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ABSTRACT: In his book *Jacques Derrida*, Geoffrey Bennington outlined what seems to be a trivial, uncontroversial, and even mandatory conception of originality. After drawing attention to its merits, I will move on to defend that (a) Bennington's conception of originality can hardly be seen as an original contribution, because it actually expresses a very widespread picture of how the concept is understood, (b) this conception of originality is riddled with logical problems, and (c) besides being riddled with logical problems, it masks much deeper, political problems. Hence, my first charges against Bennington's conception of originality will be merely logical and analytical. However, they will gradually evolve to deeper and more pressing political charges.

Keywords: originality; metaphilosophy; geopolitics of knowledge.

1 — Right in the first pages of his *Jacques Derrida*

Right in the first pages of his *Jacques Derrida*, co-authored, it should be added, with Derrida himself – or given Derrida's determination to untangle himself from this careful attempt to capture and systematize his philosophy, it may be better to say, counter-authored by Derrida –, Bennington announces that he will be undertaking "two distinct but complementary tasks".[i] The first is to show the contemporary character of Derrida, a task which does not *prima facie* present anything interesting in itself. The only trap it needs to avoid is that of emptying Derrida's thinking, reducing it to a mere "phenomenon of fashion".[ii] The second task, on the other

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hand, can and should be placed on the operating table. It may not be possible to expose its guts with painless incisions. But one must cut through the epidermic surface of Bennington's text in order to discover the internal forces that animate it. There is no need to hurry. We can approach the center of the problem slowly and meticulously, layer by layer.

The second task to which Bennington commits himself is "that of placing this thought in a tradition or a filiation in order to say how Derrida is new, to define an originality with respect to predecessors from whom Derrida would stand out in some way".[iii] He further clarifies that the attempt to "reconstruct the system of his thought" in the manner of the reconstructions of the thoughts of Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger would show "how Derrida's thought is distinguished from them".[iv] And Bennington adds: "In this way, we would gradually delimit what is proper to Derrida and none other, his originality, his idiom or signature".[v]

So far, two things are pretty much clear. The first is that Bennington considers Derrida an original thinker. But there is another point, much more important, much more interesting, that immediately catches our attention. Bennington is not content to simply *state* that Derrida is an original thinker. On the contrary, he seizes the occasion to delineate his own *conception* of originality – which perhaps does not really have Bennington's signature, except by way of his particular mode of exposition. Nonetheless, it is a conception to which he obviously subscribes. Note that this conception is not his in the sense that he presents his own, original conception of originality. But it is his in the sense that it is a conception to which he adheres. In a sense, he adheres to an opinion which is not his. But in doing so, he makes it his own. And this

means that he has a peculiar position in relation to the concept of originality, a position both passive and active. It is, in fact, the typical position of a spokesperson – or of an informant – who speaks at the same time on behalf and as part of his community.[vi] He does not speak as someone who is detached from his community, but as a member fully integrated into it. Bennington's voice is the voice of his community. Therefore, to establish a conversation with Bennington is tantamount to establishing a conversation with [redacted].

2 — And what is Bennington's conception of originality?

And what is Bennington's conception of originality? What is its essence, what is its content? What is Bennington's conception of originality – which is in fact the conception of originality of his community? Maybe there is no passage where it appears more clearly than when Bennington says he intends to show, for those who are already familiar with, for example, the thoughts of Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, "how Derrida's thought is distinguished from them".[vii] The word "distinguished" – the idea of difference – is fundamental here. Derrida is original to the extent that his text T_n says things that cannot be found in the texts T_{n-1}, T_{n-2}, T_{n-3} etc. The idea may seem obscure to those who dislike symbols. But for those who like symbols – and what is the problem with symbols? aren't ordinary words symbols too? – it may be interesting to rely on them a little further and propose the following description of Bennington's conception of originality – and that of his community:

> (D_1) If T_1 states A, B and C, T_2 states C, D, and E, and T_3 states E, F, and G, then T_4 will not be original if it simply

> states A and B, nor if it simply states A, D, and G. To be sure, it can state A and B, or A, D and G. It might even state A, B, C, D, F and G. However, it will be original only if it states things which could be symbolized by other letters, say, H, I and J. For example, if T_4 states G, H and I, or at very least F, G and H. There may be overlaps between what T_4 states and what T_1, T_2 and T_3 state. However, in order to be considered original, T_4 needs to say at least one thing that has not already been said by T_1, T_2 and T_3.

Or in somewhat less symbolic terms:

> (D_1') If Hegel stated A, B, and C, Nietzsche stated C, D, and E, and Heidegger stated E, F, and G, it follows that we cannot consider Derrida original if he simply states A and B, nor if he has simply stated A, D, and G. To be sure, he can state A and B or A, D and G. He might even state A, B, C, D, F, and G. However, we can only consider him original if he states things which could be symbolized by other letters, say, H, I, and J. For example, if he states G, H and I, or at the very least F, G and H. There may be overlaps between Derrida's philosophy and Hegel's, Nietzsche's and Heidegger's philosophies. However, in order to be considered original, Derrida must say at least one thing that has not already been said by Hegel, Nietzsche or Heidegger.

If you are not keen on symbols, you don't have to worry about D_1. Neither with D_1'. If you don't like symbols – yes, they do bring us too close to analytic philosophy –, you may simply focus on Bennington's own seemingly loose but equally rigorous formulation. In fact, D_1 and D_1' are in no way intended to dethrone, dislodge or overthrow Bennington's conception of originality [redacted]. On the contrary, both D_1 and its less arid version D_1' are attempts to make it explicit – or to convey the same message in another code.

They are, so to speak, ethnographic propositions [redacted].

Of course, there is a difference between what Bennington says and what D_1 and D_1' say, starting with the fact that the object of his speech is quite determined: he is talking specifically about Derrida – while D_1' treats the name "Derrida" just as a symbol, something which [redacted]. Had he being writing about Hegel, he would have probably said the same thing, only using, perhaps, other terms – maybe something like: "In order to determine whether Hegel was an original thinker, one must contrast what he said with what Schelling, Fichte, and Kant said". Had he being writing about Nietzsche or Heidegger, he would have probably said the same thing – and again, using other terms, but to give shape to an identical protocol: "In order to determine whether Nietzsche was an original thinker, one must see if there is something truly proper, truly specific to his philosophy", and [redacted]

There is, indeed, a noticeable difference between what Bennington says and what D_1 and D_1' say. But it is essentially a difference in form, not in content. That they differ in form, there is no doubt: a poststructuralist like Bennington would hardly express

himself in such terms; however, were him an analytic philosopher – were him writing a book not about Derrida, but about Davidson –, he would have possibly formulated his conception of originality in an even more arid fashion. Especially because aridity – the lack of color, the lack of life, the lack of movement – seems to be taken by analytic philosophy as an epistemic value in itself. The more grayish a discourse, the more effectively it appears knowledgeable: it thus creates the impression of sobriety, and of seriousness. Ultimately, analytic philosophy is something of an aesthetic school.

