takes issue with the deployment of the rhetoric of tolerance in the prevailing political discourses, which does not necessarily mean that she downgrades the importance of the value of tolerance (Brown and Forst 2014, 14). All in all, the argument is that tolerance has a normative value in certain circumstances, but it is not generally what deontological liberalism or even liberalism – i.e., a belief in moral autonomy and individualism, professes.

of transcending their immediate context. Second, beyond these minimal universal requirements, the only mechanism left to solve ensuing conflicts will be the negotiation between the adherents of different ethical worldviews on a political level. "The test of legitimacy for any regime is its success in mediating conflicts of values – including rival ideals of justice," claims Gray (Ibid., 132-133).

Overall, there are two major problems that we encounter in the "realist" critiques of tolerance. First, if, following Williams and Newey, morality is stripped of its context-transcending power, to what extent can we speak of an emancipatory potential of tolerance? It seems that tolerance, in this case, will be downgraded to the status of a mere value that cannot go beyond what is bound by prevailing norms or political expediency, whereas the most pressing instances of tolerance require self-restraint and even a sacrifice of private interests. Tolerance is a paradoxical virtue because it requires a self-rejection to the extent that is incompatible with the philosophical thinking focused on local, particularist principles.

Second, in cases where the necessity of universal norms is admitted, it is not clear how context-transcending power of normativity is accounted for. In Gray's case, he does not explain why universal morality constraints locally established *modus vivendi*, if the former takes precedence in most of the cases. It needs to be reflected upon why universal, context-transcending morality (and not just normativity) is not only indispensable but also central for the tenable conception of tolerance (even if the deontological approach cannot provide a plausible account of it).

There are at least two reasons why context-transcending, universal morality is central for tolerance. First, as it was already argued, even if tolerance is professed as part of some comprehensive doctrine, it is dubious how it can deal with newly raised, hitherto unknown cases. Dealing with such cases requires at least a constant re-interpretation of the said doctrine. It needs to be clarified how such re-interpretation emerges. Second, the need for a context-transcendent view of morality returns through the back door as the central force every time it is cast aside as being inferior to *modus vivendi*. If we conceive tolerance solely within the framework of *modus vivendi*, it is still unclear how we are able to form judgements about those cases that are not part of that *modus vivendi* – for example, about the remote societies that have no direct bearing upon us.

There is a need for a theory of tolerance that both acknowledges the necessity of transcending a particular context and the perennial limitations of such transcendence. Derrida's deconstructive approach to ethics offers a promising starting point to accomplish this task.

3.2.3. The persistence of quasi-transcendentalism

Quasi-transcendental nature of political theory is disavowed in both of the above-discussed approaches. Tønder's argument is that quasi-transcendentalism is neither "experientially" nor politically sufficient. For, it excludes both sensorially inflected experiences and alternative interpretation of values, or events (Tønder 2013b, 118). Ultimately, according to him, this boils down to the fact that quasi-transcendentalism disregards "the contexts of power and privilege" (Ibid., 130). Elsewhere, Tønder (2015, 7) writes that "the most powerful way of ensuring a just and fair society is to base the relationship between politics and the sensorium on a norm of creativity." Realists, on their part, appeal to the similar sense of contextuality in order to cast aside the "transcendental" nature of their theoretical approach. For example, Williams (2008, 9-11) argues that his approach differs from Habermas's in that it is less universalistic – viz. it does not extend itself to those past societies where different, "non-modern" things "made sense." Likewise, Gray (2000, 20) maintains that "human existence is no a priori value. In this sense, it is no different from any other human good". Gray (Ibid.) immediately adds that still, all ways of life have a certain "interest" in supporting *modus vivendi*. It is not clear on what basis this "interest" is considered to be universal in its scope.

What needs to be asked is to what extent such an open-ended politics is devoid of quasi-transcendental connotations. For it is one thing to reject the deontological framework on an *ethical* level, but it is another question if this can be done on an epistemological level. When Habermas levels the charge of performative contradiction against what he perceives as relativistic approaches, his claim is that "subject-centered reason can be convicted of being authoritarian in nature only by having recourse to its own tools" (Habermas 1987a, 185). Renouncing the quasi-transcendental implications of one's own approach is tantamount to rejecting the fact that one is occupying a performative stance. This holds true even in cases when the one is rejecting the universal thrust of deontic precepts in favor of contextually bound norms, or sensorial experiences.

At any rate, putting an emphasis on the power of "creativity" as opposed to the norms that foster antagonism, or making recourse to common "interests" looks like propounding some quasi-transcendental principles. Such principles are not entirely transcendental, as they do not go beyond the constraints of space and time, but still, they refer to something that is invariant across different contexts.

So, if deontological liberalism fails to demonstrate that its deontic precepts are not universal in nature, this should not be automatically interpreted as a rejection of the quasi-transcendental underpinnings of the whole approach. There could be another conception of ethics that more adequately describes the contexts in which human beings operate. As I argued above, sensorial and realist conceptions of ethics do not appear to be such conceptions, as they disregard either context-transcendent or context-specific sides of normativity. Instead, in order to define tolerance, we need to look for an approach that provides a more universally applicable conception of morality. I argue in the next sections that Derrida's deconstruction is such an approach.

3.3. Maintaining tolerance as a paradox in Derrida's deconstruction

Once it becomes clear that on an ethical level, it is not possible to discard the need either for a certain context-transcending normative force or the organizing role of particular norms or rules, we need to chart an alternative, third route that also makes sure that the neo-Kantian pitfalls are avoided. On an epistemological level, it seems that the paradoxes of tolerance cannot be circumvented, but rather, they need to be taken as quasi-transcendental structures. I argue that the Derridean deconstruction addresses both of the needs.

