

Derrida's Wheel – The Circularity of Political (R)Evolutions

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journals.sagepub.com/home/psc**Elia RG Pusterla** 

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Abstract

This article investigates the relationship between political revolutions and the evolution of politics. It discusses the circularity within the concept of revolution through Jacques Derrida's theory of sovereignty as particularly per Rogues – Two Essays on Reason and The Beast and the Sovereign. Derrida's notions of wheel and ipseity display ontological prerogatives and evolutionary limits of political revolutions possibly coinciding with reversals hard to turn into linear evolutions, excluding rather than reaffirming circularity. Political revolutions show such incapacity to become evolutionary for politics when lacking ontological substance and resting upon formal contingencies such as new techniques. An 'alternative' notion of sovereignty is proposed as a heuristic criterion to gauge political events' 'revolutionary' quality. This undermines the (r)evolutionary nature of political turns, like those associated with the contemporary digitalisation of politics. The Italian Five Stars Movement's parable is a case in point of digital political turns whose effect is non-evolutionary for politics.

Keywords

circularity, evolution, Derrida, digitalisation, Five Stars Movement, *ipseity*, politics, revolution, sovereignty, wheel

Introduction

This article investigates the relation, if any, between political *revolutions* and the *evolution* of politics. It does so by drawing inspiration from Jacques Derrida's theory of sovereignty that encompasses and culminates in Derrida's alleged *political turn*. The latter constitutes

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a receptacle for ethical and political reflections. This article proposes an original reading of Derrida's political theory as a useful heuristic tool to critically approach and depict the circular but not necessarily evolutionary nature of political revolutions. In particular, the original reading of Derrida's theory of sovereignty allows one to reckon that political changes, often referred to as revolutions, do not necessarily constitute changes in the form of an evolution of politics towards something *other*. Derrida's theory of sovereignty (particularly in the later work *Rogues – Two Essays on Reason* and *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminars) is given particular attention to assessing whether and to what extent the alleged revolutionary character of given political turns factually bring about something evolutionary to politics. It is stated how they do so when associated with the Derridean-like concept of 'alternative sovereignty'. It follows that the (r)evolutionary scope of contemporary phenomena associated with digital revolution and digitalisation of politics – with the relative narratives of revolutionary change due to availability and use of new media, social networks and the Internet – are to be addressed and perhaps undermined accordingly. This certainly applies to the Italian case and the Five Stars Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle – the hereafter M5S).

The starting point of the discussion requires investigating the relationship between what is a so-called political *revolution* and the very possibility of political *evolution*. The underlying problem concerns the logical relation and possible oscillation between the will of, and drive to, political change on the one hand and its definite possibility on the other. Indeed, the very notion of political change implies the occurrence of an event whose mere possibility priorly requires a necessary investigation. The latter can only depend on the definition of the categorical conditions under which such an event, indeed, logically occurs. Nonetheless, this requires avoiding at least two possible dangers. One pertains to ideal apriorisms about the empirical observation of the phenomenon. The other – almost, if not entirely, derivative from the attempt to counter the first – pertains to avoiding the limits, and ultimately the somehow similar apriorisms, of historicism. Before such a landscape of warnings, at the extreme boundaries of which opposite epistemological approaches such as, on the one hand, Plato's or Hegel's and, on the other hand, Popper's stand out, the pertinence of deconstruction emerges. The latter, indeed, allows a supplementary conceptualisation, not just inductively subject to dialectics of historical progressions and fluctuations, but also able to grasp the ontological essence of conceptualisation itself which is, indeed, embedded within and articulated throughout history. This reveals the heuristic value of the essentialism that Derridian deconstruction *de facto* expresses in the context of conceptual analysis (Derrida, 2014). Indeed, regardless of the structural invariants that may characterise historical processes, including those of political change – as well as their deriving conceptualisations – deconstruction helps to question and gauge how much, if any, political change is possible within the political sphere itself. This allows assessing whether the political revolution can go beyond and be supplementary to what politics – or some of its conceptualisations – expects a revolution to be. That is, can a political change affect politics, make it changing, evolving and not simply be part of one of its changes? Consequently, this question about the relation between political revolutions and the evolution of politics pertains to political theory's so-called 'ontological turn' (Mihai et al., 2017). Accordingly, Shorten (2016: 303) refers to Stephen

White to explain how there has recently been a ‘growing propensity to interrogate more carefully those “entities” presupposed by our typical ways of seeing and doing in the modern world’ (White, 2000: 4). This investigative *turnaround* – and the connected rhetoric of *the turn* – seems widespread in contemporary political theory and philosophy so much that the term ‘*turn*’ – and its relatives such as ‘re-turn’ – are almost fashionable. Gavin Rae explains how the question on the foundations of politics, and its possible match with onto-theological issues (Pusterla, 2020a), has mainly resulted in the ‘Return of the Theological’ (Rae, 2016: 5). International Relations are also sensitive to the charm of *the turn* and its narrative, as per the recent ‘temporal turn’ (Hom, 2013; Hutchings, 2008), with its growing attention to the study of the time dimension within IR.¹ In this context, Paulo Chamon proposes a compelling jolt to the logic and charm of the IR temporal turn by raising his refusal to ‘this interpellation to “take time seriously,” instead proposing we read these claims as part of a discourse, that is, a set of regularities through which we organise and distribute time as an object of knowledge in IR, and through which we come to govern ourselves and others’ (Chamon, 2018: 396). Beyond and beneath the merits of this sound analysis for the time issue within IR, Chamon’s (discourse) analysis is mostly pertinent for its heuristic applicability to the concept of *turn* itself and, in particular, of the *turn in politics*, namely, the *political turn*. This leads one to question whether political turns exist, sometimes perhaps even in the form of *revolutions*. Is there otherwise the risk of uselessly dwelling on something that does not constitute any (particular) change whatsoever? Instead, if something like the term *political turn* is not necessarily misused but corresponds to a possible remarkable fact/event that deserves the relative emphasis, what do these political (and perhaps revolutionary) turns consist of and how to recognise them?