Bennington's conception of originality – especially when formulated in terms of D_1 – looks solid and robust. This does not mean that it is solid and robust. [redacted] Or rather, does it not seem like he has said all there is to say about philosophical originality – and perhaps even about intellectual originality in general? Does it not seem like he has adequately answered the question "What makes an original thinker original?", and that his answer was not only accurate, but also, to a certain extent, original? In fact, does it not seem like he made – with a natural, almost effortless gesture – an original remark about originality? Doesn't his brief exposition of how the concept of originality works give him the right to claim a certain originality – in the midst of a book that has no pretension to originality whatsoever, and which, on the contrary, tries to purge all originality from itself? Although the book as a whole cannot be said to display Bennington's philosophical originality, can it not be said to display his metaphilosophical originality [redacted] Perhaps there is not much of Bennington in what he says neither of Derrida nor of originality. But at least here Bennington has left his mark: he explicitly formulated the criteria which regulate

the use of the concept of originality. [redacted]

3 — In order to make Bennington's merit clear

In order to make the merit of Bennington's account of originality clear, it may be interesting to draw attention to a strong – indeed, very strong – point about his conception of originality. For D_1 and for Bennington – and for the community which he is part of – originality is not a monadic property. On the contrary, [redacted] a relation. The explicit statement that one cannot gauge Derrida's originality without comparing him, for example, to Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger [redacted] The claim that originality is a relation implies that the working of the term "originality" is somewhat closer to the working of the term "big" than to the term "blue". The fact that a sphere is blue does not mean that the sphere next to it cannot be red. But the fact that a sphere measures 1 m means that the 10 cm sphere next to it cannot be called "big". Of course, it can be considered big next to a 1 mm sphere that, for obvious reasons, we had not seen before. [redacted] consider the 1 mm sphere big when compared to a .01 mm sphere – [redacted] a relational predicate.

[redacted] if you lay Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and Gadamer's *Truth and*

Method on a table, you will see that the former is big in relation to the second and small in relation to the third.[viii] But one book does not cease to be original because the other book was original too [redacted].

Be that as it may, the fact is that, just like physical size, originality is a relational property. There is no doubt that the kind of relation at stake here is of another nature. You can determine if one book is physically larger than another without having to open, let alone reading, any of them. [redacted] you cannot determine if a book is original without opening it and studying it carefully, and without contrasting it methodically with other members of its family – which also need to be read with due regard. Equivalence of treatment is absolutely essential. It is not just the work under consideration that needs to be dealt with seriously. If the works against which it is compared – if the works against which its originality is measured – are not read with the same seriousness, this will automatically defeat the whole enterprise. The validity of the diagnosis, be it originality or lack of originality, will necessarily [redacted] It is not as easy a task to determine the originality of a philosophical work as it is to determine its physical dimensions.

But is Bennington's conception of originality – the conception of originality of his community – free from problems?

That it *seems* solid, there is no doubt. That it recognizes the relational character of originality is also clear. And that it probably has a little problem here or there, isn't this something to be expected in regard to all definitions? But does it carry some relevant, important, decisive problem? Besides the small problems that certainly affect it simply because it is a definition – why would it be unlike any other definition? –, does it bring a time bomb inside itself? A problem that can at any moment explode and destroy it from within? For example, does it really capture how Bennington's community uses the term "originality" and its cognates? [redacted] it is very likely that if we had the chance to ask other members of his community, "What is originality? What makes a philosophical work original?", we would obtain answers that would not differ significantly from Bennington's own answer. They would all be different, for sure. But all of them would very likely allow themselves to be expressed in terms of D_1.

4 — As it turns out

As it turns out, Bennington's conception of originality has a problem [redacted] it does not reflect – and more seriously, it could not reflect – the actual uses made by his community of the concept of originality. The only thing it reflects is how his community conceives – how it explicitly or implicitly represents for itself – the concept of originality. [redacted] And we cannot say that Bennington's representation of the concept of originality simply suffers from a problem that affects all representations. [redacted]

[redacted] it is not true that all representations are riddled with similar problems. They are not tragically and paradoxically doomed to always distort what they claim to represent – which is in itself a misrepresentation of representations. In fact, we can only speak of inadequate representations because we can speak of adequate representations.

Bennington's conception has the merit of being compact and convincing. And from an empirical point of view – from an ethnographic point of view –, it has the merit of representing how his community *thinks* the concept of originality works. [redacted] it plays a fundamental role in the assessment we tend to make, at least at first glance, of his conception of originality. When we read D_1, don't we have the *feeling* that we are reading our own thoughts? Doesn't what Bennington say about originality seem to be just an *expression* – a precise and skillful depiction – of what *we* ourselves think about originality? But the fact that two people believe they are right about something [redacted]. One's opinions cannot be evoked to validate someone else's opinions. Perhaps the strong impression of validity conveyed by Bennington's conception has a simple and rather unimportant explanation [redacted] the same conception expressed and defended by different people – and possibly in different ways.

It might be interesting to state things rather boldly: to know if Derrida is original, it is *not* enough to compare him with Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger. [redacted] An absolutely

essential component is missing in Bennington's definition. And the problem is not that we are before a very short list of authors. The addition of the names of Schopenhauer, Husserl, Sartre, Camus and Merleau-Ponty [redacted]. The terms "Hegel," "Nietzsche" and "Heidegger," which do appear in Bennington's definition of originality, play an essentially symbolical role. They do not refer rigidly to Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. On the contrary, they are to be understood as variables – which D_1 makes clear by replacing them by letters –, so that the need to also compare Derrida with Schopenhauer, Husserl, Sartre, Camus, and Merleau-Ponty is actually already noted in the reference to Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger. [redacted] The problem is not at the level of its *form* of expression. The problem lies in the very *content* expressed. The problem lies in the logical procedure proposed by Bennington to determine the presence or absence of originality. Its criteria for the application of the term "originality" are [redacted] incomplete. So much so that it becomes problematic to say even that his definition is partially correct. Apparently, he grasped the relational [redacted] In order to determine if T_n is original, it is not enough to compare T_n with T_{n-1}, T_{n-2}, T_{n-3} etc. Originality *is* certainly a relation. But it is *not* a first-order relation. It must necessarily be a second-order relation, that is, a relation between relations:

> (D_2) In order to determine whether T_4 is original in relation to T_1, T_2 and T_3, it is *not* enough to compare T_4 to T_1, T_2 and T_3. It is also necessary to compare how T_4 is compared to T_1, T_2 and T_3, with how T_8 is compared to T_5, T_6 and T_7, and to how T_{12} is compared to T_9, T_{10} and T_{11}, etc.

