

NOTES ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSION OF INSTITUTIONALIST DEBATES AND A DEFENSE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL PLASTICITY

NOTAS SOBRE A DIMENSÃO FILOSÓFICA DOS DEBATES INSTITUCIONALISTAS E UMA DEFESA DA PLASTICIDADE INSTITUCIONAL

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RESUMO: O texto é um trabalho de abordagem qualitativa sobre os pressupostos filosóficos dos debates institucionalistas nas Ciências Sociais. Propõe dois tipos filosóficos de institucionalismo. O primeiro foca em ideias gerais como necessidade, estabilidade e na origem remota e espontânea da institucionalidade. Chamo-o de institucionalismo imanentista. O segundo foca em concepções gerais como contingência, instabilidade e na origem política e deliberativa da institucionalidade. Chamo-o de institucionalismo transcendentista. Ambos são mapas com articuladas ideias que foram propostas como para classificar as raízes da institucionalidade por ângulos diferentes e até contrários. Além disso, o texto reconhece que, entre os dois, o institucionalismo imanentista é o campo de ideias academicamente mais discutido e explorado. Mas conclui por advogar pela recuperação da abordagem transcendentista, não só para oferecer um possível equilíbrio dos debates de área, como também enquanto guia para composições de agendas políticas alternativas. Ao fim e ao cabo, sob uma ampla perspectiva, o texto tenta inspirar reflexões sobre como refazer as relações entre as sociedades e suas instituições a fim de mudá-las, e em um sentido profundo, sem que, contudo, elas dependam de revoluções ou crises.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Instituições; Institucionalismo; Plasticidade institucional; Filosofia.

ABSTRACT: The text is a qualitative work about the philosophical background of Social Sciences' institutionalist debates. It purposes two philosophical types of institutionalism. First, the one which focuses on general ideas like necessity, stability and spontaneous and remoted origin of institutionality. I call it

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immanentist institutionalism. Second, the one which focuses on general conceptions like contingency, instability and deliberative and political origin of institutionality, which I call transcendentalist institutionalism. Both are maps with articulated ideas which were purposed as they could classify the roots of institutionality by different and even contrary angles. Furthermore, the text recognizes that, between the two, immanentist institutionalism is the more academically discussed and explored field of ideas. But it concludes by advocating the recovery of transcendentalist approaching, not only to offer a possible balance for the debates in each area, as well as some guidance to compositions of alternative political agendas. In the end, from a broad perspective, it tries to inspire reflections about how to remake the relations between societies and their institutions in order to change them, and in a deep sense, however without being dependent on revolutions or crisis.

KEYWORDS: Institutions; Institutionalism; Institutional Plasticity; Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

This text is a qualitative work about the broadest academic views of institutions. Its basis are only bibliographic references. It aims to offer some reasons for a defense of the institutionalist tendency of thinking which conceives institutionality from a point of view that emphasizes attributes such as contingency, instability and plasticity. However, before that, the argument suggests there are philosophical dominant approaches of institutional phenomenon, which are methodologically bound to some theoretical habits. Unfortunately, they are less and less able to provide ideas for handle the demands of contemporary societies. Such demands lie on some conflicts which oppose individuals and groups to their current institutional arrangements.

In order to qualify this discussion, the text links these tendencies to a philosophical background by purposing two philosophical types of institutionalism. First, the one which focuses on general categories like necessity, stability and the idea of a spontaneous and remoted origin of institutionality. I call it immanentist institutionalism. Second, the one which focuses on general conceptions like contingency, instability and deliberated and political origin of institutionality, which I call transcendentalist institutionalism. Both are maps with articulated ideas which were purposed as they could classify the roots of institutionality by different and even contrary angles. Furthermore, the text recognizes that immanentist institutionalism is the more academically discussed and explored field of ideas and insinuates obliquely that this view is also the most celebrated and spread by traditional press in several western countries – what reports to an institutional imaginary of national elites. The conclusion advocates the recovery of transcendentalist approaching, not only to offer a possible balance for the debates in each area as well as some guidance to alternative agendas to

politics, that is, to rebuild a singular quality of relations between societies and institutions, that is, what can help them to change in a deep sense without being dependent on revolutions or crisis.