The Derridean deconstruction does not circumvent the necessity of particular norms or rules and the need for a context-transcending universal force. Instead, there are two general characteristics of the Derridean approach: first, Derrida sees ethical acts as containing a supererogatory element, that is, they necessarily go beyond duty defined by certain normative and non-normative rules and calculations. The duty involves not only comprehensive doctrines and deontic precepts but also economic calculations and legal norms; second, Derrida believes that this supererogatory nature

of justice stems from it being intrinsically bound up with the very forces that it seeks to transcend. In this way, it is different from the traditional accounts of supererogation, which generally consider supererogatory acts as being purely gratuitous. Paradoxically, Derridean supererogation involves both the endorsement and transcendence of normative rules and calculations. Such a view is most propitious for accounting for the paradoxes of tolerance. Below, I will make a quick detour and first outline the defining characteristics of the Derridean justice and, second, I will show how tolerance can be imagined within such a framework.

3.3.1. The paradoxical nature of justice

In order to grasp the paradoxical nature of the Derridean deconstruction, we need to delineate it from the prevailing conceptions of supererogation. The classic accounts of supererogation, such as Urmson's (1958), or Chisholm's (1982, 98-113), are generally concerned with the classification of ethical acts without elaborating on the ontological nature of normativity (which they largely take for granted). In contrast, Derrida (1992a) argues that purely ethical decisions do not exist as every act is necessarily tainted by different sorts of rules and calculations and is subject to different interpretations. On the other hand, acting in conformity with some comprehensive doctrine is akin to the application of the pre-existing rule - sometimes for the private benefit, rather than being a properly ethical act. The same holds true for duties that are prescribed by deontological liberal approaches, such as Kant's and Habermas's. There must be something more to justice that predetermined moral doctrines cannot capture.

So, if justice is not something that exists independently of pre-existing normative or legal doctrines, but at the same time, it cannot be determined fully by them, how can we conceive it at all? Is it merely an illusion – a vain ideal, or does it have a grounding in reality? Derrida believes in the latter and claims that such paradoxes or aporias are integral elements of our reality.

In order to understand better why a necessary determinateness or rule-boundedness of an ethical act implies the call for a transcendent *other* and vice versa, we need to examine Derrida's late works where the idea of undecidability becomes explicit. Derrida starts from asserting that every

decision undergoes an ordeal of the undecidable as otherwise, the decision would not be just but merely an application of a rule – i.e., be a product of a determinate context. (Derrida 1992a, 22-25) For example, if it were possible to completely forego the supererogatory nature of ethics and adhere steadfastly to certain rules or calculations, then we would not be able to deliver a "fresh judgement" (Derrida uses precisely this English expression). (1992a, 23) So long as every new context poses at least a conceptual challenge to the existing norms, we need to transcend the boundaries of the pre-established doctrines and acquire a new understanding of the out-of-the-box situations. To take a simple example, even such supposedly universal value as human rights is not immutable, since what constitutes a proper "human" is sometimes called into question. The opponents of LGBTQ rights, for example, do not always consider themselves to be against human rights, but rather, their claim is that gays are not fully human to enjoy the same privileges as heterosexuals. Thus, the fight for LGBTQ rights involves a conceptual and ethical redefinition of "human rights." It requires the proponents to apply the norm which was laid down in the Age of Enlightenment to contemporary reality. Moreover, ethical acts are not just based on calculations, but they necessarily transcend what is in the actors' interests or even reciprocal agreements. If this were not the case, then it would be impossible to achieve justice as the latter involves an act that is not merely practical from the economic point of view but also just from a hypothetically objective, universal standpoint.

From the other side, from a Derridean perspective, justice cannot be detached completely from the preconceived set of norms, or economic calculations. It is hard to imagine a principle that has cut all links with pre-existing notions of justice and is not partially traceable to already established norms. Similarly, almost every ethical act involves an element of economic transaction. One is never entirely sure whether or not an act is gratuitous as there is always a chance that what at first glance seemed a pure instance of gratuity, was in fact driven by egotistic calculations. „Whether it is a question of singularity or universality, and each time both at once, *both* calculation *and* the incalculable *are necessary*," argues Derrida (2005c, 150). [49] Even in such seemingly purely altruistic cases as an anonymous blood donation, it is hard to prove that no psychological benefit was accrued to a benefactor. The egotistic element cannot be ruled out as long as one can be expected to receive a certain material (in the case of familial altruism) or psychological (in the

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[49] On Derrida's deconstructive approach to justice and the relationship between calculable and incalculable see Cornell et al. (1992), Beardsworth (1996), Cheah and Guerlac, eds. (2009), Haddad (2013).

case of anonymous blood donations) benefits in her lifetime (or as we shall see later, in the case of sacrificing one's own life, one is faced with a constant prospect of reinterpretation of the original act). The most important aspect of, what Derrida calls, the conditionality of ethical acts is that it is intrinsically tied up with the supererogatory facet of justice. The necessary conditionality guarantees that there is always a space for further improvement and criticism – no ethical act is absolutely universal in nature. Otherwise, one has to anoint certain ethical acts as sacred and not susceptible to any type of criticism or re-interpretation. The Derridean critique destabilizes the moral purity of supererogatory acts and argues that in the end, every act can turn out to be of different nature than it was initially thought.