Or in less analytical terms:

> (D_2') In order to determine whether Derrida is original, it is not enough to compare him to Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. One must also compare how one compares Derrida to Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger to how one compares Foucault to Adorno, Bachelard, and Canguilhem, and how one compares Merleau-Ponty to Brentano, Husserl, and Sartre, and so on.

We can say that D_1 expresses a necessary condition for the attribution of originality, but not a sufficient condition. [redacted] On the contrary, D_2 reallocates, phagocytes D_1, finds a place for D_1 within itself. It may be interesting here to recall Bennington's ambition to rewrite Derrida as if he were writing a "computer program".[ix] Because after comparing, let us say successfully, Derrida to Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, a computer program would certainly need *more* information in order to decide whether or not the predicate "original" should be attached to his work. It would need to know, at the very least, where to draw the line. How many things does Derrida need to say that cannot be found in Hegel, Nietzsche or Heidegger in order for him to be considered original? Or how original do the things he says need to be? [redacted] justify *why* the line is drawn here and not there. And here we come again to the importance of D_2. For what distinguishes D_2 from D_1 is precisely the fact that D_2 offers a way to [redacted] Which is *absolutely* essential. Because if our requirements are too high, the predicate "original" will end up with zero or almost zero extension, and if they are too low, it will cover

all or almost all of the items in our universe. None of these options will match our actual uses of [redacted].

5 — But is D_2 really different from D_1?

But is D_2 really different from D_1? Isn't the very idea of a computer program misleading? And conceptual calibrations – isn't this just an absurd, meaningless metaphor? Indeed, the following objection can be raised against D_2: that at best D_2 adds nothing significant, nothing important, nothing relevant to our understanding of how the concept of originality actually works – or of how it ought to work. That is, D_2 does not say anything new. On the other hand, D_1 does clearly and distinctly formulate an essential feature of the concept of originality: its relational character. What D_2 does is just to polish – unnecessarily – the achievement already made by D_1. The difference between D_1 and D_2, in fact, is extremely small. It is so small that it makes no sense to use the word "difference" here, let alone that D_1 should be discarded in favor of D_2. [redacted] Its strategy is not to challenge D_2 on its own terms – as D_2 criticizes D_1 on his own terms – but to minimize its importance. In its most radical version – which is always on the prowl –, this criticism may call into question the very meaning of the discussion, the very relevance of the topic. Why discuss the concept of originality? What is gained by discussing the concept of originality? Aren't there more important, pressing problems? Didn't Bennington address the issue exactly as it deserves to be treated: in the form of a side comment? [redacted]

[redacted] minimize D_2 in some way. If D_2 cannot be attacked with sobriety – because it is actually more robust than D_1 –, there remains the alternative of disqualifying the discussion as a whole. [redacted] D_2 is reduced to a perhaps ingenious but completely empty maneuver.

[redacted] sense of distrust against D_2 simply because it springs from an unauthorized [redacted] It must necessarily have a problem – and if it is not a logical problem, it must be a deeper problem: a problem of significance, a problem of relevance. In fact, the corrosive force of D_2 – and this is true for any idea – does not depend only on its content. It also depends on its origin. The implicit rules of our epistemic practices dictate that criticism must always flow [redacted] In their upward trajectory, epistemic moves find an enormous, almost insurmountable resistance. Provenances, of course, are mere empirical determinations. However, they are empirical determinations which have been transcendentalized.

But let us return to the objection – somewhat more open to negotiation – that the difference between D_1 and D_2 is too small to merit attention. On this point of view, the problem is not the discussion as a whole. The problem is effectively the content of D_2. The problem is that D_2 is not sufficiently different from D_1. The problem is that, somewhat tragically and quite ironically, D_2 is not original. So D_2 ought to be discarded not because it is inconsistent, not because it incorrectly describes the concept of originality, but simply because it does not say anything which has not already been said by D_1. It is not that the discussion as a whole lacks importance.

It is only the contribution of D_2 that lacks importance. [redacted] an unimportant contribution cannot be considered original.

The circle of ironies, however, does not end here. For to know whether D_2 is significantly different from D_1, it is not enough to compare D_2 to D_1. We also need to compare how we compare D_2 to D_1 to how we make other comparisons. The concepts of similarity and difference are also relations between relations. [redacted] second-order relations. [redacted] dismissing D_2 because it is not different enough from D_1? Introduced to reduce D_2 to D_1, this criticism is actually an excellent opportunity to show that D_2 cannot be reduced to D_1. What makes D_2 different from D_1 is precisely the idea that relations between relations should replace pure, simple, first-order relations. In attempting to overthrow D_2 by using to the idea of difference, this criticism forgets that differences are also relations between relations – not pure, simple, first-order relations. [redacted]

Perhaps it is interesting to note that we do not need to move beyond the discursive horizon of analytic philosophy to see the limitations around Bennington's conception of originality. It has purely logical problems. [redacted] The machine reconstituted from Bennington's scattered remarks about Derrida's originality – and that we have agglutinated in a discernible, definite conception, namely D_1 – is a machine that works in an absolutely unpredictable way. In other words, it does not work. [redacted]

[redacted]

And the fact that its outputs are bound to be random and inconsistent means that Bennington's conception of originality is not the conception actually *used* by his community – for the simple reason that it is an *unusable* concept. Far from being a mere nonsensical fantasy, D_2 brings an absolutely essential inflection to the concept of originality. Without this calibration mechanism, we could take T_4 as original and T_8 as non-original in spite of T_4 and T_8 differing in a comparable way to their respective elements of comparison, that is, T_1, T_2 e T_3 in the one case, and T_5, T_6 e T_7 in the other case. We could even take T_4 as original and T_8 as non-original even though the difference between T_8 and its elements of comparison is greater than [redacted]. That is, we could take a clearly original text as little or even non-original, and a clearly non-original text as greatly original.

