

The emergence of rationality: a philosophical essay¹

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O surgimento da racionalidade: um ensaio filosófico
La aparición de la racionalidad: un ensayo filosófico

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Abstract: This article argues that the emergence of the Western question of rationality can only be understood in its dynamics and evolution from the correlation between philosophical/theological/scientific institution *and* strong objectivity, which can only be achieved by a scientific institutional *praxis*, something that common sense and common people cannot achieve-perform. The Platonic model of scientific institution as centralizing and monopolizing the epistemological-political grounding, imposing it directly on common sense and common people, is based on the idea that strong epistemological-moral objectivity is the normative condition to the sense, framing, legitimation and guiding of common sense and common people. This correlation between scientific institution and strong objectivity leads to strong institutionalism regarding the constitution, the legitimation and the social foment of the valid knowledge and valid culture, again from the contraposition to common sense and common people. Here, scientific institutions acquire a role of judge and guide of social evolution as a whole. The paper's central argument is that such Platonic association between scientific institution and rationality (or epistemological-moral objectivity as a product of scientific institution) must be deconstructed in favor of common sense and common people, that is, in favor of democracy as the basis of the epistemological-moral grounding, which implies, as a consequence, the institutional weakening and even abandonment of that Platonic self-understanding which associates scientific institution and objectivity.

Keywords: Rationality. Scientism. Foundation. Objectivity. Democracy.

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Resumo: o artigo argumenta que a emergência, no Ocidente, da questão da racionalidade somente pode ser entendida em sua dinâmica e em sua evolução a partir da correlação entre instituição filosófica/teológica/científica e objetividade forte, no sentido de que tal objetividade forte apenas pode ser fundada por meio de uma *práxis* científica institucional, algo que o senso comum e as pessoas comuns não permitem e não podem fazer. O modelo platônico de instituição científica enquanto centralizando e monopolizando a fundamentação epistemológico-política, impondo-a diretamente ao senso comum e às pessoas comuns, está baseado na ideia de que a objetividade epistemológico-moral forte é a condição normativa do sentido como um todo, é a condição para o enquadramento, a legitimação e o fomento social do conhecimento e da cultura válidos, novamente a partir da contraposição ao senso comum e às pessoas comuns. Aqui, a instituição científica adquire um papel de juiz e de guia em relação à evolução social como um todo. O argumento central do artigo consiste em que tal ligação platônica entre instituição científica e racionalidade (ou objetividade epistemológico-moral enquanto produto da instituição científica) deve ser desconstruída em favor do senso comum e das pessoas comuns, isto é, em favor da democracia como base da fundamentação epistemológico-moral, o que significa, como consequência, o enfraquecimento e mesmo o abandono institucionais daquele auto-entendimento platônico que liga instituição científica e objetividade.

Palavras-Chave: Racionalidade. Cientificismo. Fundamentação. Objetividade. Democracia.

Introduction

In a class of Introduction to Philosophy, while discussing the book VII of Plato's *Republic*, a student asked me why we study rationality, the Greek in particular and, afterwards, the Western question of rationality in general. I had never asked myself about this problem, at least not in detail, although I had some notions and epistemological-political positions regarding the concept of rationality and its institutional use by the academia. My first answer at that moment was something that was very agreeable to me: "To show that rationality—as a scientific methodology of thinking, grounding and speaking, and also as a methodology of living—is not pure; to show that rationality is a mixture of many practices, senses and symbols which have common sense and everyday life as their basis". From there to here, such question has streamlined my thoughts on the sense of philosophy as an

institutional community, activity and matter which is different from common sense, since philosophers are something other than common people, because, when we talk about rationality as the common ground to different philosophies, we are referring to a concept of institutional philosophy which flourishes with the purpose of overcoming and at the same time framing and guiding common sense and common people. That is Plato's model of philosophy as seen in the Allegory of the Cave, that is, an *institutional philosophy* produced by a closed community with particular procedures, practices and codes. Such a philosophy overcomes common sense in order to achieve a scientific worldview (ascendant dialectics) and, by doing that, acquires epistemological-political legitimacy to frame and guide common sense and common people based on a metaphysical notion of human nature, truth and others (descendant dialectics), a kind of essentialist and naturalized basis which is very objective (see PLATO, 2002, VII, 514a-541b, p. 315-359).