The turn, turning point, change, are all terms at the heart of the concept of *revolution*. The latter (*re-volvo*) semantically expresses a spatial and topological dimension of politics. Notably, it indicates the presence of a circular movement inherent in the idea of a round, turning, rolling, and, as such, it indicates belonging to physics and the study of space and the positions and movements of objects and bodies within it. In astrophysics, humanity has been talking for millennia of revolutions of celestial bodies and planets, whatever the astronomical model of reference. Before the *turning point* represented by the Copernican *revolution*, the geocentric system put the earth at the centre of concentric spheres. This example shows how epistemology – as human process and narrative on the knowledge and experience of the world and universe – has been, in the course of history, constantly *surrounded* – and still today revolves around – the assumed idea of circularity. This also applies to the political space that is approached, displayed, investigated and possibly understood by presupposing the heuristic cogency of circularity. This ideational imbrication between *knowledge*, *politics* and the *turn* is expressed by, and within, the notion of *revolution*. Indeed, as far as knowledge is concerned, the circularity of the term *revolution* is central to Thomas Kuhn’s epistemological approach expressed through the influent notion of paradigm shifts to explain how *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn, 1962) originates. If, on the one hand, an expression like *scientific revolution* may, perhaps intuitively, evoke and suggest a linear idea of epistemological progress in a Hegelian-like historical pattern, it is notable considering that on the other hand, *revolution* etymologically indicates, if not an authentic regression, at best, a march on the spot, more

likely a Nietzschean *eternal return*. However, what semantically and topologically strikes the most in the term revolution is the presence of a dyad. The turn of the revolution distinctively goes back to something else inside or outside the subject that it re-appropriates. Remarkably, the many meanings of *revolver*² all indicate a term of comparison, a *relative element*. Indeed, as per Galileo Galilei's astronomy, revolution is 'the movement of a body around a centre or an axis' (Cortellazzo and Zolli, 1998: 1099) and was later defined also as a 'motion of a celestial body that describes one orbit around another' (Cortellazzo and Zolli, 1998: 1099). However, it must be acknowledged that the relational/regressive element that these 'celestial revolutions' bring about seem somehow to disappear when it comes to the commonsensical understanding of the political term. As if to say that, when talking about revolution, it seems that the validity of a relative spatiality – determined by dyadic relationships – can be left behind, to linearly, *frontally*, enter a new and autonomous space, inhabited by absolutes and absoluteness. In this sense, the revolution understood in a political sense seems to imply the possibility, in addition to the will, not only to have a turn but to change the turn, perhaps even make the turn go out of itself and evolve into something absolutely different.

Is it like that? Do political turns/revolutions bring something new to politics, and to what extent? Are they not by any chance more like a repetitive movement of re-appropriation than of change? Logically speaking, there seems to be a rather pronounced tension between what the semantic spatiality of revolution indicates – a relative movement of return, of re-appropriation – and what it seems to pursue when it comes to its political dimension, or a change that, however *relative* to the status quo, is aimed at, and perhaps even able to, *absolutely* overcome it. At this (turning) point, it is thus worth building a bridge between the physical and more abstract/conceptual space of revolutions that unites theory of knowledge and political theory, and that emphasises how the latter help, epistemologically, to understand what is meant by, and at stake with, *revolution* in the political sense and within the *political sphere*. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate the properties that qualify a revolution as political. This primarily implies and requires a definitional effort.

The occurrence of an initial effort of definition of the object of study – or what one intends to know of itself or its causes – is an established habit in social and political science as in almost all other fields of scientific research. This definitional effort is not a customary and reassuring practice but rather a milestone to address any causal model. However, in the present case, it is not a matter of determining the causes and effects of a political revolution but establishing categorical and conditional criteria for its distinctive presence.

However inescapable this definitional effort may be, its availability is neither for granted nor easily affordable. This is particularly true when dealing with 'essentially contested concepts' (Gallie, 1955) on the nature of which – and even on the very fact they have a nature/essence – it is difficult to reach a shared ground. Consequently, it is not uncommon to deal with research apparently conducted with methodological rigour while missing an initial take on the definitional issue. Alternatively, if not entirely bypassed, this definitional effort may sometimes result in superficial and inappropriate outcomes. The latter scenario may at best depend on the use of pre-existing definitions, which – as by the

logic of predominant paradigm associated with scientific revolutions – do not temporarily raise particular objections, criticisms or risks of misunderstanding. Other times, one may wish to hasten and proceed directly to the analysis of given phenomena without paying too much attention to the (perhaps abstract complexity) of questions that may thus risk complicating or even preventing the analyses. It is roughly here that *concept stretching* (Sartori, 1970, Sartori et al., 1975) appears, that is, the problem of either excessive/insufficient abstraction on the conceptual level. The above logical tension within the concept of revolution lies precisely at the edge of this problem. Indeed, while much research addresses the causes/consequences of revolutions, there is still a need to clarify whether and to what extent something genuinely revolutionary is met, especially in the *political sphere*. This does not correspond to say that political revolutions did not occur in the past or may not in principle take place, but that it is not entirely clear what sort of *turn* is precisely expected to happen in the context of a political revolution.