6 — There are even further problems

There are even further problems with Bennington's conception of originality. For D_1 completely ignores the question of relevance. In fact, it does *not* make sense to consider a text as original simply because it makes a series of new and unique statements. They must also be relevant. And to be relevant, they need to make sense in the first place. The famous theory that the universe was created by a spaghetti monster [redacted] original way of criticizing the idea that the universe was created by a fantastic being.[x] The simple

fact that a proposition makes sense, however, is not enough to make it relevant. In fact, the very theory that the universe was created by a spaghetti monster with eyes of meatballs makes sense. [redacted] another sense of making sense: that of being intelligible – a property which, incidentally, allows us to identify it as absurd. However, it has no chance of – and no aspiration to – being listed alongside other theories about [redacted] the universe. [redacted] The theories of the origin of the universe imagined by physicists – though they may also be absurd – clearly have epistemic aspirations, and [redacted] designed to elicit to rejection. By deliberately embracing the absurd, it develops such a low convincing power – in fact, it is not zero, it is negative – that any theory to which it is compared finds its credibility seriously threatened. What matters is not just the amount of new ideas introduced by a theory. Their quality is an important factor. [redacted]

[redacted] it threatens to swallow both Bennington's conception of originality, D_1, and its calibrated version, D_2. It is true that what D_2 asks for is purely an equivalence of treatment. The objective of comparing how one compares Derrida to Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger to how one compares Foucault to Marx, Bachelard, and Canguilhem is precisely to ensure a fair calibration – thus neutralizing the distorting effects brought about by issues of relevance. That is to say, the objective is to prevent, on the one case,

attribution of originality on the grounds of an insufficient number of ideas (or on the grounds of ideas which lack quality: which have little significance, little importance, little relevance), and, on the other case, denial of originality despite a sufficient number of ideas (or in spite of ideas which are qualitatively sound: which have significance, importance, and relevance). [redacted]

How do you know if a particular idea is relevant? How do you know how relevant it is? How do you know if two ideas are equally relevant? In fact, doesn't the fact that an idea is new make it automatically difficult to realize its relevance? And the fact that an idea is considered relevant – can't this be a symptom of its lack of originality? For aren't relevance and originality antithetical?

[redacted] people can radically disagree when it comes to quality. Everything depends on the works they take to be *stellae fixae* – that is, the works whose quality they are unwilling to question. A poststructuralist would tend to find the contributions of the *Tractatus* very much irrelevant – and therefore lacking what it takes to be a candidate for originality [redacted] And an analytical philosopher would tend to find the contributions of *Of Grammatology* equally [redacted] if we measured Derrida not against Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, but against Frege, Russell, and Moore, shouldn't he now seem more original – perhaps more original than he is? Or maybe

not more original – but less relevant? So is there really any hope that a computer program will ever be able to distinguish a relevant from an irrelevant idea? Is there really any hope that a computer program will be able to process [redacted]?

7 – But there is an even more basic concept

[redacted] not the units that a computer program could easily handle. They are not words – or signs – that we can immediately perceive. Nor are they sentences – or propositional signs – that we can immediately read. [redacted] not possible to repeat its meaning except through signs. [redacted] effectively *understand* what they read, [redacted] impossible. It is not to the signs that our attention is directed, [redacted]

interest us. [redacted] escape us. From the point of view of the computer, meanings are elusive. From our point of view, however, signs are elusive.

[redacted] The problem, however, is that the same signs can convey radically different – even opposite – meanings, and the same meanings can be conveyed by radically different – Including opposite – signs. Although they are closely connected – and although they can never really be dissociated – signs and meanings have a certain independence. It is possible to speak, on the one hand, about the *propositional sign* "Originality should not be sought", and, on the other hand, [redacted] Under its aspect of a sign, the proposition "Originality should not be sought" [redacted] contains five words, twenty-eight characters etc. But as a meaningful proposition, it may be stating, for example, that "It makes no sense to try to be original", either in the sense that it is inevitable: no matter how hard we try to make only faithful and well-behaved copies of great philosophical works, we will never be able to avoid an amount, even if minimal, of originality – or in the sense that it is something unattainable: no matter how hard we try to generate an original philosophical work, we will never be able to avoid, either consciously or unconsciously, reproducing the great philosophical works of the past.[xi]

This does not mean, however, that we can simply collapse the notion of meaning [redacted] There is an obvious resemblance between "Originality should not be sought" and "It makes no sense to try to be original" that the notion of sign *cannot*

easily capture. And there is also a difference at the very core of the proposition "It makes no sense to try to be original" – that is, a difference between "It makes no sense to try to be original" and "It makes no sense to try to be original" itself – which again *cannot* be easily explained [redacted]

> (A) Originality should not be sought. It makes no sense to try to be original. Originality is inevitable. It is impossible not to be original.
>
> (B) Originality should not be sought. It makes no sense to try to be original. Originality is unreachable. It is impossible to be original.

Hence the proposition "It makes no sense to try to be original", introduced to make the meaning of "Originality should not be sought" more determinate, is itself completely indeterminate. It can both be part of the series that leads to "It's impossible not to be original" and part of the series that leads to "It's impossible to be original." [redacted] diametrically opposite answers. The same propositional sign can be part of two distinct, even antagonistic textual economies.

The fact that the units that interest are to be found not at the level of signs, but at the level of meanings, should therefore make us seriously question [redacted] in a rigorous, reliable way if Derrida is original in relation to Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger. It would also be unable to distinguish

between an original thinker and a mere commentator [redacted] There is no question that signs can be easily individuated. But when we turn to ideas – which are to be found at the level of meanings, even if it is true that meanings are always expressed through signs [redacted] senseless to say that [redacted] In general, a series of propositional signs are necessary to express an idea. And it is doubtful that in the process only one single idea will be expressed. And it is also doubtful that it will be possible to easily demarcate one from another. Moreover, there cannot be a single way – and this really is an impossibility – to express an idea. Because it must necessarily be possible to explain it. And there is no other way of explaining an idea except through [redacted] It might be worthwhile to note that this obviously [redacted] the widespread idea that meanings are produced by differences.

There is a reason why philosophers express themselves not through lists of propositions but through texts. The idea of a list suggests a set of independent, complete and self-contained propositional signs, which nevertheless [redacted] converge to form a meaning that encompasses and surpasses them. An ideal list would have no repeated items [redacted] Each of its propositional signs would express one and only one meaning, and a very definite one. A text, however, is formed by propositions – by propositional signs – that overlap and intercept each other, influencing each other in many different ways. It is pointless to try to dismember a text into isolated propositional signs as if the meanings they conveyed were independent and detachable from each other. On the contrary, one

sign bestows life into the other. Taken in isolation, they would have – and could have – their meanings. It is by chance, therefore, that philosophers express themselves by means of texts, and not by means of lists. To write a list in this sense with independent, complete, and self-contained meaning. For the very idea of a list is based on an assumption, that the task of individuating ideas can be reduced to the task of individuating signs. It is possible to have an idea, even a clear idea, of what a text is trying to say. But it is not possible to identify its ideas as it is possible to identify its signs – that is, in a completely univocal and uncontroversial way.

That there are differences at the level of the signs does not imply that there are differences at the level of meanings. Identity at the level signs is not a guarantee of identity at the level of meanings. the impossibility of individuating ideas unequivocally shatters the ground upon which Bennington's conception of originality is built. Indeed, the fact that the same signs can express different meanings and the same meaning can be expressed by different signs For the units of comparison – the letters which appear in D_1 – cannot be individuated. demarcated from one another and stabilized in units.