The first thing that can be understood about the question of rationality is that it establishes an institutional scientific notion of philosophy which is opposed to common sense and common people: this is the first step to the comprehension of the Platonic model of philosophy adopted as the hegemonic epistemological-political paradigm for Western philosophy/theology/science. It is such a strong contraposition that it came to be used in the 20th century by Martin Heidegger in his *The Essence of Truth*, where he opposes, as basis and motto for metaphysical inquiring, self-understanding and constitution, common sense's prison of the immediately useful and philosophy's inquiry for essence, uncritical common sense and philosophy as a critical scientific *praxis* (see HEIDEGGER, 1991, p. 329-330). The second step is the Platonic affirmation that epistemological-moral universalism is the condition to relativism, particularism, subjectivism, in a way that it can triumph over skepticism. Relativism, particularism or subjectivism is harmful because it leads to an epistemological-political "anything goes"; universalism leads to epistemological-moral objectivity, enabling both the institutional grounding of objective values that prevents the rabble's epistemological-moral confusion and lack of clarity and the individual life from an essential notion of wisdom contrary to a common life as determined by natural instincts (see PLATO, 2002, I, 336b-354c, p. 19-51; 2002, VII, 517c, p. 319, 1991a, p. 164; 1991b, p. 331-442; ARISTOTLE, 1984a, BOOK I, CHAPTER II, A4-5, p. 14). Heidegger's *The Essence of Truth* agrees with Plato's philosophy in this particular

point regarding the superiority of the question of essence in relation to common sense's living guided by what is immediately useful (see HEIDEGGER, 1991, p. 329).

The third step of institutional philosophy is the assumption of a model of human nature – or metaphysical-ontological essence – as the basis of the philosophical/theological/scientific institutional *praxis* both in terms of institutional grounding and of philosophical/theological/scientific institution's social rooting. This is the normative basis and political consequence of institutional constitution, grounding and political action. It legitimizes strong institutionalism regarding the foundation of institutional philosophical/theological/scientific contents insofar as institutions centralize and monopolize the construction of knowledge (denying it to common sense and common people) and, accordingly, the legitimation of social evolution, which becomes *an institutional matter and praxis* based on an essentialist and naturalized foundation, assumed by an institutional self-authorized legal staff located beyond common man/woman (see ARISTOTLE, 1984b, 1094b, p. 49; 1984b, 1102a-1102b, p. 62-63). The fourth step is the affirmation of the philosophical purity and asepsis both in terms of normative constitution and of everyday life, again from the contraposition to common sense and common people (see PLATO, 2002, VII, 516b-e, p. 318; 1991a, p. 149-158; ARISTOTLE, 1984b, 1095a, p. 51). Likewise, such fourth step also implies institutional objectivity regarding the creation and use of philosophical/theological/scientific theories when institutions are compared to the normative confusion of common sense, the integrity of the intellectual *versus* the crudity of the multitudes. In this article, I develop these intuitions concerning the constitution, foundation and social boosting of philosophical/theological/scientific institutions, their legal staff and contents as the Platonic heritage which was assumed as the basic paradigm of Western philosophy/theology/science. My essay has not the aim of reconstructing step by step the history of Western rationality and the many traditions which were fused in this long and contradictory historical, theoretical and cultural process. It intends only to provide general observations which characterize the Platonic and Western search for a rational conception and grounding as a kind of correlation and mutual-support of strong institutionalism and strong objectivity concerning the constitution, legitimation and social boosting of an institutional scientific worldview to common sense

and common people. As a consequence, it does not aim at denying philosophical/theological/scientific institution as the basis of constitution, legitimation and social foment of essentialist and naturalized foundations (or at least of valid scientific knowledge), but to problematize what kinds of institutional foundation and interpretation of rationality can be sustained in our contemporary pluralist and relativist world to both philosophical-theological-scientific institutions and popular cultures.

The Platonic Model of Foundation and the Emergence of Rationality

The Platonic model of epistemological-moral foundation is constructed from the understanding that common sense and common people are not capable of grounding an objective and critical scientific worldview. Common sense is a set of non-scientific practices and codes, insofar as common people are fundamentally guided by their natural instincts, which means that common sense and common people are not rational regarding their constitution and action over time. I consider the Allegory of the Cave as the clearest proof of this Platonic starting point: Human nature without education, without philosophical orientation and grounding, is purely and simply a cave where people live their lives based on ignorance and darkness—which is shown by the metaphoric association between cave and darkness and knowledge and light. As a consequence, it is necessary to escape the cave in order to achieve the light of truth and salvation (see PLATO, 2002, VII). Now, why is it necessary to escape the cave? Because common sense means ignorance, and ignorance means and leads to darkness. Such Platonic starting point leads to the legitimation of a metaphysical order which is the condition of evaluation and legitimation of common sense and common people, since this metaphysical order can overcome the cave itself, at least in the sense that a philosophical institution based on a metaphysical order has legitimacy to frame and guide common sense and common people. In other words, a philosophical institution based on an essentialist and naturalized foundation substitutes the crudity and lack of epistemological-moral objectivity of common sense and common people with scientific contents, practices and legal staffs.