The text is divided into four sections. First, it presents, through a short and slanting outlook, the historical academic institutionalism, as well as the neo-institutionalism, and it bets on exploring some assumptions, terms and frameworks about institutionalist debate pointing out the lack of certainty on its own philosophical background. Second, it purposes a return of the roots of institutionality as a philosophical approaching useful to reveal such implicit assumptions that need to be exposed in these discussions. Beyond that, it describes quickly an evolution of modern philosophical perspectives on institutionality that acquire maturity in the last Hegel's work. Third and more important, it organizes a philosophical typology about ideas on institutionality which suggests the general terms for theoretical articulations in academic debates. The last and conclusive section is about the relevance of the second type, transcendentalist institutionalism, seen as the core of some alternatives to institutional impasses in academy and politics today.

2. THE PREDOMINANT CHARACTER OF ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONALIST DEBATES AND THE LACK OF ASSURANCES CONCERNING ITS OWN PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The institutions have called the attention of researchers, analysts and theorists in realms of Social Sciences and Humanities in distinct moments since the last decades of the XIX century. Each of these occasions – one by one celebrated as a great discovery – revealed the slogan “institutions matter” as support to academic effort updates. In areas like Law, Economics, Politics, Organizational Studies, History and Sociology, the adoption of that label has offered several and rich inflections, above all in the opportunities wherein their debates face perplexities and seem to be going nowhere².

It is possible to suggest that there is something in common among those fields of knowledge that incorporate institutions as a central theme. In a more-or-less standardized fashion, each of them requires a set of analysis or selections of specific events by which one may elaborate some assumptions to be part of a particular

² By different angles of academic activity, the theme of institutions often returns to the center of debates. The spirit of such a move was summarized by Karol Soltan in a short paragraph from his article: *Institutions as Product of Politics* (1998, 49-50): “What are the sources of the current growing interest in institutions? Contrary to earlier Marxist expectations, the capitalist state turns out to be reformable (legal institutions can change the world). Hence, Marxists become institutionalists. Elsewhere in the intellectual landscape, more political stability is found in the world than public choice models thin in their institutional detail can explain. So public choice theorists become institutionalists. And institutions are increasingly seen to make a difference in economic performance. So economists join as well. All of this points in one direction: institutions matter.”

vocabulary. Such gathering of technical terms corresponds to some of those quoted sciences, by drawing an institutionalist slant³.

The institutionalist tendencies inquire the functions and the impacts of institutions over individuals, citizens, economical agents, social groups etc., or search for the meaning of institutions in order to deal with transversal subjects from their respective areas (Hall & Taylor, 1996). These tendencies have several origins. All of them branches of the same tree, that is, the late motto “institutions matter”. In a whole sense, they work by the method of institutional analysis and, according to some contemporary approaches, namely neo-institutionalists, they appeal to the invention of models for the purpose of testing the validity of contents. Moreover, these tendencies close to intellectual initiatives, similar to rationalism, by using hypothetical-deductive method which helps to formulate fields of abstraction in order to cover some empirical data⁴. The aim is, almost every time, to inform the statesmen and private firms about the best ways to work or to deal with current institutions, by taking advantage of their openness and/or by avoiding their constraints and vices. They are, therefore, for the most part, technocratic and normative tendencies.

The core of such institutionalist view is on the recognition of how institutions shape individuals and societies by informing their relations. Institutions would give the form, define the boundaries, organize the interaction and establish the rules that limit and modulate human action. That is why it is usual in specialized discussions questions like: How these institutions influence or determine human conduct in this context? How institutions develop, reproduce and transform themselves?

These movements are about the necessity of existent institutions. Its emphasis is on the institutional acts (and there are some authors that would say “thinks”⁵).

³ The so-called institutionalist theories are tendencies or schools divided in several academic discussions throughout the last century. In 80s and 90s, however, initiatives for convergence and talks among colloquiums, publications to gather specialists, what became object of studies itself. About that, see: Soltan K., Uslaner, E., Haufler, 1998, 4-5.