Based on the foregoing, the supererogatory nature of a normative act can be understood in three senses: first, the Derridean version of supererogation can be taken as a utopian ideal that is potentially realizable, but its realization is postponed in the future. Derrida explicitly objects to this interpretation by arguing that in this case, "inaccessibility would still retain the temporal form of a future present, of a future modality of the living present." (Derrida 1994, 84) The latter is problematic as it would turn out that justice is something that objectively exists in space and time, but it cannot be attained for whatever reason. The Derridean contention, on the other hand, is that justice is an inner condition of reality – something that makes all forms of conditionality, including rules, calculations, political regimes, theological doctrines, etc., possible. If justice were purely conditioned, then it would be a mere economic transaction – a product of some egotistic calculation. On the other hand, it is hard to find something that is unconditional. Such unconditionallaty can be compared to sacredness as an unconditional act would be absolutely selfless and singular. In reality, it is hard to find something that is not conditioned upon anything – for example, is not part of some institution or a set of rules, or cannot be reinterpreted in the future, cancelling out its "sacred" character. Justice has an aporetic structure; it is an enabling condition, rather than a negative ideal, that can never be achieved and for this reason, may drive human beings to nihilism. Democracy will never exist, "*not because it will be deferred*, but because it will always remain aporetic in its structure." [Emphasis added] (Derrida 2005c, 86)

Second, we may argue that justice is achieved in a fleeting manner and is easily overpowered by the forces of conditionality – the rules and calculations that subdue its unsettling power. On this interpretation, while justice is evanescent in nature, it is still something that firmly registers itself

in time and can be captured in an objective manner. However, if it is argued that a particular act was just in an absolute sense, such interpretation would run counter to Derrida's (1982, 5) claim that *différance* is "what makes possible the presentation of the being-present, it is never presented as such." The same logic applies to justice, which is a cognate of *différance* and named by Derrida at various points as *trace*, *iterability*, *arche-writing*, *khôra*, *democracy-to-come*, etc. If it were even possible to catch the very moment when justice is achieved, it would be impossible to maintain it. As it was already argued above, any just decision quickly establishes itself as part of a rule, a convention or a doctrine, as the very moment justice comes into force quickly evaporates and gives ground to the forces of conditionality. Even sacrificing one's own life cannot be perceived as just in an absolute sense as the motives that transpire at the very moment of an act quickly vanishes and a *post mortem* glorification, or sanctification of it may serve various interests beyond what was originally intended.[50] (This is especially true of the deeds undertaken by religious saints – a favourite example of the theorists of supererogation.)

Finally, the Derridean supererogatory justice is understood as a demand that individuals cannot help making, despite the fact that it cannot be fulfilled. One of the lessons of the Derridean deconstruction is that the paradoxical/aporetic nature of justice does not amount to the renouncement of universal morality altogether. Instead, it has to be taken into account that unconditional universality is needed in order to make possible delivering justice, in general. Self-sufficiency of particularist comprehensive doctrines is as much an illusion as its opposite – a conception of unadulterated morality. At first glance, the idea seems to be counter-intuitive, since it is argued that (a) precisely because every ethical/normative act is necessarily bound by determinate rules or calculations, it has a capacity to transcend its defining limits, and (b) since a

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[50] Urmson's (1958) famous example of a soldier throwing himself on the grenade to save fellow combatants admittedly makes it harder for a sceptic to deny the purely supererogatory nature of such an act. Clearly, there could be no possible benefits accrued to a person who sacrificed himself, obviously, not even a psychological comfort. However, the Derridean critique of such accounts of supererogation does not just appeal to the contamination of pure supererogatory acts by the existence of private, egotistic interests. Rather, the contention also is that any supererogatory act quickly turns into something other than it was originally intended - it necessarily gives rise to various interpretations. This point is neglected by such critics of Derrida as Heyd (2005) and Ungureanu (2013; 2019), who argue against the thesis that private interests necessarily compromise supererogatory acts. This is not to say that there is no supererogatory element in the deeds of saints, for example. Instead, the contention is that the original motives and the frame of thought often remain a mystery, for death itself remains inaccessible from the vantage point of a living mortal. The fact that religious saints usually believe in a prospect of otherworldly salvation complicates the matters further.

context-transcending universal force exists, it is grounded in a finite reality. As we have seen, Derrida does not regard this as a problem as he openly endorses an aporetic nature of justice.

In this way, deconstructive analysis of justice necessarily contains a supererogatory element, even though it cannot completely fulfil it. Derrida does not imply that such a performative stance has to be this or that type of democracy, or tolerance, or any other concrete ethical, or political proposal. Instead, his idea is very minimal: all that is required is to respect the gap announced by the ontological analysis of justice, while the ontic content may vary across different contexts. At various points, Derrida (1992a, 38-39; 2005a, 39) calls such a conception of justice an act of "madness" or "madness of the impossible."

Below, I will show how the paradoxes of tolerance can be accounted for with the help of the Derridean deconstructive approach to justice.

3.3.2. Accounting for the paradoxes of tolerance

Let us quickly recall why the deontological approach and its alternative fail to account for the paradoxes of tolerance. Deontological liberalism purports to provide an objective universal standard of morality that is supposed to dictate what can be tolerated (the first paradox of tolerance) and where such tolerance should end (the second paradox of tolerance). In reality, as it was demonstrated with the critique of Habermas and Forst, it flounders on maintaining its standards, chiefly among them reciprocity, as universal. The universality of a moral norm, on its part, is desperately needed to sustain tolerance as a value. Otherwise, as it is shown on the examples of the realist and sensorial accounts of tolerance, one cannot establish a) why other, non-mainstream doctrines should be tolerated (the main problem of the realist approach), and b) where tolerance should end at all (the main problem of the sensorial approach). The Derridean deconstruction avoids both extremes.