Here the open opposition to common sense and common people is seen as the basic starting point of Plato's metaphysics, something that even Immanuel Kant in the 18th century, G. W. F. Hegel in the 19th century and Martin Heidegger in the 20th century used in their reformulations of the Platonic metaphysical legacy, maintaining the aristocratic institutional self-comprehension which was Plato's starting point (see KANT, 2001; HEGEL, 1992; HEIDEGGER, 1991). Reason is something different from common sense, and opposed to it. The philosopher is different from the common man and opposed to him. In both cases, the philosophical-theological-scientific institution becomes the condition of truth of common sense and common people, so all the current values, practices and subjects *can and must be* framed, evaluated, guided and determined from philosophical-theological-scientific institutions and their objective codes, practices, procedures and legal staff. It is interesting that the philosophical question, subject and institution emerge from common sense (as a common matter, a current social-cultural problem) and as common *man* (a person or a group of daily life). In other words, the philosopher comes from common sense, since he is first and foremost a common man, although he gradually assumes a very institutionalized and specialized practice, procedure and staff. The basic metaphor for metaphysics is the idea that knowledge starts from common sense, overcoming it by scientific institutional *praxis*; it is in that moment that scientific *praxis* is self-conscious of its evolutionary course and epistemological-political constitution, as can be seen in Hegel's phenomenology of the spirit – in other words, the self-consciousness of the epistemological-moral-ontological objectivity only is possible in the moment that science is institutionalized; when knowledge is rooted into the common sense, as common sense, there is not self-reflexivity and self-consciousness of that epistemological-moral-ontological objectivity, which means also that common man cannot achieve such a strong objectivity. A correlation between philosophical institution, objectivity, truth and criticism emerges and defines the *scientific and institutional sense of rationality* as determining its constitution, legitimation and use over time by Western philosophical-theological-scientific traditions which constitute themselves from the opposition to common sense and common people, involving at the same time the epistemological-political *self*-legitimation in terms of the superiority of philosophical-theological-scientific institutions and their leadership regarding common sense and common people. From medieval

times, Catholic theology, based on the idea of *plenitudo potestatis*, or of the *theory of two swords*, has definitely adopted, within Western institutional (political, juridical, educational, scientific and others) culture, the Platonic normative notion that is characterized both by such contraposition between philosophical-theological-scientific institution and common sense and common people, and by the consequent correlation among scientific institution, objectivity, truth and criticism, contrarily to common sense's and common people's crudity and ignorance concerning this correlation.

It is from such double contraposition that concepts like homogeneity *versus* heterogeneity, unity *versus* plurality, objectivity *versus* partiality are established as epistemological steps both in terms of the institutions' scientific constitution, its *self-understanding* and *self-delimitation regarding common sense and common people*, and of the mutual relationships between philosophy/theology/science and common sense, between philosopher/theologian/scientist and common man (see PLATO, 2002, VII, 517a-541b, p. 319-359; 2003, I-LII, p. 1-55). These last contrapositions are based on the notion of daily life as an uncritical heterogeneous world of instinctive and bestialized common people. Those conceptual oppositions mean that science is directed to strong objectivity, to the essential, to the universal, which overcomes the confusion and lack of clarity of pluralism. Institutional science—and science always means institutional science, according to Plato's epistemological-political understanding and legacy—starts with the *Allegory of the Cave* in order to understand and constitute itself in relation to common sense, and this enables the legitimation of a very clear and aseptic barrier between institutional science and common sense, between the scientist and the common man. Therefore, such barrier, which allows the scientific institution's self-understanding regarding common sense and common people, acquires a political role that will define, once and for all, the conflicts between science and common sense as much as the starting point of scientific institution, namely the comprehension of common sense as a dark and rough cave inhabited by epistemologically and morally fallen beings. Here, the light of salvation comes from an institutional scientific *praxis* which overcomes the crudity of common sense by means of the negation of common sense as a valid instance in terms of speaking, acting and grounding. Common sense has nothing to say to institutional science; as a consequence, it has nothing to

contribute to political *praxis*. This Platonic notion of institutional science is so strong that it will be drawn upon by Karl Marx in the 19th century: philosophy is the head of the theory and practice of revolution while the proletariat is its heart and hands – and since the classical age we know that the hands obey the head, and not the contrary (see Marx, 2001; Rorty, 2010).