If a computer program were clever enough to identify ideas – an indispensable step for us to be able to compare them and to decide whether they are original or not –, it would be consequently

able to represent each of them by a single symbol, a single letter. That is, it would be able to describe texts in the way D_1 presupposes – as an uncontroversial truth – that is possible to describe them. And if it were to conclude that T_n says A, the next step would be to look for A in T_{n-1}, T_{n-2}, T_{n-3} etc. The problem, however, is that the signs used by T_{n-1}, T_{n-2}, and T_{n-3} could be completely different from the ones used by T_n. And these differences could lead incorrectly to the conclusion that the ideas in question are also different. Alternatively, they could be deceptively alike. How would a program know whether to interpret these differences as too small as to allow the conclusion that we are before "different ideas" or as too great as to allow us the conclusion that we are before the "same ideas"?

[redacted] we cannot even the start the process of making comparisons.

8 – But we don't have to discard D_1 altogether

[redacted] find a proper place for D_1 within the general economy of ideas about the nature of originality. After all, doesn't Bennington give an adequate account of how his community thinks the concept of originality works? The fact that D_1 is tarnished by inconsistencies

does not mean that its descriptive value – its ethnographic value, its empirical value – is zero. In fact, to the consciousness that has not examined D_1 carefully, it can even impose itself with the force of a necessity. And if there are people who reject Bennington's conception of originality because there is nothing groundbreaking, nothing original about it, because it is, in other words, plainly intuitive and quite uninformative [redacted] believe that D_1 can be used rationally. [redacted]

Bennington might also be giving an adequate account of how we tend to think that the concept of originality *should* work. In fact, doesn't it seem like, at least at first glance, that D_1 makes a substantive contribution [redacted] Even if it does not describe how the concept of originality *actually* works – or how it is *thought* to work –, can't D_1 describe how it *should* be used? That is, couldn't D_1 have, in the absence of any referential value, at least a normative value? [redacted]

Which brings us to a somewhat curious situation. The problem of originality indicates that at least four levels are at play here – not just two, as the marks left in our retinas by the classical distinction between theory and practice may incline us to think. It is necessary to distinguish between (a) how the concept of originality works, (b) how it is thought to work, (c) how it should work, and

finally (d) how it is thought that it should work. We can refer to these as the [redacted] levels. The classic distinction between theory and practice – which informs Wittgenstein's distinction between definitions and uses of words, for example – is subsumed under the distinction between the [redacted] levels. One thing is to see how the word "game" is defined. Another thing is to see how it is used. Obviously, it is possible to *force* the assimilation of the [redacted] levels onto the classical distinction between theory and practice. The problem, however, is to decide how exactly one ought to proceed. For example, what should we group under the label "theory"? [redacted] doxastic [redacted] normative [redacted] Is it even possible to make a non-arbitrary decision here?

In any case, D_1 seems to inform reasonably well how one *thinks* the concept of originality works – and also how one *thinks* it should work. [redacted] If D_1 seems to say how the concept of originality *should* work, and if, in addition, it also seems to be an appropriate description of how it *really* works (at least, that's what we think), how are we avoid [redacted] the conclusion that we *are* using the concept of originality how it *should* be used? [redacted] spoils the party. But perhaps D_2 does not demonstrate that we *use* the concept of originality in a flawed way, only that we *represent* our flawless use of the concept of originality in a flawed way. [redacted] Although we are unable to

explain coherently how we use the concept of originality, the fact is that the uses we actually make of it do show how it *should* be used.

9 — This much should be clear

This much should be clear: [redacted] On the other hand, D_1 describes neither how it should be used nor how it is in fact used. Therefore, perhaps, we have explained well – or reasonably well – the [redacted] aspects of the concept of originality. What remains to be explained is its [redacted] dimension – that is, how it *is* actually used. It turns out, however, that the concept of use – despite appearing neutral, despite appearing objective, despite appearing unproblematic – is not free from riddles of its own. And the concept of originality is especially suited to bring them to the surface. In fact, it illustrates very well how the level of use is traversed by conflict and incongruity – and how it loses its explanatory powers along with its lack of regularity.

[redacted] no agreement as to the originality of Derrida. We already know that Bennington considers Derrida an original thinker [redacted] Barry Smith, for example, also uses the term "original" – or at least, he so believes – also to label works which display significantly new ideas, but he does not in any way regard Derrida as an original thinker. In fact, two of the three authors mentioned by Bennington

to attribute originality to Derrida are explicitly mentioned by Smith to deny his originality:

> There is, leaving aside a lot of meaningless banter, and even with the best of intentions, very little in Derrida that you cannot find already in Heidegger or Nietzsche. (…) Derrida seeks to deconstruct familiar binary opposites, such as that between serious and playful (...). Nietzsche, we can say, had interesting and original things to say about this opposition, and he said them in full Germanic seriousness.[xii]

How are we to infer the use of the concept of originality from such disparate judgments? Does Bennington and Smith really have the same concept of originality? [redacted] level of use. But its apparent simplicity is what gives the impression that it can finally quench our thirst for explanation: its apparent simplicity is what gives the impression that it functions as a kind of [redacted] seems to bridge the gap between language and reality [redacted] makes the concept of use an ideal candidate for the role of the bedrock of meaning. It fulfills – or gives the impression of fulfilling – all the necessary requirements for the task: it is an apparently objective and neutral concept, even a humble one. It is a concept so far from the sky and so close to the ground that it no longer seems to be a concept anymore.

[redacted] The scale that is commonly taken into account when evoking the concept of use – and which emphasizes its supposed explanatory powers – is the scale used by Wittgenstein: the scale of

the most immediate interpersonal linguistic transactions, that is, the 1:1 scale.[xiii]

It is true that when we go down to the level of the most immediate, interpersonal language transactions, we see events in all their colors and with an incredible richness of detail – but it is also true that we simultaneously stop seeing The 1:1 scale is, so to say, exuberant – but it is at the same time silent. Despite its infinite textures, it doesn't say anything useful. It is quite right to say that in order for it to play the discursive role of an explanatory foundation, it cannot say too much. The level of uses – the level of the most immediate, interpersonal linguistic transactions – gains its strength from its discretion. different from itself uses of the term "originality" and its cognates under the 1:1 scale Far from being a place of simple lack of regularity, uses are the place of irregularity *par excellence*.

Of course, the image of the level of use as neutral and disinterested comes from – and depends viscerally on – the consideration of somewhat insipid and uninteresting words like "tool" and "game".[xiv] But the fact that the concept of use – aided by the related concept of family resemblance – is perhaps able to reasonably explain how words like "tool" and "game" operate does

[redacted] mean that it explains equally well the workings of concepts marked by struggles and disputes – as is the case of the concept of originality, and, indeed, of the very concept of philosophy.[xv] The level of use – at least when viewed on the supposedly promising 1:1 scale – does not shed any light on how the concept of originality works.