⁴ There are several works about it and not only in Anglophone countries. One of the most abundant contributions to institutionalism on contemporary academy is at France. See:

(A) Ardoino J., Boumard, P., Sallaberry J.C. (2003, 9-13), is a book which gathers approaches from the French institutionalist school. The comprehension that institutions are forms of organization is exemplified by the field of organizational studies. Institutions would be evolutions from or formalizations of spontaneous organizations. Institutionalism would be a large set of tools for analysis the functions of institutions and determine the conduct of social actors.

(B) Note that in the Social Sciences a great contribution has left by symbolic interactionism school, of authors like Peter Berger, N. Luckmann and Erving Goffman, among others. According to them, institutions provide the *meaning* where social action takes place.

⁵ The anthropologist Mary Douglas, for instance, purposes just that in her *How Institutions Think* (2004). As a Durkheim’s disciple, she understands that the institutions’ capacities to act and to

Thus, the tendency of these institutional studies is to forget the attributes of plasticity and imagination of institutional life, giving no chance at all to think about how the circumstances would be the case if institutions worked in a different way. What if the normative and programmatic contents of these institutions were remade in radically distinct terms compared to the current one? The answers to this could open many doors still closed.

Instead, what prevails among them is a bet on an unrestrained link between institutionality and stability, as if the existence of institutions would have as its unique purpose to assure stable interactions⁶. Social Sciences, especially Political Science, use to agree with this point of view⁷ by being solidary with virtual-graphic categories as system and structure.

On one hand, institutions use to appear as the systems of rules while societies use to be treated as systems of institutions and consciences: it would be comparable the relation between a society and the performance of its institutions with that one between an institution and the individual action inside it. At the center of this comparison, we find the idea of function. That is why, the virtual-graphic category of system invites some sort of functionalism.

On the other hand, when the category structure is called to explain the rapport between individuals and the norms at the beginning of an institution, human action is conceived as an expression inside an area only socially understood. This area establishes human dimension, limits and freedom, by drawing the architecture of

think are modalities of their character as previous and exterior things in relation to individuals. In her argument, institutions are independent in a way that they end up by being compared with natural reality. See Douglas, 2004, p. 47.

⁶ Countless authors work with such emphasis on stability. In their writings, institutions used to be described as special profile organizations not entirely fluid, not totally plastic, necessarily durable and distinguished by being and promoting stability.

(A) In the Political Science field, for instance, Samuel Huntington's remarks could be reminded. See Huntington, 1968, p. 10-12.

(B) Moreover, in the Economic theory field, I highlight Douglas North's ideas from his *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, above all the first chapter, where from I highlight what follows: "The major role of institutions in a society is to reduce uncertainty by establishing a stable (but not necessarily efficient) structure to human interaction. But the stability of institutions in no way gainsays the fact that they are changing. From conventions, codes of conduct, and norms of behavior to statute law, and common law, and contracts between individuals, institutions are evolving and, therefore, are continually altering the choices available to us. The changes at the margin may be so slow and glacial in character that we have to stand back as historians to perceive them, although we live in a world where the rapidity of institutional change is very apparent." (North, p. 6). It is remarkable that efficiency is not criteria to define an institution, stability is.

⁷ That is how North and other economists understand: institutions matter because societies would have found out that through them uncertainties are dissipated as well as the costs of transactions are minimized. See North, chapter 4, especially p. 34.

the social world. The invisible aspects of structures used to be constancy, ubiquity, indivisibility and invariability. In addition, sometimes there are improvised forms of combining structure and system in a same theoretical framework⁸.

The problem behind such approaches is their propension to subordinate the interpretation of institutional phenomenon to a predictable and ongoing functioning, in the lack of which the analysts label “anomy”, “disruption”, “failure”, “crisis” and “collapse” under the object. The autopilot institutional operation is the institutionalists’ dream. They attribute status of *necessaire* reality to the inertia that encrusts the current institutions. Once desiring associating the “normal” to the “stable” they seem like were hypnotized by their own working methods and tools. Unfortunately, it prevents them to grasp plasticity, contingency and instability, that are also parts of institutional phenomena, just because each of these notions require to change the angle whereby institutions are to be realized.