The ontological turn of political theory is helpful in this sense. On the one hand, it addresses the question of relief such as the definitional one – and thus gathers the growing needs for better inter-subjective comprehension (Agazzi, 2001) of concepts such as that of political revolution in this case. On the other, it does not lose sight of such a question's analytical and normative applicability. Ontologically, it is, first, to clarify whether and how politics is inhabited by a turn, a circular spatiality, such as the concept of revolution assumes. In other words, the initial question is whether and how politics is associated with the idea of *the wheel*. Contextually, it is also necessary to assess the reason for this possible occurrence.

Derrida's theory of sovereignty leads one to clarify and address these questions and advance a response line. Derrida's philosophical trajectory does not necessarily seem to have the circular shape of a parable,³ but instead, as if a *turning point* crossed it, and, in particular, a *political turn*. Simon Glendinning explains: 'In the early 1990s, there took place what has been called a "turn in Derrida's thinking": an ethical and political turn. With the publication of *Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'* in 1992 it became impossible not to register an effort on Derrida's part to identify connections between his 'philosophical deconstructive questioning' and wider social and political concerns' (Glendinning, 2011: 78). On the one hand, the impossibility not to notice Derrida's political turn declares it and, on the other hand, implicitly evokes an earlier latent presence not that evident until that turn. Accordingly, Derrida himself says: 'There are no doubt many reasons why the majority of texts hastily identified as "deconstructionist" seem – I do say seem – not to foreground the theme of justice (as theme, precisely), nor even the theme of ethics or politics. Naturally this is only apparently so, [...]' (Derrida, 2010: 235).⁴ Indeed, "'Deconstruction," Derrida announced, "is justice"' (Glendinning, 2011: 78); and, as such, it has and occupies a political dimension. By this, it is not surprising that '[m]any readers saw the prospect of something really salutary arriving here. [...] Derrida's text became "politicized," his work seemed finally to get political, with deconstruction expressed in "newly politicized language"' (Glendinning, 2011: 78).

If it undoubtedly emerges that ‘there certainly is something like an ethical and political turn in Derrida’s thinking from the 1990s on’ (Glendinning, 2011: 79), Patton emphasises how Derrida conceives it as part of a greater circularity:

‘Derrida always resisted the suggestion that there was a political or an ethical turn in his work, most recently in *Rogues* where he insisted that ‘there never was in the 1980s or 1990s, as has sometimes been claimed, a *political turn* or an *ethical turn* in ‘deconstruction’, at least not as I experience it’ (Derrida, 2005: 39). On other occasions, notably, an interview with Michael Sprinker recorded in 1989, he recognised that it was ‘too easy an answer’ to say that deconstruction has always been a political enterprise. Instead, the articulation between deconstruction and politics ‘must imply a radical re-elaboration of the concept of politics in general circulation’ (Derrida, 2002: 177–178). (Patton, 2007: 768)

This re-elaboration of the concept of politics that Derrida invites to accomplish seems to derive from his depiction of the same tension already met and precisely inherent in the concept of political revolution. There is, indeed, a certain ambiguity between the idea of politics as ontologically impregnated of circularity (and somehow inclined to turn on itself) and that of another, and *alternative politics* whose (perhaps not well-defined) prerogatives/properties *circulate* and are part of, and/or help to constitute, the commonsensical idea of politics and of political revolution itself. Accordingly, it seems that the effort to establish whether and when there was a political turn in Derridean philosophical thought finally results in, and leaves the floor to, a more in-depth and substantial investigation of politics itself in terms of turns; in a re-elaboration of the terms through which it circulates and, at the same time, a determination of what political turns are. In particular, this results in a shift from the philological question on *the (a) possible (b) political (c) turn of a (d) thought* (such as Derrida’s) to a more philosophical reflection on (i) a *(a) possible (d) thought of the (b) political (c) turn*, or also (ii) a *(b) political (d) thought of the (a) possible (c) turn*. Given that 24 is the factorial number of simple permutations of these four elements, there are other combinations possible, but the intertwining between these two particular meanings is right in the middle of, and turns around, Derrida’s book *Rogues – Two Essays on Reason*. In tight conjunction with Derrida’s seminars and derived two volumes book entitled *The Beast and The Sovereign*,⁵ this book appears as a powerful heuristic means to grasp and display the ontological prerogatives of political turns or *revolutions*. The last book published in life by the author, *Rogues*, offers an ideal ground to investigate and discuss the circular movement of revolution through the notions of *wheel* and *différance* expressed. Accordingly, *Rogues* allows grasping the *evolutionary limits* of political revolutions. Accordingly, political revolutions may produce actions hard to convert into evolutions that rule out circularity (*e-volutio*) rather than reaffirming it. The use of deconstruction to address the ontological relationship between political revolution and evolution has the merit of providing a further element of reflection and analysis with respect to the possible alternative between political projects of linear progressivism rather than abrupt accelerationism. On an ontological level, both of the latter represent as such possible modalities, and ambitions, of political turning points, but not necessarily of a real revolution of the political turn to the point of

altering or even stopping the turn itself and making it change into evolution. This does not mean that historical projects of progressivism and accelerationism have not pursued this evolution. However, it cannot be assumed a priori that they have articulated their effort on ontological awareness on the overall higher categorical level of the challenge of stopping the dynamic of the political wheel or, at least, turning it differently.

The political wheel

Rogues has a prominent position among the books that constitute Derrida's alleged political turn and also deserves very particular attention because it is also 'Derrida's most sustained *involvement* [emphasis added] in the field of international relations' (Thomassen, 2006: 986).⁶ Lasse Thomassen, who emphasises the methodological link between deconstruction and political theory (Thomassen, 2010), considers how *Rogues*' 'reading and analysis are inspiring and clever, and, in [his] opinion, mostly correct' (Thomassen, 2006: 987). While also taking into account the limits of this book that 'is better at raising questions than giving answers' (Thomassen, 2006: 987), he concludes that: '[...] the real value of Derrida's theses can only be shown through further studies whether deconstructive or not' (Thomassen, 2006: 987).