10 — Perhaps we cannot maintain

Perhaps we cannot maintain that these two evaluations, Bennington's and Smith's, are equally valid and rational. [redacted] blend together. [redacted] with time, the substances would come apart again. [redacted] They cannot be both right. One of them necessarily needs to be wrong – this is a required by [redacted] What makes things especially puzzling, therefore, is that both take themselves to be right; furthermore, nothing indicates that Smith sees himself as a critic interested in minimizing Derrida's achievements and maximizing his failures in order to dethrone him at any cost. In fact, despite being an analytic philosopher, he does not have a typically anti-continental posture. In fact, we have good reason to think that neither Bennington nor Smith were deliberately biased in their evaluations. They do [redacted] seem to be willing to make gratuitous statements about Derrida – one to paint him with [redacted] positive colors and the other to paint him with [redacted] negative colors. Besides, it is not so simple to invoke Smith's analytical background in order to disavow his negative assessment of Derrida. For Bennington's literary background could

also be invoked in order to disavow his positive assessment. Both of them assess Derrida's work – at least from their own point of views – soberly, seriously and objectively. [redacted] Just as Bennington is not irresponsibly trying to make a weak author look strong, Smith is [redacted] irresponsibly trying to make a strong author seem weak. Bennington sincerely believes that Derrida is original. And Smith also sincerely believes that Derrida is not original. They both believe that they are just revealing things as they really are. They both believe to be [redacted]

[redacted] believe that they are using the concept of originality neutrally and objectively. [redacted] a computer program previously fed with Hegel's, Nietzsche's, and Heidegger's works would *not* arrive to the same conclusion as Bennington did. Not because he considers Bennington's conception of originality incoherent. On the contrary, everything suggests that Smith believes – and perhaps here is his only point of agreement with Bennington – that the concept of originality works according to the scheme described in D_1. That is, Bennington and Smith seem to agree on the [redacted] level – the level of how one *thinks* that the concept of originality works. But they obviously do not agree on the [redacted] level – the level

of uses. In fact, here they come to radically different conclusions. One is absolutely convinced of Derrida's originality. The other is absolutely convinced of Derrida's [redacted] originality.

So Bennington and Smith seem to agree and disagree [redacted] simply a difference in opinion? [redacted] If we take it for granted that they are using the same scheme and the same criteria, won't we be forced to conclude that one of them – at least one of them – is necessarily misapplying the concept of originality, either voluntarily or involuntarily? Is it possible that one of them is – or both of them are – taking as irrelevant ideas that are actually relevant, or, alternatively, as relevant ideas that are actually irrelevant? [redacted] Is it possible that Hegel's, Nietzsche's, Heidegger's and finally Derrida's ideas are being individuated in an unreliable way?

There is no doubt that neither Bennington nor Smith were as rigorous as a computer program. Not even a computer program could be as rigorous as a computer program. [redacted] not and will never be at our disposal: a computer program capable of infallibly evaluating

whether a work is original or not. [redacted]

The fact that Bennington and Smith can converge on the level of schemata and criteria [redacted] The 1:1 scale, the scale of uses, can perhaps be fruitfully evoked to explain harmless and primarily descriptive words – such as the word "game", which do not have a strong, obvious political component. But when we move from the concept of game to the concept of originality, a new dimension comes into play: there is a break in continuity here – the theoretical tools deployed to explain the former no longer [redacted]

11 — The first thing that the level of use

[redacted] disputed concept.[xvi] There is no doubt that D_1 and D_2 are both at a considerable distance from how the concept of originality effectively works. [redacted] The term "originality" is more

like a label which is pulled violently from one side to the other – due to its *legitimating power* – than like a label placed placidly on items that meet its criteria of application.[xvii] [redacted] fierce linguistic struggles – which are nothing like the peaceful scenario suggested by the concept of use. [redacted] a structure of their own.[xviii] [redacted] neither D_1 nor D_2 are not enough to explain *how* legitimizing concepts like originality are actually used.

[redacted] A description of how the concept of originality is *used* – as opposed to a description of how it is *thought* to be used [redacted] the power to produce – or to undo – visibility and existence. [redacted] destroyed.

[redacted]

[redacted] the concept of originality [redacted] much more parsimonious precisely because its effects are much more impacting and decisive. An author needs to be updated, well-informed, serious, coherent, and rigorous to be considered original – otherwise he or she will be seen at most as an eccentric author. But it is not enough that he or she be updated, well-informed, serious, coherent and rigorous in order to be considered original. [redacted] in fact, it is not enough to *be* original in order to be *considered* original – and one may even be *considered* original without *being* original.

There is, however, another, deeper reason why Bennington opens his book stating Derrida's originality. In fact, he must somehow justify – including to himself, because the self expects reasons for the allocation of its energy – the immense work he is about to do: that of describing Derrida's thought; actually: to effectively rewrite it, making Derrida's thought his own. [redacted] convince the reader – in

whose interiority lies an equally vigilant self – to dedicate his time, his energy, to the work he has done. [redacted] the antagonism between magic and understanding: when the magician reveals his or her secret, the trick ceases to amuse us. The less we insist on the constructed character of Derrida's originality, the more we can insist on Derrida's originality.

Bennington and Smith are certainly aware – even if not propositionally aware – of the political dimension of the concept of originality. However, they believe – at least they seem to believe – that it is possible to draw a clear boundary between its political dimension and its purely descriptive dimension. [redacted] The problem, on Bennington's view, is that Smith and his colleagues did not perform operation D_1 – or operation D_2 –, and stubbornly decided to attack Derrida based on a purely political motivation. And on Smith's view, on the other hand, the problem is that Bennington and his colleagues did not apply the criteria outlined in D_1 – or in D_2 –, and stubbornly decided to defend Derrida based on a purely political motivation. For Bennington and his colleagues, a flaw was committed by Smith and his colleagues – a flaw perhaps more ethical than logical. For Smith and his colleagues, a flaw was committed by Bennington and his colleagues – a flaw perhaps more logical than ethical. [redacted]

[redacted] possible to isolate the descriptive use of the concept of originality from its political use. [redacted] impossible. The attempt to isolate and clarify its descriptive core – when undertaken seriously and rigorously – tends to empty it: in fact, this task [redacted]

There is no doubt that these two antagonistic positions see themselves as purely descriptive – and it is from the descriptive dimension that they draw their strength –, but there is also no doubt that they function essentially in a performative way. The statement that Derrida is original makes him – or contributes to make him – into an original thinker. [redacted] rest their positions on reasons. They are not gratuitous, free-floating positions: they meet criteria. Nonetheless, these criteria seem to play here a purely cosmetic role – and not only because they lead to diametrically opposed conclusions. The concept of originality is *not* [redacted] On the contrary, T_{n-1}, T_{n-2}, T_{n-3} etc. are brought about in order to construct – or to destroy – the originality of T_n. That is, the reference to T_{n-1}, T_{n-2}, T_{n-3} etc. does not play a decisive role in the task of determining the originality of T_n. Reference to T_{n-1}, T_{n-2}, T_{n-3} etc. has only a decisive role in the task of *legitimizing* – by dressing it with a methodical, thoughtful and

rational appearance – the evaluation of originality of T_n. [redacted] look legitimate.