From this perspective, the first paradox of tolerance can be accounted for by arguing that justice requires paradoxes in order to exist as justice. Otherwise, one is trapped within the confines of a particularist doctrine that only prescribes something that is already part of the dominant comprehensive worldview. Tolerating something that is not part of your worldview is a basic

requirement to be just. Justice, as Derrida (1992a, 23) argues, needs a "fresh judgement" that arises only in case one is ready to forego some of the previously held beliefs. This does not of course amount to erecting a layer of universal morality - including such purportedly universal mechanism as reciprocity - on top of the privately held ethical beliefs. Doing so would again annul justice as the latter requires to go beyond not only any particularistic doctrine but also any type of a predetermined rule or a program. Absolute universality exemplified by reciprocity is, in this sense, itself a predetermined rule or a program. For this reason, from the Derridean standpoint, even non-reciprocal acts can be justified from an ethical point of view. In contrast, universality is based on the recognition of the necessity of *both* reciprocal and non-reciprocal acts. Derrida illustrates this point when discussing the architectonics of a gift – a phenomenon that also subsists on a gap between supererogatory, unconditional nature of justice, and conditionality of rules and calculations. He sums up his point in the following terms:

"The gift, if there is any, does not even belong to practical reason. It should remain a stranger to morality, to the will, perhaps to freedom, at least to that freedom that is associated with the will of a subject… If you give because you must give, then you no longer give. This does not necessarily mean that every law and every "you must" is thereby excluded from the gift (if there is any), but you must then think a law or a "you must" that are not determinable by some practical reason" (Derrida 1992b, 156). In the same manner, tolerance may lie in an unexpected gesture of tolerating someone without them even reciprocating on it. The only universal requirement for a tolerant person is to stay open, despite the fact it is virtually impossible.

The second paradox of tolerance, likewise, is accounted for by drawing from the paradoxical nature of justice. As I've shown, from the Derridean perspective, universality cannot be attained in an absolute sense, as it would amount to the reinstatement of the sacredness of certain moral acts. Tolerance is bound by certain conditions and rules that make it impossible to be absolutely tolerant; every time such a claim arises, it is checked by certain conditions. At this point, what Derrida argues for about hospitality and forgiveness can also be applied to the question of tolerance. In relation to both questions, Derrida sustains that conditionality and unconditionality are absolutely heterogeneous from each other and must remain so.

To explicate the aporetic structure of conditionality and unconditonality, we may look at Derrida's treatment of the subject of hospitality. According to him, a host is necessarily a sovereign in his

own realm. Otherwise, he or she loses the right to welcome and receive a guest. "Anyone who encroaches on my 'at home', on my ipseity, on my power of hospitality, on my sovereignty as host, I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner," writes Derrida (2000a, 54-55). Moreover, it is not only that being a host requires sovereignty rights over one's own abode, but also, it involves determining conditions of the receiving act. For example, not all guest are received indiscriminately –especially, those that would encroach on one's "at home", are not welcome. It is the host who decides whom to offer a shelter and whom to reject (Ibid.). As we have seen, the similar logic applies to the question of tolerance as it necessarily imposes its own limits. Paradoxes are inherent to the practice of hospitality as much as they are inherent to tolerance. In both cases, conditionality and unconditionality are each other's enabling conditions (Derrida 2000a 147, 2005, 44-45). Not tolerating the intolerant, similarly, is admittedly a discriminating act, in a sense, that it draws on particularist ethical doctrines or private interests. But it does not lead to a renouncement of the universalistic thrust of tolerance, as the deontological approach suspects it. Paradoxically, setting the limit to tolerance is what enables its context-transcending power.

3.3.3. Paradoxes as quasi-transcendental structures

To summarize, Derrida advocates a) setting a limit to tolerance; b) leaving the space open for transcending this limit; c) retaining the paradoxes of tolerance. Now, the questions are: if the paradoxes cannot be superseded, then what is their nature and what practical purpose they can serve in the case of tolerance?

The fact that paradoxes are ineluctable indicates that they are of quasi-transcendental nature. Several commentators already have alluded to the quasi-transcendental nature of deconstruction.[51] In his last works, Derrida (2005b, 91) himself acknowledges the quasi-transcendental character of his critical expositions. Quasi-transcendentality here alludes to the revised architectonics of the Kantian transcendental idealism. Unlike Kant, Derrida does not seek to establish the conditions of experience that are completely extra-temporal and ahistorical. The paradoxes of tolerance are heavily grounded in a concrete reality so as the element of particularity cannot be predicted

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[51] See Gasché (1986), Bennington (1993, 2000), Rorty (1995b), Fritsch (2011), and Doyon (2014).

preliminarily. There is no categorical, clear-cut rule, like reciprocity, that would dictate how tolerance should be exercised.

However, we can argue that these paradoxes, as long as they are ontically defined, still impose certain minimal practical requirements on both tolerating and tolerant parties. Tolerating those who openly renounce the paradoxical nature of tolerance is not the same as tolerating those who merely have different opinions. For example, I argue that tolerating the adherents of totalitarian ideologies contradicts the spirit of the Derridean approach to a greater extent than not tolerating them. Of course, as it was already mentioned above, no possibility of tolerance should be totally excluded as there are no transcendental requirements that prompt us to do so. In certain cases, tolerating a religious fundamentalist, for example, could also be an only viable and justified option. Quasi-transcendental paradoxes can only give us some very weak foundations for ranking the different cases of tolerance, instead of deciding once and for all what should be tolerated and what not.

Recall that deontological view of tolerance won't tolerate even the advocates of the realist and sensorial approach, despite the fact that the two are certainly not against tolerance. They merely oppose the Kantian separation between higher-order morality and lower-order ethical and religious doctrines. The realists and "sensorialists," on the other hand, are too hesitant to impose the limits of tolerance and risk self-negation due to being prone to tolerating the intolerant. The Derridean approach, on the other hand, is supposed to be much more open towards such approaches than to, say, Nationalism Socialism, or Bolshevism.

Although they offer an invalid account of the structure of experience, deontological liberalism and its universalism denying counterparts are still fallibilistic doctrines and are much closer to the Derridean aporetic view than their totalitarian alternatives. For example, both Habermas (2003b, 85) and Forst (2012, 129-130) admit that the conditions of experience are not transcendental, but rather quasi-transcendental. They err in designing the universal rule that disregards its own quasi-transcendental status, not in endorsing fallibilism. Realists and "sensorialists," on their part, are fallibilists at heart. Their main problem lies in extending such fallibilism inordinately to include even such cases which can potentially jeopardize fallibilism.