In some historical periods where the emergency of an extreme right populism, as that between the two Great Wars as well as nowadays, both of them are experienced under strong anti-institutional impulses – the blind popular rebellion against the institutional inertia is not well understood neither avoided. And why? Partly because the intellectual contributions of theorists and analysts of institutions are not able to show the real alternatives to conceive and deal with our – our means in each national reality – institutions. Under the hope of contribute to the current academic debate I will purpose a speculation in socio-political philosophy which can spotlight and convincingly advocate the other set of general ideas about the root of institutionality.

3. THE PHILOSOPHICAL THEME OF INSTITUTIONALITY AND THE BALANCE ON INSTITUTIONALISM DISCUSSIONS

Although one can’t speak on institutionality without handling institutions, and one must speak on institutionality in order to understand the nature of institutions, they are different themes. Institutionality means a set of human predispositions and tendencies to create institutions and live on, with and among them. It is not about the web of current institutions. It is a prominently philosophical subject, not a scientific one. It has to do with the human faculty to instituting and abide by the instituted. These are reciprocal activities whose comprehension can’t be obtained from isolated academic disciplines, neither can be restrained to methods as institutional analysis. Instead, it requires a transition toward outside them, where one can provide a view that offers as much a genealogical narrative as a scrutiny about the deep meaning of institutions.

⁸ Categories like *system* and *structure* have huge importance for many approaches with academic prestige. The definition offered by Hodgson (p. 2) in his debate with North is: [institutions are the] systems of established and prevalent social rules that structured social interactions. Language, money, law, system of weights and measures, table manners, and firms (and other organizations) are thus all institutions”.

Institutions matter to philosophers since a long time. In Plato's dialogues, as *Cratylus*, *Crito* and also in his most famous work, *The Republic*, institutional issues were treated, in spite of sideward. But the ideas concerning institutions as human creations were reflected since the dawn of Modernity. Many thinkers, from Hobbes' time until now, have tried to answer the question: What predisposes Men to create institutions? In order to describe the process of justifying the State, the Market, the Law, or the Property each thinker remade the trajectory from the institutions toward its deep anthropological roots. In many ways contemporary philosophy has faced the theme of institutions, either in a straight and ontological reflection, as in Merleau-Ponty's very known lectures (Merleau-Ponty, 2003), or through the broad and controversial thesis inside a complex movement as American Pragmatism (Medeiros, 2023). But the real inflection of thought, what can be called a philosophy of institutions, has operated many decades before them by the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

Hegel represents a qualified overcoming of such mentality. He worked for recomposing the place of institutions what were effective in nineteenth Europe: monogamic family, private property, corporations, civil society, positive law, constitutional State etc. in a continuous and homogeneous tissue. He understood them as update, present manifestation of the Spirit [Geist] – that would be reach through agreed "mode of behavior" [Handlungsweise] that seems necessary to singular individual as custom [Sitte]. (Hegel, 1977, p. 195)

By doing that, Hegel operates an intellectual lifting from his national experience until the universal standard for humanity in itself. In his words: "As actual substance, it is a nation, as actual consciousness, it is the citizens of that nation". Nation [Volk] is historical bodies wherein spirit becomes concrete by sharing actions and practices. (Hegel, 1991, 267).

The essence of citizen consciousness [Bewußtsein Bürger] lives on the moment of simple, individual, singular Spirit, that it acquires certainty and truth by being "entire people" [ganzen Volk]. Spirit demands to be acknowledged while collectively expressed. Thus, Hegel writes: "This Spirit can be called the human law, because it is essentially in the form of a reality that is conscious of itself. In the form of universality, it is the known law, and the prevailing custom [vorhandene Sitte]" (Hegel, 1991, p. 268).

Hegel thinks of Spirit as a totality under a process of changing and moving. That is why we can learn from him a notion of institutionality as something congruent with the expressive multiplicity of the people's actions which is stabilized in the present and supported by the customs (Sitte). Under such ambitious idea, Hegel offers an ontological approach of institutionality as a fluid, active, spontaneous, anonymous and, above all, plural stuff.

As Hegel supports the assumption of politics and history justifying the current institutions as they are hitherto, the roots of institutionality should be searched on the stabilization of conflicts, as well as it is exemplified into the setting of the

present: the validity of institutions in its particular. Surely, it can be sound as an apology of current institutions, which determine how the power and the access to goods and services ought to be in the social life.