In saying that Derrida is original, therefore, Bennington is doing much more than simply attributing to him originality. [redacted] example of a performative proposition. The problem of Bennington's conception of originality – which is also Smith's conception of originality [redacted] in order to evaluate the originality of T_n, it is not enough to compare it to T_{n-1}, T_{n-2}, T_{n-3} etc. Nor is it limited to the fact that there can be disagreements as to the textual components that should be taken into consideration. And again, neither to the fact that it is doubtful whether the units of comparison themselves can really be individuated. [redacted] assumption that it is a purely rational concept.

And there is no doubt that it must *appear* rational in order to exert both its legitimating and its delegitimizing effect. It is precisely from this appearance of rationality that it derives its strength. Knowledge must have the appearance of knowledge – preferably of pure knowledge – in order to exercise its power effectively. The appearance of rationality lends force to the concept of originality, which in turn lends force to the work considered original. And the original work, in turn, lends force to those who decipher and disseminate it. [redacted] trickle-down economics here. The

aura built around the original thinker also touches its interpreters. But if we manage to unmask rationality, we will see here a chain reaction: the dissipation of the aura around the concept of originality will imply in the dissipation of the aura around the work considered original – and also, finally, will imply in [redacted]

12 — So we know that

So we know that [redacted]

As a rule, however, discrimination acts in a discrete, insidious, sneaky way: it does not show its face; [redacted] it needs to be skillfully cornered – in order to show its face. And this means that it cannot be easily discerned at the 1:1 scale, the scale of the most immediate linguistic transactions. In fact, here it finds the perfect hiding place: here it can justify itself, here it can claim neutrality, exemption, rationality. But when we move on to a scale like $1{:}10^3$, the physiognomy of the city [redacted] less likely to have their intellectual achievements

recognized. Angela Harris and Carmen González could not have summarized the problem more accurately:

[redacted][xix]

That is, their cognitive abilities are constantly put into question. Just like society as a whole, academia also has two sides – a heroic, brilliant side, visible to all, and a crude, rough side, visible only to a few. "While many of the formal barriers have been lifted", Harris and Gonzalez further explain, "academic institutions remain, at their core, profoundly inhospitable to the experiences and points of view of those formerly excluded".[xx] There is a stark contrast between academia's image of itself and [redacted] the 1:1 scale is not very informative. It can only show that there is nothing peaceful and straightforward about the use of the concept of originality. But the scale $1:10^3$, on the other hand, [redacted] regularities begin to appear: [redacted] If their works fail to match the requirements set by the most modest epistemic qualities – if they are not up-to-date, well-informed, serious, coherent, and rigorous *in principle* –, then what hope can they have to be considered original? [redacted] women of color: gender and skin color factors make them two times separated from knowledge. Because they are women, they are associated with partiality and emotion –

and dissociated from objectivity and reason. Because they are not white, they are associated with primitive societies and all forms of backwardness – and dissociated from high culture and civilization. They are more likely to be seen as researchers willing to act dishonestly in order to look original than [redacted] and originality itself may be the triggering factor [redacted] In fact, it is not enough to be original in order to be original. Nor does one have to be original to be original.

[redacted] change the scale of analysis. And when we move from $1{:}10^3$ to $1{:}10^8$, the scale of the world map, we discover even more regularities. [redacted] geopolitical lines [redacted] The discursive strategy employed to minimize – or to deny – the effects of sexism, racism and eurocentrism on the formation of the canon are already well-known (though only to those who know them): women and [redacted] first nations peoples of the whole world have mythology, but not philosophy. [redacted] at least since Christine de Pizan a woman could have a secure place in the canon, and at least since Anton Wilhelm Amo an African could have a secure place in the canon.[xxi] And if one cannot speak of "Indigenous philosophy" because the term "philosophy" has a Greek origin, why can one speak of "Indigenous mythology"? [redacted]

why is it necessary to speak of "Indigenous mythology"? Is it not because the terms "philosophy" and "mythology" have a hierarchical relationship – the term "mythology" functioning in a delegitimizing way?

although he mentioned Algeria , his country of origin, and where he lived for the first two decades of his life, he speaks of "we the French" and "we the Europeans",

For he chooses to locate his own thinking within a primarily European canon.

reiterating and reinstantiating the great thinkers of the European canon, the repetition of the same The women that he cites are also primarily French or French-influenced thinkers

continuation of the canon, in spite of Derrida's Unlike Paulin Hountondji and Odera Oruka, whose thoughts cannot be coherently dissociated from African history – they speak as Africans, they speak to

Africans, Derrida is a de-Africanized author. Hountondji and Oruka – especially Oruka – have made a colossal effort to break away from the rails that only allow us to see and value the spiritual work of the West. Although Derrida [redacted] his work nonetheless continues, deepens and reinforces that canon, [redacted] If there is something that Derrida did not deconstruct, it is his own practice of deconstructing preferably the great thinkers of the European canon, thus contributing to deepening, reinforcing and updating, however indirectly, however tortuously, their canonical statuses.

Originality, the highest of the epistemic virtues, which has a decisive role in the selection and formation of the canon, is reserved for [redacted] Humble epistemic moves can be performed by anyone. Significant and decisive moves, however, involve a great deal of responsibility: they must be constantly monitored: they must be kept under surveillance: they must be entrusted to [redacted] This is not how things are. This is how they have to be. And the concept of originality plays a key role in making things be so. [redacted] not possible to

explain how the concept of originality works without making any reference to bias.

But, after all, is Derrida original or not? If my position hasn't yet been made clear, I can end this chapter with the following remarks. Contrary to Bennington, I'd say that Derrida is hardly an original thinker. There is a big difference between originality and logorrhea. However, Smith's assessment is also unfair. Derrida was neither a god nor a demon, just a mediocre thinker who has been turned into a star. He has been originalized, so to speak, and canonized. But what is really troubling about Derrida is something that both Bennington and Smith missed entirely: it is very likely that he was deliberately and strategically chosen to be turned into a genius precisely because of his political naïveté.[xxii] However, this should be discussed in another occasion.[xxiii]

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[i] See Bennington 1999, p.3.