Now, how can the self-comprehension of scientific institution sustain such strong and aseptic barrier between, on the one hand, its procedures, practices, codes and legal staff, and, on the other, common sense and common people? How is the contraposition between homogeneity and heterogeneity, unity and plurality, objectivity and partiality, sustained by institutional philosophy/theology/science, possible? It is made possible through the scientific institutional defense of an essentialist and naturalized foundation as condition to criticize and orientate, as a condition of truth and emancipation, to ground the objective epistemological-political point of view. Indeed, here is the secret of Plato's model of philosophy which was adopted by medieval theology, modern natural science and modern philosophy as the basis of their internal self-structuration and general self-comprehension, of their epistemological-moral foundations, as well as of their contacts with common sense and common people: the strong objectivity of their contents, practices and procedures which would be based on an essentialist and naturalized foundation. Such an essentialist and naturalized foundation could only be understood from institutional procedures, practices and legal staff which would have the conditions to achieve, by its internal constitution, an objective worldview that could not be performed by common people based on common sense. But this institutional objectivity based on an essentialist and naturalized foundation must sustain, as the condition of institutional legitimacy and superiority regarding common sense and common people, a metaphysical model of human nature and a theological/natural hierarchy of the things that are the only normative paradigm capable of framing, criticizing and guiding common sense and common people. In other words, the Platonic opposition between philosophical/theological/scientific institution and common sense and common people is only possible through the institutional defense of an essentialist and naturalized order which is located beyond common sense and common people, since it is not accessed by common people from an analysis of common sense. Such an essentialist and naturalized foundation, which

could only be accessed by institutional procedures, codes and legal staff, cannot be confused or associated with common sense and common people, because it is metaphysical, that is, an institutional construction and form of grounding, which means that institutional science and its legal staff centralize and monopolize both institutional functioning over time and its social foment of scientific practices and codes by centralizing and monopolizing the understanding of this metaphysical order. Here, institutional science becomes the epistemological *and the political* basis of social constitution and evolution.

The history of Western institutional philosophy/theology/science is based on this Platonic notion of an essentialist and naturalized foundation, since it is permeated and streamlined by the institutional attempt to ground an objective essentialist and naturalized foundation as condition of truth, justification, criticism and guidance of common sense and common people from the correlation between scientific and political and educational institutions – that is, the association between truth and political power that Michel Foucault discusses in his works (see Foucault, 2006a, 2006b, 2008). The Platonic basic intuition, the epistemological-moral objectivity as the condition to criticize, frame and intervene, as a condition to the evolution of common sense and common people, institutes truth as the basis of political power: Institutional science grounds an objective notion of truth that legitimizes a political institutional structuration and political institutional action into the social dimension as a correlative characteristic and consequence of the Platonic model of institutional science. Now, the Platonic model of institutional science based on an essentialist and naturalized foundation as the condition to criticize, frame and guide common sense and common people is based on an misleading notion of essential objectivity which generates an institutional illusion of power that not only puts the institution—its internal procedures, codes, practices and legal staff – as opposed to common sense and common people (in the sense that it overcomes the dark cave of ignorance constituted by common sense and common people), but also endows scientific institutions with the legitimacy to criticize, frame and guide common sense and common people, denying its autonomy to constitute itself as a normative arena, epistemological-political subjects with conditions to construct valid practices and codes beyond scientific-political institutions.

The scientific institution's illusion of truth is the basis of the contraposition between scientific institution, on the one hand, and, on the other, common sense and common people, marking a scientific institutional self-comprehension which has streamlined the history and the constitution of Western philosophical-theological-scientific thought until our days, although today there is a very fast epistemological-political deconstruction of this scientific illusion of truth, this strict epistemological-moral objectivity. Such kind of illusion is the basic Platonic normative legacy and it entails many correlative characteristics: first, epistemological-moral objectivity is the condition of relativism, particularism and subjectivism; second, objectivity is located beyond common sense, since it cannot be accessed by common people, becoming fundamentally an institutional matter, procedure and practice; third, scientific institution is the only arena, procedure, practice and legal staff from which epistemological-political objectivity is constructed and grounded; fourth, epistemological-political objectivity is the foundation of institutional political power and can lend legitimacy to political institutions; fifth, institutional philosophy/theology/science becomes the paradigm of validation of all justified knowledge and political practices, of both institutions and everyday life. Now, such a scientific institutional illusion of truth means that institutions can ground a very strict epistemological-political objectivity, from internal methods, procedures, practices and a trained legal staff. Therefore, this illusion of truth means that it is possible to construct, from and by scientific institutions, an objective epistemological-moral paradigm based on an essentialist and naturalized foundation that cannot be developed from common sense and by common people. This philosophical/theological/scientific self-comprehension has constituted the basic point of unity in the evolution of Western thought over time, which allows placing Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant and Hegel, or even Husserl, Heidegger and the first Wittgenstein in the same context—the context of a scientific worldview based on strong institutionalism regarding the legitimation and the constitution of scientific institutions and their relations with common sense and common people. All of them start from the contraposition to common sense and common people and presuppose that epistemological-moral objectivity is the condition of discourse and scientific knowledge: common sense and common people are the sources of epistemological-moral confusion and nonsense, exactly because of their lack of conceptual