From the Derridean perspective, one should draw a line between different fallibilistic conceptions and an outright rejection of fallibillism. Liberal doctrines, no matter how lopsided their claims are,

should be deemed worthy of tolerance, whereas in most cases, totalitarian ideologies should be met with open hostility.

Conclusion

In the beginning, I outlined two major paradoxes that characterize the notion of tolerance in contemporary liberal theory. The first problem concerns the difficulty of tolerating the views that challenge one's deeply held beliefs. The second paradox asks where the threshold of such toleration lies. As I've shown in this chapter, neo-Kantian deontological theories fail to address either of these two paradoxes. Habermas and Forst cannot ignore the fact that a) ethical doctrines necessarily impact a tolerating act in such a way that tolerance is never neutral but instead, dependent upon the prior rules often supplied by ethical doctrines, and b) for the same reason, they cannot determine a threshold of tolerance since there is no neutral vantage point to do so. Those critics of neo-Kantian theories of tolerance that relax the requirement of universalizability for an ethical act are equally unable to overcome the conundrum of tolerance as ethical doctrines, or political expediency do not guarantee that a hitherto unknown or not tolerated practice, or an act can be tolerated. And finally, Tønder's sensorial conception of tolerance tries to circumvent the second paradoxes of tolerance completely; however, this aporia of tolerance surreptitiously return through the back door. Most importantly, it becomes apparent that it is impossible to write off the limiting role of norms in determining who should not be tolerated.

The Derridean aporetic conception of tolerance, by contrast, provides a thinner universal standard than its deontological counterpart. It acknowledges the contamination of a universalistic act by particularistic doctrines. According to this view, it is imperative to maintain the tension between the two different facets of tolerance – the one tied to a determinate context, or rules, and the other that always tries to transcend its finite context. In this way, it will be possible to entertain the possibility of a self-negating tolerant act without losing ground to a neo-Kantian universal morality deracinated from any determinate context.

Since paradoxes cannot be thrown away, they can be construed as having a quasi-transcendental nature. I argue that this has practical implications for defining tolerance. Now, it is possible to circumscribe the limit of tolerance by looking at the different degrees of how ethical doctrines

acknowledge the quasi-transcendental paradoxes. So, in contrast to deontological liberalism, the Derridean view turns out to be more respectful of other fallibilistic approaches. As opposed to non-universalistic conceptions, the deconstructive approach does not shy away from imposing limits on tolerance either.

CONCLUSION

In the beginning, I posed a question if it is possible to maintain the universality of truth and morality under the pressure of the populist movement. Some strands of populism cast doubt upon the realist notion of truth as something that exists independently and can be acquired via scientific methods. Likewise, moral universalism is called into question in the name of the supremacy of localized norms (even if such norms are liberal). Some commentators blamed post-modernism and post-structuralism for such relativization of truth and morality (McIntyre 2018, 138-139; Sim 2019, 104).

In this thesis, I showed that not only it is false that Derrida's deconstruction is a relativistic philosophy, but it can also be argued that the Derridean approach can salvage the universality of truth and morality. The task of recovering universalism became especially urgent after it became apparent that the traditional realist account of truth and the deontological account of morality confront considerable difficulties. By deconstructing Habermas's philosophy, I argued that the above-mentioned traditional notions of truth and morality fail on their own terms.

I showed that despite the fact that the Habermasian neo-Kantian liberalism cannot sustain itself as a universalistic approach, its universal thrust still needs to be retained. In his works, Habermas (1987a, 185; 2017, 47) defends the need for universalism with the argument of a performative contradiction. The basic premise of this argument is that any theoretical approach is articulated communicatively and therefore, is necessarily expressed on an ontic plane.

Apart from the argument of a performative contradiction, the necessity of universalism could be attested via the critique of relativistic approaches. In all three chapters, I took issue with the relativistic counterparts of the traditional notions of universal truth and morality. I showed that they could not escape from their own quasi-transcendental implications. Nor could they propound justified theoretical accounts of truth and morality.

Below, I will first briefly summarize how I defended the project of the Derridean universalism in three chapters. Then I will point out the main advantages and disadvantages of this approach and say a few words about the possible future lines of research.

1) In the first chapter, I asked two related questions: a) Is the traditional realist notion of mind-independent truth justified? and b) If not, does this warrant a relapse into anti-realism – i.e., an endorsement of the epistemic notion of truth?

a) To answer the first question, I examined Habermas's (2003b) critique of realism in *Truth and Justification*. Habermas presents two arguments against realism. First, he shows that such a position is not internally consistent. He maintains that "as we cannot grasp reality except in terms of our concepts, the idea that we could somehow step in between the linguistic realm of concepts and 'naked' reality, purified, as it were, of all subjective components makes no sense" (Ibid., 2016). For example, the external stimuli can be meaningfully interpreted by different parties as referring to the same object only if they coordinate their responses communicatively (Ibid., 118). Second, Habermas (Ibid., 217) argues that unapologetic endorsement of realism leads to a metaphysical deadlock. As he concludes, summarizing Hilary Putnam's views, one should reject "the model of the world as consisting of objects or facts that exist once and for all independently of our conceptualizations and that impose themselves on our minds so unequivocally as to allow for but one way of representing them." (Ibid.) The alternative is to declare certain claims about reality as absolutely true – a move that would invite the suspicion of metaphysics.

b) Anti-realism is similarly rejected on the grounds that it essentially smuggles realism through the back door in the guise of "objective idealism" (Habermas 2003b, 201-202). Idealists, in a nutshell, assume that the outside world is structured on the pattern of the human mind and hence, is potentially accessible in entirety. Habermas argues that endorsing idealism, in its full sense, would spell the end to the learning processes as would also be the case with realism (Ibid., 132-152).