This encourages an original reading of *Rogues*' contribution to assess the circularity within politics as tightly linked to Derrida's theory of sovereignty. Indeed, the logical location of *Rogues*, with the arguments treated therein, pertinently applies to the above logical tension associated with the concepts of revolution and politics itself. The book is at the intersection of the *unpredictable* and *repetition*, and it illustrates and theorises their perhaps supplementary or integrative presence, perhaps in tension or perhaps in complicity, but certainly within the political and at its origin. For Derrida, politics does not escape, particularly, the presence of a gap between what *is called*, *is meant*, *is sovereignly ordered* to be, and what follows. For Derrida, this original call, and every call to political life and the life of politics itself, always results, indeed, every *time*,⁷ at every *turn*, in a defaulting act, not coinciding with the original call:

'A dissymmetrical, unequal correspondence, unequal, as always, to the equality of the one to the other: the origin of politics, the question of democracy. [...]. And because, at the intersection of repetition and the unforeseeable, in this place where, each time anew, by turns [*tour à tour*] and each time once for all, one does not see *coming* what remains *to come*, the *to come* turns out to be the most insistent theme of this book' (Derrida, 2005: xii).

This theme of the poietic call to (political) life evokes and implies the call to re-assemble, to gather together the forces that define and affirm themselves, but at the same time also the theme of waiting and fighting for the presence of something else. This is the theme of political identity and self-determination and sovereignty itself, with all its possible social, political, psychological, theological and religious meanings and implications (Bethke Elshtain, 2008). The theme of political identity and self-determination archetypically lies at the heart of Carl Schmitt's theory of sovereignty and sovereign decision (Schmitt, 2005 [1922]), and also in the definition of Schmitt's categories of the

political (Schmitt, 2007 [1932]) through the particular friend/enemy distinction of the other (via an *idem/alter* heuristic code). Therefore, Derrida refers to Schmitt to address the political terms of the process of self-defining identity but deconstructs the epistemological ground of such logic⁸ and deviates from him:

‘The problem, for Derrida, is that the Schmittian other is always, in some sense, separated from the sovereign by an unbridgeable gulf. The division between self and other is absolute, meaning that it is not possible to know what the other intends and, as such, it is not possible for the sovereign to designate, for sure the status of the other. As such, Schmitt’s formulation of the political depends upon an epistemological impossibility’ (Rae, 2016: 69).

This is an insight on the ambition to (sovereign) *power*, or the *potentiality*/possibility of giving life (or respectively death⁹) as a sovereign prerogative (Regazzoni, 2008: 7–13). Indeed, Derrida’s argument explains that, in essence, and regardless of the more or less legitimate nature of political calls and relative ambitions, political things do not factually work like *initially* thought and decided. What is *to come* always depends on the ontological non-correspondence of the other to the self. The *sovereign* itself results *subject* to that:

‘Assuming, then, that anyone ever makes a decision that is his or hers, for himself or herself, his or her own decision. I have often expressed my doubts on this subject. The death penalty, as the sovereign decision of a power, reminds us perhaps, before everything else, that a sovereign decision is always the other’s. Come from the other’ (Derrida, 2014: 1).

This submission of the self to the other that Derrida depicts¹⁰ is a sort of ontological law grasping the sovereign itself; this law is more sovereign than the sovereign (*altius quam altior, supremus quam superior*), and in any case, even the sovereign must obey this law to which cannot escape.¹¹ The other is the context in which the subjective and individual monad is placed. So, to decision, or the very act of (having to) decide, no one can escape, not even those who think to abstain because even abstention is in itself a decision (Pusterla, 2020a). It is a law imposed on and/or influencing the subject.

Indeed, the sovereign is overwhelmed – in Italian *travolto* – by this law that is just like an ontological condition that affects politics. It can be considered a sort of *principle of reality* that states that, when and whether powerful, politics takes place in a context that determines it. This explains Derrida’s distinction between *unconditionality* and *sovereignty* in *Rogues*. Sovereignty and unconditionality are born as absolute and synonymous concepts. However, politics and its context (or *the other*) place sovereignty outside an abstract space of theoretical unconditionality.

‘[...] through certain experiences that will be central to this book, and, more generally, through the experience that lets itself be affected by what or who comes [(*ce qui vient*)], by what happens or by who happens by, by *the other to come*, a certain unconditional renunciation of sovereignty is required a priori. Even before the act of a decision’ (Derrida, 2005: xiv).

This ontological law of politics unconditionally imposes non-correspondence between the sovereign self and the other, or *difference*, with all its possible meanings and implications such as distance, disagreement, dissidence, distrust. Such a difference, be it justified or not, results in an impetus, a pushing force – as when, in physics, two connected weights (e.g. the self and the other, the sovereign and the subject) are no longer in equilibrium and start a rotation – that produces alternation, change and, politically, the overturning passage of a possible sovereign power from a given sovereign modality to another. Again in a physical visualisation, it then becomes a question of trigger and speed of rotation. It is about understanding the extent to which the weights on the political axis are (at least considered) in equilibrium without triggering an overturning or, once triggered the imbalance, how fast the rotation will take place and the possible slowing down rebalancing. This law thus manifests itself through *the turn* and, possibly, in a *revolution*.