clarity, epistemological objectivity—which can be provided by institutionalized science, by an institutionalized scientific *praxis*.

Strong institutionalism regarding epistemological-moral foundation is the basic legacy of the Platonic model of foundation, of the philosophical/theological/scientific illusion of truth, of the strict epistemological-moral objectivity. Strong institutionalism implies the fact that philosophical/theological/scientific institutions centralize and monopolize the constitution, legitimation and evolution of the scientific field, directly legitimizing a kind of political institution that guides, frames and defines the dynamics and everyday life of common sense and common people over time. Strong institutionalism has, as a consequence, the centrality of scientific institution regarding the constitution of everyday life and of political power, in a way that establishes institutions as the basic core of social life and social evolution beyond the participation of common sense and common people in epistemological and political terms. Strong institutionalism is based both on the contraposition between institutional science and spontaneous common sense, and on the scientific institutional affirmation of an essentialist and naturalized foundation as the groundwork of epistemological-moral objectivity. This double characteristic of the constitution of scientific institutions allows the institutional self-comprehension of its superiority regarding common sense and common people, as its centrality concerning the grounding of an objective scientific worldview which is the condition of discourse and practice. From here, the scientific discussion and criticism in terms of the grounding of knowledge is basically an internal matter and practice based on internal procedures and performed by institutional self-authorized people. From here, esoteric institutional practices, codes and procedures are a different and special thing in relation to exoteric results that are easily digested and understood by common sense and common people. In other words, strong institutionalism as the result of the Platonic model of institutional philosophical/theological/scientific foundation institutes the centrality of the scientific institution regarding the constitution, legitimation and social foment of valid objective knowledge and, accordingly, of the institutional political practices concerning social life. Here, the contraposition between scientific-political institutions and common sense, between scientist/bureaucrat and common people pervades and constitutes strong institutionalism and its relationships with common sense and common people. The

same way, the correlation between strong institutionalism and strong epistemological-moral-ontological objectivity consolidates the construction, legitimation and social boosting of the valid knowledge-*praxis* as an internal and technical-logical matter-procedure centralized and monopolized by scientific institution, by its self-authorized legal staff. Here, a strong institutionalism based on a fundamentalist procedure and arena defines all the possible epistemological-moral-ontological objectivity, beyond common people and common sense.

It is interesting that the notion of *rationality* has four senses in the Western philosophical tradition, which legitimate the centrality of scientific institution regarding common sense and common people. First, rationality means scientific objectivity based on an essentialist and naturalized foundation, something that is opposed to common sense and common people, legitimizing scientific institution as the core of epistemological-political grounding; second, it signifies the logical construction of knowledge, the respect to at least the three principles of Aristotelian classical logics (identity, non-contradiction and third excluded); third, rationality means, according to the modern philosophy of the subject, self-justification based on impartial, neutral and procedural reasons, which leads to a decentered and universal consciousness (non-egocentric and non-ethnocentric), opposed to the traditional mind, which is attached to its own context (becoming egocentric and ethnocentric); fourth, it signifies the possibility of intersubjective dialog and cooperation, putting itself in the place of others (as post-metaphysical thinking does). In the four characteristics of rationality, and mainly in the first three, a form of scientism can be perceived, which is contrary to the pluralism and heterogeneity of common sense. Such scientific rationality implies that the epistemological-moral grounding is not a task that can be performed by the use of everyday values and practices, or by everyday thinking, because it requires the philosophical-scientific capability to objectively and impartially justify a kind of normativism that has no historical-cultural-linguistic roots and contextualization, a kind of normativism that has no carnality and politicity. To think objectively is to think in a formal, impartial, neutral, impersonal and procedural way, meaning that the thinker has reached the universal point of view from which criticizing, legitimizing and framing are possible. Common sense and common people do not allow such formalism, impartiality, neutrality,

impersonality and proceduralism regarding the grounding of binding notions of value and practice. As a consequence, a rational way of life and grounding acquires a scientific sense which is streamlined by philosophical/theological/scientific institution: that is the most basic characteristic of Western thought and culture in terms of epistemological-moral foundation and regarding the institutional definition of a kind of scientific rationality as the basis of that epistemological grounding. Here again, a logical, formal, impartial, impersonal and neutral form of rationality and of epistemological-political grounding is only possible through the institution's internal procedures, codes, practices and legal staff, not from common sense and by common people.