That is why Hegel is important for our earlier discussion. The issues that in his legal, social and political works are summarized on the idea of stabilization were what bond conservatively the real to the rational. According to Jürgen Habermas this association can be called “the rationality of the existent” – it was the peculiar way of thinking of philosophers from “Right Hegelianism”⁹.

Hegel’s view provides a landscape to my argument. The most penetrating philosophical ideas about the nature of institutions deal with the relation between individuals and institutions to confirm, to improve, to criticize, to deny, to question, to rupture or to endorse the existent institutional reality. The Hegelian institutional legacy lies on the thesis of the roots of institutionality as the cover of a plethora of institutions whose contents make the soil to human interactions possible. Hereinafter, for many engaged philosophers, they must be expressed by their intrinsic historicity.

4. A PHILOSOPHICAL TYPOLOGY OF INSTITUTIONALITY

Following a course longer and much winding than I could detail here, the Modern West woke up to two general forms of conceiving institutions. From the deepest viewpoint, Hegelian’s institutionalist philosophy and Marxian’s critics to its assumptions and consequences (Marx, 2013) were the dawn of the institutionalist philosophical reflections as a whole. These two models of thinking accommodate institutionality as part of the larger phenomenon of social order. But they brought a problem. A rational criticism which was able of revealing an universally valid content about the order would imply the formulation of the question regarding the legitimacy of created deals to organize the social life. It is implicit in such intellectual impulse the perspective that legitimacy could always be broken up by disruptions or confirmed by conservative pacts.

Meantime, that is a chance to paint two different images for express institutions due to such movement of ideas. The first one shows us institutions as mainly consistent and ubiquitous realities, that is, collective achievements turned into conventions or formal displays, which are supported by ethical resilient columns. Under this sight, they are well represented by instances which are conceived as anonymous collective patrimony. They would be useful for regular the conduct and to guide decisions concerning collective life.

The second one shows us some prevailingly evanescent and soluble objects. They would be built under the deliberative human intention after some historically

⁹ According to Habermas, “Right Hegelians followed Hegel in the conviction that the substance of state and religion would compensate for the restlessness of bourgeois society, as soon as the subjectivity of the revolutionary consciousness that incited restlessness yielded to the objective insight into rationality of the status quo.” (Habermas, 1987, 56)

dated conflicts. This image emphasizes what each reformer or social revolutionary aim to make possible. Institutions would be things to inaugurate or overturn for the purpose to improve society – according to this, there is no social rupture without the replacement of an institutional content by another one.

Behind both images there is a categorical distinction. The first of them focus on necessity as an implicit aspect of this durable forms of interactions. The other focus on contingency of the human affairs. The modal category of contingency regards the experience of indeterminacy, that is, there would not be nothing on the contingent phenomenon that testifies its existence or occurrence, nothing as a consistent and imperishable fundament. Otherwise, the modal category of necessity informs the reliance of the object or phenomenon regarded. It means that there is always something behind or below that works as institutional basis and whose denial would imply an unbearable – and impracticable – contradiction.

If a philosopher or social scientist works for offering an idea of institutionality to preventing us from the social disorders, in other words, if affections like fear is in the core of his or her speculation, then he or she acts on behalf of a conservative institutional arrangement. He or she used to focus on the dimension of instituting, because wants people to protect against the threats of an unstable social life. On the other hand, if he or she works for melting the frozen scheme of institutions that are constraining people, that is to say, if he or she are moved to struggle against the present state of things, then the agenda is written by a creative engagement. He or she chooses to emphasize the dimension of instituted aiming to make clear that if an institution was created by someone, so it can be changed by the others. (If you like, this could be place, in literary terms, as a distinction between Fyodor Dostoevsky and Franz Kafka.)

Both attitudes are well described as ways of going about two general problems. The first one is the deinstitutionalization; the second, hyperinstitutionalization. The problem of deinstitutionalization occurs whenever there are symptoms of disintegration of social bond and hence losing at least part of social order. It happens as imminent or remote risk provoked by episodes of conflicts or suspicion wherein current institutions are stroke, hurting its legitimacy and even removing them.