However, it is not said that it is. In other words, the presence of a difference, of a non-correspondence, of disequilibrium between what a given political (and presumably sovereign) power orders and what it factually obtains can be the origin, or part, of a revolution, but not necessarily. As stated, a certain non-fulfilment of political and sovereign power is an ontological supreme law imposed by the reality of the political context itself and to which the sovereign must also adapt. If this were not the case, every alternation of government, president, prime minister and other political leadership would intrinsically constitute a revolution. Nevertheless, one can easily understand how this analysis, even intuitively, is wrong. No need to bother with the concept and doctrine of permanent revolution; there are daily changes in politics that none would ever dream of considering revolutionary turns. On the one hand, it may be that the term revolution is sometimes (mis-)used for rhetoric or to make a newspaper headline, but it cannot undoubtedly be thought that every day there is a turning point, nor a revolution. On the other hand, even if in balance, politics is always on the move, on a turning move. There is always a wheel that turns without this producing a turning point. Again, we are in a position and condition of difficult logical distinction between what is turning *repetitively* rather than *unpredictably*, with the possibly liable distinction between the two. That is to say that perhaps something repetitive can turn unpredictable, and vice versa, the unpredictable turn out repetitive. To this end, Derrida returns to the question of the alleged political turn of his deconstruction and says:

‘The thinking of the political has always been a thinking of *différance*, and the thinking of *différance* always a thinking of the political, of the contour and limits of the political, especially around the enigma or the autoimmune *double bind* of the democratic. That is not to say, indeed quite the contrary, that nothing new happens between, say, 1965 and 1990. But what happens remains without relation of resemblance to what the figure that I continue to privilege here might lead one to imagine, that is, the figure of a turn [...]’ (Derrida, 2005: 39).

Derrida here indicates the presence of *différance* within politics and/or of political thought. At the same time, this does not make a turn in the revolutionary sense of the term. Therefore, it is to be deduced that there are two types of turn: those turns belonging to the

political mechanism of *différance* and the turns somehow transcending it. In other words, the constant turns of politics have to be qualified to assess when and whether they are proper revolutions. It is, therefore, crucial to understand when and whether the non-correspondence between the self-subject and the other-context goes to constitute a relevant *turning point* and not a political *routine*, more simply. In other words, when do political events become a revolutionary turning point that is not just an ordinary *event*, or a repetitive turning of the political?¹² It is a matter of understanding when the relationship between the *unpredictable* and *repetition* leads to a revolutionary fact/event. It is to determine when and whether the motion of revolution of the *self* around and in respect to the *other* can substantially change the relationship between the parties themselves (e.g. in terms of power relations). Moreover, it is to understand when this change cannot be considered an ordinary turn of their political relation but a revolutionary turn that fundamentally upsets or suppresses their political relation and the system it constitutes. The question of the shift from – and the possible distinction between – *turns* and *revolutionary turns* requires investigation.

In its process of self-constitution (as also said in the form of a possible (re-)appropriation of power, rights, properties, etc.), the revolution, like politics itself, originates in a call, a gathering that aims at defining and affirming given political conditions of existence and identity of the self, sometimes even at the cost of imposing them to the other. For Jack Goldstone, '[w]e can therefore define revolution in terms of *both* mass mobilisation and institutional change, *and* a driving ideology carrying a vision of social justice. Revolution is the forcible overthrow of a government through mass mobilisation (whether military or civilian or both) in the name of social justice, to create new political institutions' (Goldstone, 2014: 4). In Goldstone's definition of revolutions, the expression '*in the name of*' blares, and the related theme of calling (by name) and waiting for something or someone *returns*. *Rogues'* preface entitled 'Veni' (come!) depicts this mechanism raising the question of who has the *right* (i.e. *droit*, also the law in French), the *force* (Derrida, 2010), to call by name (and in the name of someone or something) and delineates how the answer to that call may result in a *revolution*. The revolutionary call has a juristic dimension concerning the legitimacy of its origin. This legitimacy depends on assessing the presence of a *force* able to establish a political force that overturns and resists any competing alternative. Accordingly, the identity gathering of the revolutionary call *par excellence* resounds in the Marseillaise's notes and text *Aux armes, citoyens!* These called by name citizens are in that way called to life and as newborn citizens are, indeed, invited to gather and bring about their force, define and affirm themselves in the name of precise political values. History reveals whether or not these citizens could collect enough of their force to make their self-constituting overturn of the political relationships within the *ancien régime* a revolutionary turn rather than just a turn. Were they able to be revolutionary and *resist*¹³ the risk of turning out with the same political order? The answer arises from the fact that, historically speaking, the concept of revolution is at our times expected to bring with it elements of political novelty since they precisely appeared prominently as a result of the French revolution: 'In older usage, this word [*i.e. revolution*] preserved its literal meaning of a turnaround, a revolving, a change, of political or social conditions, but not necessarily a sudden, abrupt or violent one. The current sense of major,

or indeed violent, upheaval developed after 1789' (Mautner, 2005: 533). Thus, the concept of revolution in some way coagulates an idea of a turning point that dates back to the French revolution, symbolic mother of modern and contemporary political revolutions, or those authentic events of novelty whose turning movement was able to affirm itself as revolutionary and resist the danger of turning out being a political routine. Notwithstanding, not even the French Revolution – a possible archetypal ideal of a revolutionary turning point in some authentically evolutionary way – is entirely exempt from the a-historical necessity (and benefits) of a deconstruction. This allows one to assess whether and to what extent, within this historical event, something authentically innovative in the evolutionary sense of the term ever occurred. In other words, it assesses to what extent the content of the hitherto unheard-of call *Aux armes!* would have been followed by a corresponding and equally unprecedented empirical articulation. Indeed, in *Death Penalty Volume I*,¹⁴ Derrida refers to capital executions during the Terror to explain the revolutionary motion's contradictory turns and conflicting developments.