A Western Model of Institutional Scientific Community and the Foundation of Rationality: The Correlation between Strong Objectivity and Strong Institutionalism

The Western model of institutional community is the normative-political core regarding the constitution, foundation and streamlining of a notion of epistemological-moral objectivity to common sense and common people; it is the basic normative-political core concerning the construction of a valid notion of knowledge and moral *praxis* to common sense and common people. Plato's normative legacy – the philosophical/theological/scientific institution as the core of the epistemological-political foundation, institution as the very platform of legitimation, based on an essentialist and naturalized foundation, which leads to the opposition to common sense and common people, as to institutional fundamentalism (strong institutionalism and strong epistemological-moral-ontological objectivity) – was consolidated as the natural pathway of Western scientific institutional constitution, as the epistemological-political self-understanding with respect to Western scientific institutional evolution. Likewise, Plato's normative legacy puts objectivity as the epistemological-political condition of particularity, so the Western philosophical/theological/scientific institutional tradition consolidated by medieval Catholic theology has instituted such idea regarding the theoretical-practical foundation: Without epistemological-moral objectivity, there is no legitimacy, sense and justification. Here there is a correlation which is the normative legitimation of the scientific institution's centralization and monopolization of the epistemological-

moral foundation, namely the interdependence between strong objectivity (or just objectivity) and strong institutionalism. According to Plato, epistemological-moral objectivity is the condition to intersubjective meaning. Therefore, without such an epistemological-moral objectivity there is no comprehension and guided collective action. If values and practices are not based on consistent epistemological-moral objectivity, then relativism, subjectivism and, as a consequence, skepticism are the basic *normative patterns* which ground an “epistemological-moral anything goes.” This is another of Plato’s normative legacies, that is, the affirmation that, without objectivity, skepticism – which is a bad thing epistemologically and morally speaking – leads to an “anything goes.” Objectivity is the very fundamental condition for individual and social stability – and that is the major scientific institutional aim, the greatest task of scientific institution in order to save common sense and common people of the darkness of the cave.

The correlation which emerges here, therefore, is the deep association between epistemological-moral objectivity and scientific institution, that is, the fact that scientific institution grounds an objective epistemological-moral paradigm to frame, guide, criticize and orientate both the institution itself and common sense and common people. Epistemological-moral objectivity becomes not only an institutional task beyond common sense and common people, but also a very institutional property, in the sense that scientific institution centralizes and monopolizes the constitution, legitimation and social foment of this objective epistemological-moral paradigm, from the (institutional) justification that common sense and common people lack such an objective scientific worldview. This correlation between scientific objectivity and scientific institution leads to strong institutionalism regarding the constitution, legitimation and social foment of the valid knowledge and grounding of an institutional political *praxis* that can orientate and frame common sense and common people. This correlation enables the institution’s self-comprehension and political power to guide social evolution as a whole from its internal practices, procedures, codes and legal staff, in a vertical sense from top to bottom. Here, the scientific institution assumes a pastoral sense, since it becomes the judge of culture, legitimating from its internal constitution and grounding what is and what is not valid knowledge, what is and what is not civilized culture.

In other words, scientific institution legitimizes from within the entire external social-cultural context and dynamics, which also implies the fact that the philosopher/theologian/scientist, from his bureau, acquires an epistemological-political power that frames social life and common people as a whole. On this point, the Platonic separation between esoteric and exoteric texts/practices also means the centrality and superiority of the esoteric institutional role regarding exoteric common sense and common people. Now, how is it possible? As said above, by the correlation between strong objectivity and scientific institution, which leads to strong institutionalism and institutional fundamentalism concerning the constitution, foundation and social foment of an objective epistemological-moral paradigm, which means as consequence the institutional self-referentiality, self-subsistence and autonomy regarding common sense and common people.