[ii] See Bennington 1999, p.4.

[iii] See Bennington 1999, p.4.

[iv] See Bennington 1999, pp.4-6.

[v] See Bennington 1999, p.6.

[vi] For a similar conception of what turns a thinker into an original thinker, see, for instance, Lokhorst & Kaitaro 2001, and Behrent 2010.

[vii] See Bennington 1999, pp.4-6.
[viii] See Wittgenstein 1974, Gadamer 1993, Derrida 1997.
[ix] See Bennington 1999, p.1, p.49.
[x] See Henderson 2006.
[xi] For a defense of the first position, see Cabrera 2010. For a structural transformation of one into the other, see Seabra 2014.
[xii] See Smith 1999, p.147.
[xiii] See Wittgenstein 2009.
[xiv] See Wittgenstein 2009.
[xv] See Seabra 2014.
[xvi] See Seabra 2012, 2014.
[xvii] See Seabra 2012, 2014.
[xviii] See Seabra 2014.
[xix] See Harris & González 2012, p.1. The redaction is mine.
[xx] See Harris & González 2012, p.7.
[xxi] See Pizan 2000. For Amo, see Abraham 2004, Wiredu 2004.
[xxii] This should not be understood as a defense of analytic philosophy. For a criticism of analytic philosophy, see Seabra 2014. I am simply not willing to give up my right to think for myself and to reject other people's flags and banners.
[xxiii] What makes poststructuralism so attractive is its feverous association between a non-realist epistemology and a progressive, leftist *pathos*. So poststructuralism embraces a kind of monomorphic imagination that only admits the existence of distortions of reality, accusing those who also believe in truths of two correlated sins, that of being naïve from an epistemological point of view, and that of being conservative from a political point of view. In other words, the epistemological and political components only combine, according to poststructuralist monomorphic imagination, in one specific way, and this combination is rigid: epistemological realism is necessarily linked to political conservatism.

However, it doesn't take much to realize that it is theoretically wrong and even politically dangerous to say that anyone who defends the existence of truths is necessarily a political conservative, and that those who are radical thinkers necessarily think that reality is always distorted. Therefore, contrary to poststructuralism's monomorphic imagination, I'm for a more open, actinomorphic kind of thinking. In my universe there are not only two types of thinkers:

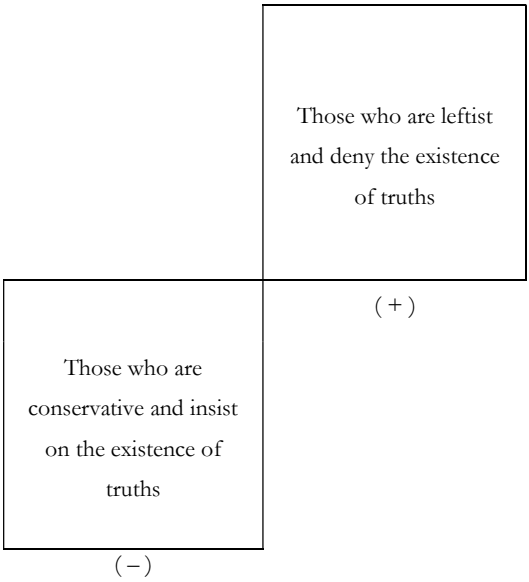
(a) those who are leftist and deny the existence of truths, and
(b) those who are conservative and insist on the existence of truths.

In my universe there are instead four types:

(a) those who are leftist and deny the existence of truths,

(b) those who are conservative and insist on the existence of truths,
(c) those who are leftist and insist on the existence of truths, and
(d) those who are conservative and deny the existence of truths.

It follows from this that it is impossible to coherently infer one's political commitments from one's epistemological commitments. My actinomorphic typology is more complex than poststructuralist's monomorphic typology because it includes not only two doxastic positions, but all four doxastic positions that can be obtained, by a simple process of permutation, from the two elementary epistemological and political positions. The poststructuralist typology, constructed from simple oppositions, necessarily leaves gaps in its doxogeography. If we want to represent it graphically, we will get something like the following:



The signs (+) and (–) indicate from which doxastic *locus*, according to monomorphic thinking, we must emigrate, and to which we must immigrate. They indicate what monomorphic thinking values (what it claims to be right) and what it devalues (what it claims to be wrong). In the monomorphic universe, the adoption of an anti-realist epistemology and a leftist politics is a sign of enlightenment (not "Enlightment", of course, just "enlightment"). Hence it pushes toward a reordering of the discursive space; in fact, reordering it is part of its goals. In an important sense, therefore, poststructuralist

mononarrativity is doubly dualistic: first, it recognizes only two diametrically opposing doxastic *loci*; second, it values one of the poles and devalues the other. Furthermore, dualism expresses itself in the tendency to under-criticize the valued pole and to over-criticize the devalued pole: both the weaknesses of the *locus* occupied by those who are leftist and attack the existence of facts and the strengths of the *locus* occupied by those who are conservative and defend the existence of facts are thrown into the background and completely forgotten. This imbalance forces a migratory movement in the discursive space. Ideally, monomorphic thinking leads to the elimination of one of its doxastic places (the place occupied by those who are conservative and defend the existence of facts) and to the promotion of only one of its doxastic places (the place occupied by those who are leftist and deny the existence of facts). Thus, mononarrativity leads to the reduction of the discursive space to only one doxastic place.

To think in an actinomorphic way is to think in a stellar way. It is to understand that all petals of the flower have their place. It is to escape the dualistic logic that fosters the adoption of different critical attitudes towards different doxastic *loci*. What mononarrativity takes as the conclusion (e.g. as the end of the thought process), namely a leftist anti-realism, actinonarrativity takes to be only the beginning (of the thought process). The elements which constitute leftist anti-realism can be disaggregated and recombined to fill in the gaps left in the conceptual space by monomorphism. If we want to represent actinonarrativity graphically, we will get something like the following:

Those who are leftist and deny the existence of truths	Those who are conservative and insist on the existence of truths
Those who are leftist and insist on the existence of truths	Those who are conservative and deny the existence of truths

Actinomorphic thinking does not stigmatize or praise any of the doxastic places of the discursive space. That is why the graphic representation of actinomorphic thinking has neither the (+) nor the (–) sign. The actinomorphic mandala is more complex and full than the monomorphic mandala. Unlike monomorphic thinking, actinomorphic thinking is not dualistic (in this respect). Unlike monomorphic thinking, actinomorphic thinking is not apoplectic. Mononarrativity is a prison for thought. It can, yes, free from the *locus* of conservative realism. However, it re-arrests thought on another level. But where mononarrativity holds thought back, actinonarrativity reactivates it.