On the one hand: 'Robespierre who, before changing his mind, one must recall, argued abolitionist theses without success when the Penal Code was being drafted in 1791. Later, he demanded the execution of Louis XVI, described as a "criminal toward humanity," [...] a turnaround that Thomas Paine deemed a betrayal of the abolitionist ideal that he had at first shared with Robespierre' (Derrida, 2014: 18). On the other, 'by taking a position for the inviolability of human life, Hugo is at the same time a revolutionary and someone who, even as he realises one aim of the French Revolution, contradicts all the same a practice of the same Revolution, breaks with it, with the principle of Terror. Hugo proposes in sum a revolution within the Revolution, a revolution that contradicts the Revolution of 1789 in order to confirm it' (Derrida, 2014: 101).

Therefore – once made abstraction from contextual, historical and phenomenological more or less clear-cut features such as its violence, territorial and social diffusion – the concept of revolution seems to bring about an element of political continuity. Not even that much paradoxically, from time to time, politics is crossed by a change, even a revolutionary one, that remains endogenous. Political revolutions are thus part of politics and what is there before and after a revolution is and remains political. The *ancien régime* was political, as was the proclamation of the first French republic in 1792 and the immediately succeeded Terror regime. In this perspective, the revolutions would be political but would not affect the essence of politics as such. However, Goldstone wonders what a revolution is and, at the opening of his discussion, he narrates the following episode:

'On the morning of July 14, 1789, a crowd of Parisian workers set out to attack the royal prison of the Bastille. Joined by deserting soldiers who brought cannons, and ignored by Royal Army troops camped nearby, the crowds forced their way into the fortress by late afternoon, killing the governor and parading his head on a pike. That evening King Louis XVI reportedly asked the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, 'Is this a revolt?' To which the Duc replied: 'No Sire, it is a revolution!'" (Goldstone, 2014: 1).

This short narration symbolically grasps relevant elements that help to understand *the wheel* within politics. First, it presents a clear distinction between *revolt* and *revolution*. Second, the sovereign, the *Sire* – despite the self-proclaimed ‘*maior*’ right of His (beastly) Majesty (since *superior stabat lupus*) (Derrida, 2009: 206–14) – does not know that difference. He naïvely considers the revolt the worst-case scenario and shows him unprepared in this regard and in respect of that event. Third, be it a revolt or a revolution, he did not see that thing coming¹⁵ and has now to ask for and collect information accordingly. Indeed, and fourth, he does not know the other-context to which he is confronted but still tries to bring, to turn everything, back to the (inappropriate) perspective of sense he owns. He does not simply ask for information on what happens but also outlines a personal hypothesis. Furthermore, the sovereign *is dramatically not right* and will no longer have the right to govern because his reason is not a *good reason*. The sovereign has not the force of a reason that conquers, founds and keeps imposing the proclaimed sovereign right-ness so that the sovereign will lose his reputation, his often many titles, and his name: ‘a right without force is not a right worthy of the name; and it is primarily for this reason that the troubling problem imposes itself, which is the very problem of sovereignty’ (Derrida, 2009: 207). What he has managed to produce alone is therefore unsuitable for preserving the stability of the political cycle. This narrative shows that the sovereign did not make good use of reason, certainly not a good political use. In other words, the sovereign has not been able to maintain and/or re-appropriate that *reason*, or that self-reflexive capacity for reflection and judgement that is politically decisive since it serves to know, prepare and perhaps either welcome or resist the always coming of the different, of the other to come. The problem is thus that the sovereign’s perspective of sense is found not to be political since it conceives sovereignty as absolute and unconditional and does so by wrongly neglecting the sovereign law of *différance* within the political and the possibility that given turns can be out of sovereign control and turn out to be revolutionary. The *political wheel* is, therefore, a matter of the *political reason* of the sovereign, or the capacity for self-reasoning of self-consciousness, in the proper sense of the superior human faculties, that cannot be renounced to within politics if it is, a bit paradoxically, to sovereignly get on top (*venire a capo*) of *différance*. In other words, the inappropriate use of reason by the sovereign prevents his re-appropriation and defence of the sovereign self or the forceful reason behind the self-positing call to his sovereignty. This loss of reason on the part of the sovereign provokes a turn on himself, a self-referentiality that is not political but originates from the dizziness that endangers the survival of the sovereign self and exposes him to the risk of decapitation. ‘The sovereign is the one who is at the head, the chief, the king, the capital, the first, the *arkhé* of commencement or commandment, the prince, but also the one whose head can spin, who can lose his head, in madness or decapitation. And lose, along with his head, meaning’ (Derrida, 2009: 138).¹⁶ Indeed, the political mechanism of mismatch between self and other generates difference. This difference creates cycles, turns in which the force of the reason is constantly under examination as in the *différance*. This examination consists of verifying the sovereign’s ability to have and maintain the force of reason in the conduct of politics. He has also to resist – by providing reasons for his decisions and conduct – the opposition of the ontological limits he is subjected to, or *différance* itself. This observation

can yet provoke a revolution, more than a simple turn, when it is *believed*¹⁷ that the sovereign has no more reason, that is, he no longer has the force of reason. The question of *the wheel* becomes a question of the sovereign's ability to be cogent in terms of sovereign *ipseity*.¹⁸ However, the cogency required from the sovereign in politics is not simply self-referential unconditionality – as Louis XVI may have believed – but a very different thing that interests and is rooted in the relationship between *humanity* and *politics*.

‘The invention of the wheel marks, to be sure, an enormous and decisive mutation in the history of humanity, indeed of hominization, and thus, in terms of *possibility*, at least, if not in terms of the fact or the event of technical invention, in the humanity of man; and, among other things, in the history of the rights of ‘man’, beginning with the right to recognize oneself as a man by returning to oneself in a specular, self-designating, sovereign and autotelic fashion. When I say ‘wheel’, I am also not referring, or at least not yet, to the purely geometrical figure of the circle or the sphere’ (Derrida, 2005: 10).