Truth is objective, and the political sphere is based on truth. Truth is an institutional matter, made possible only by scientific institution; as a consequence, political *praxis* is based on scientific institution's internal procedures, practices, codes, legal staff and contents, which were constructed by institutional science. This is the Western traditional way with respect to a triple correlation: first, the relationship between institutional science and common sense and common people; second, the link between scientific institution and political power; third, the profound link between truth and political legitimacy. This triple correlation grounds a model of epistemological-moral foundation that presupposes strong objectivity as a condition to particularism, as the truth of particularism, which means that the Enlightenment is fundamentally a scientific institutional way and sense. The strong objectivity constructed by a philosophical/theological/scientific institution enables the framing, the grounding and the guiding of common sense and common people, so that this strong objectivity leads to strong institutionalism in terms of constitution, legitimation and social foment of the valid knowledge and cultural-political practices, since scientific institution centralizes and monopolizes such a scientific task. On this point, as I ever said above, the scientific institution becomes self-referential, self-subsisting and autonomous regarding common sense and common people, becoming also closed to them and acquiring a depoliticized and technical core-role.

In Plato's normative legacy, scientific institution implies the effective epistemological-moral objectivity as its basis and core. On the other hand, common sense and common people is its opposite, associated with relativism, subjectivism, particularism and inability to think in a universal way and sense. Therefore, the scientific institution is the counterpoint to common sense and common people, as epistemological-moral objectivity is the opposite of common sense's relativism, subjectivism and particularism. Scientific institution and its objective epistemological-moral paradigm that leads to truth are not only the counterpoint to common sense and common people, but also their truth, their sense. And it is from scientific institution allied to political power that the normative framing, guiding and orientation are possible. The dark cave of common sense can be overcome by scientific institution as much as common people are well guided by the institutional philosopher. The fact is that Plato has developed the idea that knowledge is an institutional matter and *praxis* by a scientific institutional community that can ground an objective epistemological-moral paradigm. Such objective epistemological-moral paradigm overcomes the relativism and particularism of common sense and common people, in other words, its ignorance. Here, epistemological-political objectivity as a scientific institutional matter and *praxis* provides scientific institution with the power not only to centralize and monopolize the legitimation of valid knowledge, but also to frame and guide common sense and common people in their evolution over time.

Western scientific institutional culture and its profound link with objectivity are in the foundations of strong institutionalism, which is a very basic characteristic of the Western scientific institution and of its self-understanding regarding both the construction and the grounding of valid knowledge and concerning the very scientific institutional relationships with common sense and common people (see Habermas, 1989). Here, scientific institution centralizes and monopolizes the constitution and legitimation of epistemological-moral objectivity. Now, if epistemological-moral objectivity is the only normative condition to pluralism and subjectivism, then scientific institution, in the moment that it – and only it – has the capability to ground objectivity and streamline it over time – becomes the core both epistemologically and politically, since scientific institution is the societal basis *par excellence*, because it is from such scientific institution that social-cultural evolution

is planned and carried out. And it is here that the Platonic contraposition between scientific institution and common sense, philosopher/theologian/scientist and common people acquires a political-cultural sense that defines the Western scientific institutional history and evolution up to our days: the epistemological-moral objectivity is a monopoly of scientific institution, since it is provided by the philosopher/theologian/scientist, not by common sense and common people. The discussions and practices related to the construction of valid knowledge and to the constitution of socially binding valid culture are always an institutional matter, monopoly and practice, so that institutional science and political power are very close and correlated in the constitution and evolution of Western thought. In Western cultural evolution, institutional dynamics has the centrality with respect to epistemological-political contents and practices, beyond common sense and common people. Strong institutionalism regarding epistemological-political foundations means exactly the centrality of scientific institution, as its monopolization of the legitimation of the social-cultural constitution and evolution. Here, the masses are not the subject of epistemological-political grounding, which belongs to scientific institutions. As said above, the centrality of scientific institution is possible through the correlation between scientific institution and epistemological-moral objectivity as the basic point both of scientific institution's self-understanding and of institutional relationships with common sense and common people.

This is a very crucial epistemological-political challenge to contemporary philosophy, which it has pursued to deconstruct in many ways and senses. Indeed, one of the more important epistemological-political steps of contemporary philosophy is the refusal of strong objectivity regarding the epistemological-moral-ontological foundation and, as a consequence, the gradual renunciation of the contraposition between scientific institution and common sense, as well as of that between philosopher/theologian/scientist and common people. Philosophy/theology/science continue as an institutional matter, practice, procedure and community, but, from the moderation of that Platonic self-understanding, contemporary institutional science does not endorse such a strong objectivity epistemologically and politically speaking (exception to theology, which continues using an essentialist and naturalized basis, affirming the correlation between strong institutionalism and strong epistemological-moral-ontological