I accepted Habermas's criticism as valid and argued that both realist and anti-realist notions of truth were not justified. I contended that truth could not be located on either of these two sides of the dichotomy. Instead, truth should be understood as a gap between the two.

Habermas (2003b, 16, 27-33; 2008, 152-181), despite his criticisms of realism and anti-realism, still misses the mark as he occasionally concedes too much ground to either realism or anti-realism. As an alternative, I propose the Derridean deconstruction as a universalistic solution.

On the one hand, Derrida rejects the claim that the mind-independent reality can be accessed outside of a particular context or a linguistic practice, either in scientific terms or in some mystical ways (Derrida 1978, 143). Derrida's argument is that a certain determinateness – a rootedness in a particular context, is always guaranteed by the linguistic practice that necessarily requires that everything has a particular, context-bound character.

On the other hand, contrary to anti-realism, Derrida argues that every context-bound truth is necessarily punctured by the possibility of context-transcendence. He forcefully demarcates the analysis of language from the philosophy of being (Derrida 1982, 175-207). He argues that the central force behind deconstruction – différance is a "nonconcept in that it cannot be defined in terms of oppositional predicates; it is neither this nor that, but rather this and that (for example, the act of differing and of deferring), without being reducible to a dialectical logic either" (Derrida 2004, 142).

The rejection of both alternatives reveals the aporetic structure of experience. In other words, it can be argued that truth is plagued with paradoxes. I showed that the Derridean deconstruction, despite being constantly subversive to every particular context, could still be interpreted as a quasi-transcendental theoretical endeavor. This is due to the fact that Derrida cannot discard the performative/ontic manifestation of his own approach. Otherwise, as Habermas (1987a, 185) rightly points out, it cannot avoid the charge of a performative contradiction.

What needs to be explored further is the relationship between deconstruction and other post-foundationalist strands of thought. With the insights gained from the Derrida-Habermas debate, we can explore the conceptions of truth in other post-foundationalist philosophers, such as Badiou, Nancy, or Laclau. The goal here is not hermeneutical, but rather analytical. In other words, we need to find out if there are other quasi-transcendental requirements that can fit the criterion, that is, that can evade the extremes of realism and anti-realism. For this, we needn't review all existing post-foundationalist literature, but a brief overview of the most important would suffice. For the lack of space, this wasn't possible within the limits of this thesis.

2) In the second chapter, I posed the following questions: a) Is the deontological liberal view of secularism justified? and b) if not, does this mean that contingency-based accounts of secularism should be endorsed?

a) I showed that the Habermasian deontological view of secularism, centered on the priority of universal morality over particularistic ethics, runs up against its own limits. First, it cannot demonstrate how such a version of universal morality can be applied to negative freedoms. For example, the cases of abortion and genetic engineering reveal that there is no neutral vantage point from which it is possible to define human life. In discussing such borderline cases, Habermas (2003a, 40) readily admits that the state neutrality cannot always be strictly enforced. Second, universal morality as applied to positive freedoms cannot remain neutral either. Habermas (2006b, 10-11; 2008 130) famously argues that religious citizens are not supposed to employ religious arguments in the formal political public sphere without taking necessary steps to translate those arguments into a secular language. However, such a translation will only work if we accept that it can neutrally convey religious attitudes, or feelings, without assigning entirely different meanings to them. As I argued, based on Arfi (2015), the Habermasian translation is not neutral, in this sense.

b) I argued that despite the fact that the universality of the Habermasian conception cannot be maintained, we should not abandon the quest for a universal conception of secularism. I offered two arguments to support my position. The first is the familiar argument of a performative contradiction that I mentioned above. Second, I showed that contingency-based alternatives to deontological secularism neither offer the accurate accounts of secularism nor escape from their own quasi-transcendental presuppositions. For example, I showed that Charles Taylor's (2007) contextualist approach to secularism does not explain how it is possible to reinterpret the existing status quo in the name of a better political model. William Connolly's (2005) immanentist alternative unavoidably confronts the problem of grounding itself into a particular worldview. Moreover, on an epistemological level, neither of the two types of relativist accounts can sidestep the quasi-transcendental implications of their own approaches. For example, Charles Taylor's designation of the "immanent frame" as a correct interpretation of the secularist path indicates that, after all, not all interpretations of secularism hold water in an equal measure. This shows that there are some external criteria, not entirely dictated by the historical condition, that reveal the correct path. Likewise, Connolly' argument implies that there are some ahistorical, quasi-transcendental features that operate in every society, regardless of a particular context.

I offered the Derridean deconstructive view of faith and knowledge as an alternative to both deontological secularism and its contingency-based counterparts. Derrida (2002, 70-93) makes the

distinction between the two sources of religion. The first source is what he calls "knowledge," which denotes any type of attachment to a determinate reality. Derrida (Ibid., 78) believes that religion cannot help but attach itself to some place, institution, or ethos. At the very moment religion institutionalizes itself, it loses its appeal to the sacred which has to remain something inaccessible or as he calls it, "unscathed" (Ibid.). From a Derridean perspective, deontological morality itself is a form of knowledge, as it presupposes following a specific rule that bars it from being an absolute standard. However, this does not mean that the possibility of context-transcendence is revoked in the Derridean philosophy. While he points out the universalism of the Kantian moral faith is untenable, Derrida (1997a, 21-22) still argues that without pretension to universal justice, no political creed, including secularism, or religion can function. He understands such universality as a singular event arriving in the form of the *other*, rather than a uniform rule that is supposed to work regardless of what particular contexts demand.

The aporetic relationship between faith and knowledge indicates that secularism cannot be homogenous in every context. However, if we interpret deconstruction as a quasi-transcendental theoretical endeavor, it means that this aporia itself is a universal requirement that can be extended to various contexts. This gives us some minimum universal requirement that can be extended across various societies.