To this end, Derrida explains how this acquisition of a human awareness relates to sovereignty and politics in a very particular way: ‘What is becoming clearer here is that the fear that pushes one to respect the laws and therefore to respect a sovereignty destined, by convention, to ensure protection of the citizens – that this fear is here defined as a human thing, as proper of the mankind’ (Derrida, 2009: 42). The sovereign has to ensure citizens' protection or take charge of the condition of fear experienced by humanity. The sovereign must be aware that his presence originates in and is justified by the need of the other, and this awareness entails a turning movement of human self-consciousness in the sovereign. Everything comes from the other. Sovereignty runs the risk of being overthrown when it is believed that the sovereign does not know, willingly or not, how to be there with respect to the other. ‘It follows that law, sovereignty, the institution of the state are historical and always provisional, let's say deconstructible, essentially fragile or finite or mortal, even if sovereignty is *posited as immortal*’ (Derrida, 2009: 42).

The distinction between revolts and revolutions, simple turns rather than revolutionary turns, depends on how sovereignty factually interprets and actuates its *ipseity*. It is a matter of an-*other* (more demanding) sovereign *ipseity* than that suggested by the logic of unconditionality. The political turns are due to the inevitable calls (*come!*) to which sovereignty is subjected cyclically to remember its origin and possible responsibility for the other's need. Revolutionary circles arise from the ‘ignorance’ of sovereignty to such calls. Derrida touches this theme when he mentions the issue of desire and pleasure in Aristotle (Derrida, 2005: 15) and of a good life (also within and in respect to politics) (Derrida, 2009: Session I) that is precisely the theme of human actuation within and through politics. Political turns and revolution, therefore, differ in terms of *evolutionary* ambitions. The ambitions of revolutions address politics as a means for human evolution or an *ex-volvere* in the sense of turning something out, of breaking something free. From here, it is possible to understand the meaning of *Rogues'* chapter entitled ‘the free wheel’ and its evident allusion to *free will*. The evolutionary character of political revolution pursues an act of decision. The latter would lead the self towards its liberation. Thence, the political would be freed from that wheel, promoting sovereignty as unconditional self-

reference and auto-immunity as an *unrelated* condition of self with respect to the other. If the revolt stems from the mere impression that the sovereign decision has not produced the desired results, the revolution more deeply challenges both the capacity and will to obtain these results. The revolt arises from and lashes out the human limitations associated with the presence of the wheel in politics. In other words, it arises from the *différance* between will and power, between the sovereign's desire and his concrete ability to respond to the other. In this context, the sovereign is human and, as such, perfectible. In other words, the revolt stems from the idea that, within politics and its ontological limits, the sovereign can and had to do better. The revolution arises, instead, from the conviction that the sovereign person embodies a form of life that is not, or at least any longer, political because it is self-referential and incapable, and perhaps even disinterested, in the relationship with the other and constitutive of politics itself. Thus, the revolution throws itself against the inhumanity of sovereignty. One understands in what sense Derrida comes to define in terms of suicide the sovereign who believes he must pursue unconditional *ipseity* and not an *ipseity* at the head of his weaknesses (such as the egotistic, inhuman and thus non-political search for pleasure.¹⁹)

'[...] we can [...] formalize, still following the figure of this wheel [*roue*], this route that turns back on itself, this additional turn or twist, this roundness of the turn and the tower, this return to self, the law of terrifying and suicidal autoimmunity, the wheels of suicide here engaging in a singular way a gyrotory coincidence between force and law, force and justice, force and the reason of the strongest' (Derrida, 2005: 18).

At this stage, one understands why the revolution is a re-appropriation, a return movement. The revolutionary movement re-appropriates itself of a usurped sovereignty that betrays the initial humanity of the self to produce an inhuman aberration outside of politics and the space in which humanity is actuated. This event, however, did not occur because of a lack of will and sovereign decision by the Sire, but for having ignored the difference between *political/human sovereignty* and *non-political/inhuman sovereignty*. The latter pursues unconditional sovereignty that ignores the humanity of politics, while the former considers the features of the human condition as essential to the political. In other words, the French sovereign lost his mind because he forgot/ignored that politics is other, that politics depends on the other *to come*. The French sovereign did not see the revolution coming because it concentrated on the circular aspect of self-referentiality, convinced that this aspect is appropriate to and sufficient part of politics. Instead, the revolutions differ from the simple turns, precisely for their evolutionary purpose, or attempt to turn out of any mechanism of inhuman self-referentiality.

Alternative sovereignty

Thanks to Derrida's approach, analysis and understanding of turns within politics and his theory of sovereignty, an original criterion emerges and results heuristically cogent to assess the (r)evolutionary character of turns within contemporary politics and even concerning recent events that affect the international political system. What so far