objectivity as its dynamics of constitution, legitimation, evolution and interpretation and social foment of the creed), as contemporary thought weakens an essentialist and naturalized foundation which was the basis of the self-understanding of Platonic scientific institution. This means that the institutional community's task of epistemological-moral grounding becomes more modest, more humble, in that institutional philosophy/theology/science renounces the centralization and monopolization of such an epistemological-political foundation, attributing it to common sense and common people, to a democratic *praxis* that decides how legitimation is possible and its contents. When we study second Wittgenstein, Rorty, Rawls and Habermas, for example, we can see exactly such philosophical renunciation of an essentialist and naturalized foundation as the basis of the self-understanding of philosophical/theological/scientific institution and, as a consequence, the affirmation that what remains to philosophical *praxis* is the abandonment of the institutional centralization and monopolization of the epistemological-moral grounding in favor of a deliberative democratic *praxis* that involves common sense and common people. Here, the philosopher/theologian/scientist is a citizen like any other, he/she is not superior regarding common people as much as scientific institution is not superior regarding common sense. Therefore, the most important transformation of contemporary philosophy is characterized by the refusal of both strong epistemological-moral objectivity and of the correlative strong institutionalism with respect to the epistemological-moral grounding and of its social foment by scientific institution (see Wittgenstein, 1999; Rorty, 1995; Rawls, 1990; Habermas, 1990).

What, then, is the function of institutional philosophy/theology/science? It should contribute with the strengthening of cultural-political democracy, not replace it. It acquires meaning in contributing with the improvement of the democratic political *praxis* by fomenting critical normative perspectives based on the discussion between plural individuals and groups. It also enables popular criticism regarding institutions or social systems, which leads to the refusal of strong institutionalism as the basis of the organization and legitimation of the very social systems. Indeed, this is a very important task of—and for—contemporary institutional philosophy/theology/science, namely the deconstruction of strong institutionalism in all areas of society, like economy, politics, law, religion, culture, mass media, education and

others (see ALVES, 1981). As said above, the concept of *strong institutionalism* means, as it is being used here, the fact that institutions or social systems centralize and monopolize the constitution, the comprehension, the legitimation and the social boosting of their specific areas of functioning and programing, closing it both to democratic political *praxis* and to a binding notion of social normativity, becoming depoliticized and technical-logical institutions, very impersonal and unpolitical regarding common sense and common people. Strong institutionalism implies that the social system or institution becomes the very social field which it centralizes and monopolizes, autonomizing it from the social context and, therefore, from the political *praxis* in which it is rooted. In this case, the institution becomes a technical, logical and procedural structure which is only understood, streamlined and transformed by its internal practices, procedures, codes and legal staff, renouncing a political-normative constitution and transformation. Here, in strong institutionalism, common sense and common people have no voice and participation, which are monopolized by the institutional elites based on a technical and logical, non-political and non-normative procedures. This is a Platonic legacy that must be deconstructed by a democratic political *praxis* streamlined and fomented by institutional philosophy/theology/science, by institutional philosophers/theologians/scientists from an epistemological-political standpoint characterized by institutional limitation in favor of common sense and common people.

This can be achieved by the permanent and pungent theoretical-political deconstruction of the correlation between scientific institution and objectivity, by the theoretical-political deconstruction of strong institutionalism as the basis of institutional structuration and of social evolution beyond common sense and common people. The epistemological-political foundation – even the institutional grounding, constitution and evolution – belongs to the people; it is a democratic matter and *praxis*, not purely institutional at all. Democracy is the only way and principle for epistemological-moral foundations, and it deconstructs essentialist and naturalized foundations as the basis not only of social evolution, but of institutional constitution and legitimation as well. The Platonic model of strong institutionalism based on the correlation between scientific institutional community and strong objectivity, based also on the contraposition between scientific

institutional community and common sense and common people, is no longer valid as the basis of philosophical/theological/scientific institution, as well as an essentialist and naturalized foundation cannot be affirmed as the condition of the institution's epistemological-political centrality and monopolization of socially binding normativity and its grounding. This Platonic era is over; now is the time of democracy, including within philosophical/theological/scientific institutional communities. From now on, objectivity results from a democratic *praxis*, even if it means the permanent victory of relativism, subjectivism, particularism, that is, the epistemological-political centrality of common sense and common people, and no longer of the philosophical/theological/scientific institution that cannot assume the entire legitimation and orientation of social-cultural evolution nor constitute itself as an autonomous and closed community that monopolizes the epistemological-political grounding, imposing it with no mediations on common sense and common people.

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