The problem of hyperinstitutionalization is the opposed. It happens whenever there is an awareness about the distance between people's purposes, interests, wills and desires and the way how institutions actually are, it means, a set of rigidity, impersonality, coverage, facing what individuals are unprotected, immobilized and incapable. The crux of the matter is not fear of falling down under disorder because of the absence of regularity, but the hopelessness in front of the autonomy with which institutions impose themselves.

The type of thinkers and scientists for whom concern primarily the problem of deinstitutionalization I call immanental institutionalism (or immanentalism). It used to combine and articulate three basic preferential themes. First, the theme of

remote and spontaneous origin of historical institutions. Second, the ethical fundament over which they are and because they are legitimated. Third, the centrality of stability, what only institutions could provide for social life. Immanentist institutionalism has normative horizons explicitly or not conservative in relation to institutions. It does not mean that any immanentist is politically or morally conservative just because political conservatism is not a synonymous with institutional conservatism¹⁰.

The other type priorities the searching for solutions to hyperinstitutionalization. It can be called transcendental institutionalism (or transcendentalism). It focuses on three main articulated themes. First, the theme of deliberative origin of institutions. Second, the political fundament that reveals the contingency and the creaturely substance of them. Third, the individual and collective emancipation that justifies them and whereby they express their plasticity. Moreover, transcendentalists work with normative agendas of transformation of society under changing her institutions¹¹. As well as immanentism does not imply political conservatism, transcendental institutionalism does not presuppose progressivism in moral or in politics¹².

These two points of view as much make clear the roots of institutionality as suggest the content of agendas which must guide the direction of society through organizing and directing their institutions. Nevertheless, it is on the items of those normative agendas that the difference between both types is exposed. The core of this difference relies on the answer to that question: What should us expect by

¹⁰ The categories here show a deep affinity behind diversity of authors and thesis. The philosophical formulations I highlighted as the more emblematic in this group are those from Hegel in his *Philosophy of Rights* (1820) and from Arnold Gehlen's work *Human Being and Moral and Hypermoral* (1954). Both are philosophers that reflect on ontology and philosophical anthropology that better organize and fundament immanentist institutionalism.

¹¹ Among the works in the Social Sciences literature there are huge discussions about the ways to realize and to describe the institutional changings. A really sophisticated framing line is in the scopes of historical institutionalism. A radical point of view about the contingency in institutions was provided by Capocchia and Kelemen in their work about critical junctures (2007). Their theory is developed above such definition: "we define critical junctures as relatively short periods of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents' choices will affect the outcome of interest. By "relatively short periods of time," we mean that the duration of the juncture must be brief relative to the duration of the path-dependent process it instigates (which leads eventually to the outcome of interest). By "substantially heightened probability" we mean that the probability that agents' choices will affect the outcome of interest must be high relative to that probability before and after the juncture." (Capocchia & Kelemen, 2007, p. 348)

¹² The formulations that I focus here are from Cornelius Castoriadis and Roberto Unger's Works, respectively *L'Institution Imaginaire de la Société* (1975) and the trilogy *Politics, a Work in Constructive Social Theory* (1987a, b, c). Both elaborate social philosophies in which normative and programmatic positions allow to conceive plastic institutions.

speculating on the roots of institutionality either to make sure of institutional durability or to subject them to current human will by transformative policies?

5. Final considerations: toward a rehabilitation of transcendental institutionalism

Before to go to the normative agenda that it implies the last section of this work has to mention the main difficulties of its research. These difficulties surround a same center: to write about institutions as a theme of boundaries. The work requires a bibliography which not exists yet about a field where classic Social Philosophy and Social Sciences are combined. On the contrary, either one studies a classical philosopher's work, as Hegel's, or one studies the evolution and utilizations of Social Sciences concepts regarding institutions. It is not usual to read the institutional phenomenon through so distant vocabularies, philosophical and scientific, and try to put them side by side for dealing with concrete institutions and general institutionality in the same table. But actually, a complex subject like that always demand interdisciplinary readings even and above all in an ultra-theoretic domain, what must combine Philosophy with Political Science, Economy, Sociology and History. That is why the eventual constraints of this work can also be seen as invitation to the researchers enlarge this interdisciplinary field of discussions.