For the lack of space, I couldn't explore various secularist arrangements in the light of the Derridean deconstructive framework. All secularist principles that could be propounded are merely provisional, except those that tend to annul the aporetic nature of secularism. The nature of such fundamentalisms needs to be carefully explored as well.

In addition, the Derridean deconstruction could be also helpful in deconstructing the various religious criticisms of secularism. Unfortunately, this could not have been undertaken within the limits of this thesis. However, one shortcoming of this project would be that it would become all-encompassing. Deconstruction should not be necessarily conceived in this way. Instead, we may still accept the division of labor between different disciplines or modes of thinking. I will summarize this dimension of tolerance further below.

3) In the third chapter, I took issue with the paradoxes of tolerance. I asked the following questions: a) Is it possible to supersede the paradoxes? and b) if not, should we endorse or discard them altogether?

a) I argued that the deontological conception of tolerance, exemplified by Habermas's and Forsts's approaches, cannot plausibly supersede the paradoxes of tolerance. I took aim at the main deontic precepts of reciprocity and generality. First, I argued that it is not only that reciprocity requires different arrangements in different contexts and the number of potential aspects of it is inexhaustible, but in certain instances, non-reciprocal tolerance might be more justified, given the existence of historical injustice and the educational, or cultural disparities stemming from it. The same logic applies to the criterion of generality. For example, LGBTQ people have been long considered to be less than human even in the West, and they still do not enjoy equal formal rights in some European countries. Recently, the issue of transgender rights has become the subject of the same kind of controversy as LGBTQ rights were in the past. There is no guarantee that in the future, what constitutes a "human" won't be up for debate. For these reasons, deontological liberalism does not offer a universal perspective that would supersede the paradoxes of tolerance.

b) I argued that the paradoxes should not be brushed aside either. I examined the two approaches that advocate such a view. The first, "realist" view attempts to dethrone morality from its status as higher-order reasoning. According to realists, tolerance has to be understood as a function of local political arrangements rather than being derived from moral judgement. However, giving up on universalism works well in situations where the parties involved possess similar amounts of material or symbolic resources or have a history of successful co-existence. It fails to account for those instances where a tolerant attitude is exhibited towards a worldview that radically challenges the status quo or deeply-held ethical convictions. The second, sensorial alternative, exemplified by Lars Tønder (2013a, b), supposes a much more radical critique of deontological liberalism. It questions the centrality of any normative conception that, in Tønder's words, stems from the somatophobic attitude characteristic of the mainstream Western ethics. Deontological liberalism is targeted as the most characteristic exemplification of the view which overlooks "sensorially-inflected" life experiences. This includes what Tønder calls "active tolerance." While the realist critics of the deontological conception of tolerance mainly focus on the need to circumscribe normativity within the bounds of a finite context – be it political or cultural, Tønder's criticism reaches an opposite conclusion. As I showed, for him, the normative dimensions of an act lose their central role in conceptualizing tolerance. I argued that the sensorial conception of tolerance turns tolerance into a floating signifier – an "immanent" practice with no need for grounding itself

in particular norms, or principles. Such a conception disregards the "particularist" dimension of tolerance that requires setting limits to it.

As paradoxes of tolerance cannot be either superseded or discarded, I argued that we need to endorse them as quasi-transcendental structures. I turned to Derrida's deconstruction to accomplish this task. From the Derridean perspective, the paradoxes should be retained for two reasons. First, justice, as Derrida argues (1992a, 23), needs a "fresh judgement" that arises only in case one is ready to forego some of the previously held beliefs. Otherwise, one is trapped within the confines of a particularist doctrine that only prescribes something that is already part of the dominant comprehensive worldview. Tolerating something that is not part of your worldview is a basic requirement to be just. Second, from the Derridean perspective, universality cannot be attained in an absolute sense, as it would amount to the reinstatement of the sacredness of certain moral acts. Tolerance is bound by certain conditions and rules that make it impossible to be absolutely tolerant; every time such a claim arises, it is checked by certain conditions. At this point, what Derrida argues for about hospitality and forgiveness can also be applied to the question of tolerance. In relation to both questions, Derrida sustains that conditionality and unconditionality are absolutely heterogeneous from each other and must remain so. Moreover, they are each other's enabling conditions (Derrida 2000a 147, 2005, 44-45).

Since paradoxes cannot be thrown away, they can be construed as having a quasi-transcendental nature. I argued that this has practical implications for defining tolerance. It becomes possible to circumscribe the limit of tolerance by looking at the different degrees of how ethical doctrines acknowledge the quasi-transcendental paradoxes. So, in contrast to deontological liberalism, the Derridean view turns out to be more respectful of other fallibilistic approaches. As opposed to relativistic conceptions, the deconstructive approach does not shy away from imposing limits on tolerance either.

Due to such minimal grounding in ontic reality, the main advantage of the Derridean quasi-transcendentalism is that its emphasis on aporias is easier to maintain across different contexts. The problem with the Habermasian view is that it defines truth and morality *entirely* as part of some preliminary program, or a theoretical approach. For this reason, it is hard to extrapolate such a view to different cases. For example, in the case of truth, Habermas slides back either into realism or anti-realism. In the first instance, he relies too heavily on scientific approaches, and for this

reason, leaves unexplained the change of scientific paradigms in different historical time periods. In the second instance, Habermas gives too much ground to the anti-realist emphasis on the linguistic practice, and for this reason, cannot account for the emergence of the learning processes. Derrida evades both of these extremes by locating truth not in such ontic domains, but in a gap between the anti-realist and realist truths. The priority of morality over particularistic ethical doctrines is similarly deconstructed by revealing the inherent indeterminacy of it. It is difficult to turn a blind eye to the fact that morality as a form of higher-order reasoning cannot detach itself from any ethical doctrine. In fact, it is itself an ethical doctrine, and admitting this destabilizes its pretension of universality. Derrida does not deny that any type of morality is already tainted by the rules, institutions, or cultural practices that place it in a particular context, contaminating its universal character. However, as we've seen, from the Derridean perspective, universalism does not lie in any determinate principle or a rule, but instead, it is located in an inherent instability of any such "program." Such a universalism can be more easily applied to different contexts.

There are at least two broad lines of criticism that can be directed against the Derridean "weak" universalism defended in this thesis. The first one asserts that the belief in aporias may not be extendable to various historical, or cultural contexts, or shared by various individuals. The second counter-argument that might be advanced from the universalist perspective is that the Derridean deconstruction offers too weak foundations for truth and morality. Below, I will discuss these counter-arguments in turn.

(1) First, it can be argued that the Derridean belief in the aporetic structure of experience is not universal. A subset of this argument is the assertion that the Derridean approach is still Eurocentric, regardless of its vehement opposition to the Western tradition of metaphysics. One may argue that the deconstructive logic cannot be accepted by someone who is raised, for example, according to Buddhist or Hinduist traditions. For example, is can be argued that both Habermas and Derrida tend to universalize the particular monotheistic tradition, instead of engaging critically with different religions or worldviews (see Ungureanu 2019). Such claims can be interpreted in two ways. First, in a relativistic fashion, one may argue that a universal claim is impossible to maintain as all positions are contingent and not extendable across various contexts; second, in a universalistic fashion it can be asserted that a universal position can be in principle occupied, but the Derridean view is not neutral enough. As I showed in this thesis, neither of these alternatives

hold water. The relativistic alternative cannot demonstrate that it is possible to get rid of universalistic implications. The Habermasian universalism, on its parts, cannot prove itself to be universally applicable across different contexts.

The failure of relativism and the Habermasian universalism does not in itself guarantee that the Derridean universalism is tenable. There are two main arguments that are advanced in this thesis in defense of such universalism. First, as I showed, occupying a quasi-transcendental position is a performative requirement; we cannot escape from it as long as we take a performative stance. Even keeping silence could be interpreted as a performative position – it still may convey something about one's views. Otherwise, the charge of a performative contradiction cannot be evaded. Likewise, from the Derridean perspective, one is always engaged in some type of discourse, as long as our positions are manifested on the linguistic/ontic plane. There is no "extra-linguistic" position as we interpret our actions on a linguistic level.

(2) Second, for some critics, the Derridean "weak" universalism may look too vague to offer anything concrete about truth and morality. However, as it was shown in this thesis, in fact, Derrida's deconstruction, interpreted as a quasi-transcendental endeavor, offers concrete philosophical and ethical proposals. For example, from the Derridean perspective, one should support the aporetic drive behind secularism as a minimal measure against the metaphysical doctrines. While it is true that Derrida does not deny the fact that secularism itself is based on a particular set of rules, traditions, or institutions, he still believes that space should always be open for something radically different. As I showed, at times, he openly expresses his preference for Europe as a sociopolitical space that can guarantee such opening (Borradori 2003, 116-117). Salvaging universalism does not permit us to lay down stronger foundations beyond acknowledging the persistence of paradoxes. In this way, the Derridean deconstruction saves us from the extremes of unapologetic universalism and self-defeating relativism.

There are at least two aspects of my approach that can have an implication for future research. The first is the separation between the metaphysical and ethical, on the one hand, and the epistemological, on the other. The second characteristic is the linkage between the epistemological dimension of a theoretical approach and the performative stance that it occupies. Below, I will discuss these implications in turn.

First, the separation between the metaphysical and ethical, on the one hand, and the epistemological, on the other, points to the fact that any relativistic, or contingency-based attitude eventually requires some "stable" epistemological foundations. For example, if one denies the existence of strong metaphysical foundations, the epistemological question about the source of such a denial remains still unresolved. In other words, one needs to specify how the knowledge about contingency is derived. Not only the Derridean aporetic conditions of experience, but even Connolly's immanentist approach or Tønder's sensorial conception of tolerance are ultimately grounded in an epistemological position that the proponent of an approach occupies. This is true regardless of the fact that in both cases, the strong metaphysical foundations are denied. Likewise, the relationship between moral claims and their epistemological status seems paradoxical. For example, one may argue that there are no universal moral norms, but it seems that such an argument still requires clarification about its epistemological status. Such a curious link between metaphysics and ethics, on the one hand, and epistemology, on the other, needs to be further explored to find out the nature of this contradictory, possibly paradoxical, relationship.

Second, the relationship between the performative and the epistemological raises further questions about the nature of epistemology. Habermas (2003b, 7-8) explicitly interlinks the two. For example, he writes that "in performing speech acts, speakers trying to reach an understanding with one another must 'unavoidably' undertake certain idealizations" (Ibid.). For Habermas, ultimately, epistemology becomes heavily influenced by the linguistic and performative turns. He writes that "what from an epistemological point of view used to be conceived as the constitution of two object domains has now been sublimated, in formal pragmatics, into a presupposition of purely formal systems of reference, or 'worlds'" (Ibid., 77). I pointed out in this thesis that from the Derridean perspective, a similar conclusion can be drawn if we follow his critique of Levinas. This time the contention is that everything manifests itself on an ontic plane. For example, Derrida (1978, 143) writes that "the *other* cannot be what it is, infinitely *other*, except in finitude and mortality." So, if Habermas believes that every type of idealization arises out of a communicative process in which human beings engage themselves, for Derrida, every claim about transcendence (including, the Levinasian one) is ultimately grounded in an ontic reality. For future research, this link between the epistemological and the performative, as well as the different methods to establish it, needs to be investigated further.

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