As I suggested before what is predominant on social sciences is the immanental institutionalism. It is confirmed by propensities to think institutions by highlighting its rigidity and the processes and rules they print on social routines. The scheme of explanation derived form it used to be weak forms through part of academic elite priorities the same what late Hegel, in a much consistent fashion, also does. It has to do with spontaneous integrity with what institutions form themselves as synthesis over conflicting sides into a historical process, so that they stabilize interactions among individuals and groups in reputedly universal and coverage arrangements.

Such robust immanentalism from Hegel's work is apologetic in social sciences and sounds like bias from the ordinary press. It is conspicuous that the press used to fulfill the west national elite's imaginary with only one set of ideas regarding institutions, that one formulated by immanental institutionalists – with its several variations, from rational choice theories to some path-dependence theories.

Taking a contrary route, I am purposing we pay attention to the type of transcendental institutionalism in order to bring to debate some relevant and unexplored ideas. Transcendentalism is important for my purposes just because it gather lots of positions to strike the problem of self-autonomy rigidity of institutions. We must be able to question the institutional inertia, without being vulnerable to the populist adventures which use to deny institutions. Conceptually, the transcendentalist institutionalism advocates by the conciliating path into which

we can radicalize the contingency of institutions giving autonomy and power to individuals whereby formal institutions, never outside or against them.

Three themes can draw such path. First, the theme of deliberative origin of institutions. It consists in emphasizing historically dated institutions and its origins. It implies to think of institutions as things which were created inside the time and supported by us in our time. Second, the political matrix of what fundaments institutions consists in emphasizes the political aspects of the institutionality. Third, the theme of plasticity of institutions as consequences of its political and imagined substance. Institutions are human artifacts that can or cannot be favorable to achieve the current objectives of social pact. Although they produce stabilizations, they do not determine definitive contents for stave off conflicts.

The whole process of institutional self-autonomy is marked by a concentration of power justified as being natural order of things, what implies the recrudescence of institutions against individuals¹³. That is why I prefer call that process hyperinstitutionalization. To hit institutional self-autonomy is to recognize its artifactual character and to give back to the people the status of demiurge of their own social world¹⁴. There is no chance, in such approach, for an anti-institutional activism. To struggle against the institutional world is inevitably to rebuild this world. Of course, the most relevant ethos acquired from that struggle is the responsibility to participate of our institutional interactions as their co-founders. This implies changes on our relationship with our institutions.

A possible and practical way to do so is on the changing purpose by transform the content of existent institutions in the fields of power. It must be done with the help of imagination: alternative displays and procedures can delete and add institutional meanings and practices. It is not derived from a complete institutional framework disruption; instead, it can make their co-founders work by changing some of its aspects, piece by piece, in order to transform the aims that rise up from the circumstance. It is the institutional intrinsic capacity to adapt and learn with themselves in particular circumstances the core of my argument, precisely what can be called institutional plasticity¹⁵.

¹³ Cornelius Castoriadis' critics to that process is corroborated by the dynamics he calls economic-functional, which is characterized by defining and justifying the contents of institutions. (Castoriadis, 1975, p. 160-161)

¹⁴ Unger attacks hyperinstitutionalisation by identifying fetishist feature that institutional orders are usually treated with. In his sentence: "Institutional fetishism is the failure to understand that abstract institutional conceptions like "representative democracy" or "market economy" lack any single, natural or necessary expression in a set of rules, practices, and institutions." (Unger, 1987b, p. p. cxxii – cxxiii.)

¹⁵ A well elaborated definition of plasticity I take from Roberto Unger: "By plasticity I mean the facility with which work relations among people – in a plant, in a bureau, in an army – can be constantly shifted in order to suit changing circumstances, resources, and intentions. Plasticity is the opportunity to innovate in the immediate organizational settings of production, exchange,

Social Sciences and Humanities, once admitting at least just a small part of transcendentalist perspective will have a triumph over circumstances like these with we deal today. They will know how discuss about the institutionality framework which could be durable just because it would be plastic. The institutional problem is not on substances of institutions, but on our relations with them.

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administration, or warfare and to do so not just by occasional, large-scale reforms but by an ongoing, cumulative flow of small-scale innovations. According to this thesis of plasticity, the advantages of rigid control or surplus-extraction schemes outweigh the benefits of plasticity only at relatively low levels of resource availability and technological sophistication (Unger, 1987c, 153-154)

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