expressed displays the distinction between, on the one hand, the repetitive turn of a revolt calling the sovereign to his responsibilities and, on the other hand, the evolutionary intent of a revolution overturning sovereignty *tout court* because of its inhumanity. Nevertheless, the evolutionary impact of so-called revolutions cannot be taken for granted. History provides indeed examples of turns that resulted in cases of inhuman revolutions. Accordingly, this leads one to hypothesise that political revolutions may suffer the incapacity of resulting evolutionary if they do not actuate their evolutionary content, as when they bring about revolutionary techniques or a *tekné* that do not reverberate on the humanity of politics. Such *tekné* may allow enhanced sovereign control (and correlative knowledge/reason) but not necessarily evolutions representing the actuation idea(l)s. ‘When I say “wheel,” I am not yet or necessarily referring to the technical possibility of the wheel but, rather, rather earlier, to the roundness of a rotating movement, the *rondure* of a return to self before any distinction between *physis* and *tekné*, *physis* and *nomos*, *physis* and *thesis*, and so on’ (Derrida, 2005: 10). What is then this idea or *possible thought of the political turn/political thought of the possible turn*, that can make the difference between a revolt or a revolutionary attempt, and, instead, the latter’s evolutionary actuation for, and within, politics? This (r)evolutionary idea(l) pertains to the political re-appropriation of the humanity of sovereignty in the form of another, alternative political return of the self to itself. The presence of an evolutionary idea(l) within a turn that may become (r)evolutionary thus depends on the satisfaction of what is named the ‘*alternative sovereignty*’²⁰ criterion. Indeed, a political turn may turn out to be authentically (r)evolutionary provided that it actuates an *alternative sovereignty* within politics. The logic of the ‘*alternative sovereignty*’ criterion is a good heuristic tool to assess the evolutionary character of revolutions as based on the logic of ‘another politicization, a re-politicization and therefore another concept of the political’ (Derrida, 2009: 75) within which sovereignty articulates accordingly. This logic of *alternative sovereignty* is tripartite since it actuates an (i) alternative (i.e. *alter*) (ii) rotation (i.e. *turn*) of the (iii) self towards itself in respect to the other (i.e. *sovereign ipseity*). *Alternative sovereignty* firstly assesses the humanity of sovereignty actuated through, and within, the context of politics and not unconditionally from it. The political value of humanity as a relation is indeed *superior to sovereignty* and precedes and determines it. Second, *alternative sovereignty* is certainly *turning* but also aware of the limits and conditions due to the ontological presence of the wheel within politics. Nevertheless, it not only implies a turn differing from any political ambition to, and attempt of, absolute unconditionality – except that which absolutises this alternative purpose – but also rests upon the logic according to which it is harmful and inhuman to think or want to make anyone think, otherwise. Third, *alternative sovereignty* sees *ipseity* differently, or somehow turning before centrifugally towards the other to then turn centripetally towards the self, or vice versa. In part, this is ascribable to the fact that the self can be sovereign only whether capable of sovereignly dominating itself in favour of the other. More substantially, authentic *ipseity* requires a return of the self to itself in the form of awareness about the human prerogative of the self that is precisely at stake within the relationship with the other. This means that the self re-appropriates itself, its (human) nature, when it recognises that its relationship with the other makes the difference. I only *turn* out or *return* to be what

I am – possibly human – *with* the other. *Alternative* sovereignty thus deconstructs the inhuman self-referentiality of unconditional *ipseity* and opens to all the implications of another *ipseity*, in the form of *ipseity-with-the-other*. This results in a space-time ontological (r)evolution as in Derrida’s reading of Celan’s ‘*with*’ (*mit* from *mitsprechen*), or the sovereign call to give to the other its *time*, its *turn* (Derrida, 2009: 232): ‘It is not even, here, a poetics, still less a politics of dialogue [...]. It is not a matter of democratic debate, during which one leaves the other his speaking time [...]. It is not a matter of speaking time but of letting the other, and thus of giving the other [...] its time’ (Derrida, 2009: 233–4).

It is undoubtedly true ‘[t]here are different and sometimes antagonistic forms of sovereignty, and it is always in the name of one that one attacks another [...]’ (Derrida, 2009: 76). However, Peter Gratton’s elaboration on Derrida’s one encourages its application to contemporary and international politics. He builds a bridge between the possible assessment of the evolutionary impact of events such as the *digital revolution* – mainly associated with the technological advancements of the Internet and social networks – through applying the *alternative* sovereignty criterion. Indeed, Gratton reveals the importance of the evolutionary ambition of the revolution that has to regain its political dimension through an idea(l) of human sovereignty at the expense of a non-political and inhumane one:

‘It is perhaps too late in the day to see the glimmer of resistances and appositions in all their formations across the globe to sovereigntisms, to the nexus of sovereigntism and capitalism that would form the world in its own image through globalization; this is what occupies this generation’s Occupy movements. If there is to be hope *now*, then we must form polyvalent resistances to sovereignty, perhaps through a thinking of a popularly sovereign pardon that undermines that very sovereignty and opens oneself to the other, whenever and wherever popular sovereignty is used to identify and take hold over one and the other; perhaps through a thinking of the public spacing of action, its *arche*; through a genealogy of sovereignty and its *telos* in forms of pastoral and governmental powers; or through an engagement with a thinking of freedom and sovereignty’s autoimmunity. Is it too late in the day to think another universal [...]? Sovereignty continues to have its day. As so many others are put to the *question* by sovereign force, it is we, too, that are put in question. All that is not for another day, though it requires a thinking for what tomorrow’ (Gratton, 2012: 232).

The heuristic applicability of the *alternative* sovereignty criterion thus allows assessing the present and still non-evolutionary feature of those turns within global politics that arise from the availability of new technologies. Despite their technical benefits, these information and communication modules have not fostered any real change in the self-other relation within politics through an actuation of political sovereignty that could satisfy the *alternative* sovereignty criterion. Politically, the circular turns promoted by the *digital revolution* have indeed produced (and perhaps pursued) new forms of political participation. However, the latter also resulted in a widespread decrease in popular trust in political parties and democratic institutions, which is now verifiable in the massive turns and re-turn of populisms. In this context, the Italian Five Stars Movement – internationally

at the forefront of digital technologies' use and promotion within politics – is a case in point concerning the still non-evolutionary political effect of technological revolutions. This political movement – also similar to the Yellow Vests Movement that is currently less structured but ideologically close – archetypically encapsulates a national and international impetus that, by borrowing Chantal Mouffe's argument, aims to promote the *return* of the political (Mouffe, 1993). This impetus is not necessarily to be aprioristically *anti-political*, but perhaps also *alternative*, or aimed at promoting another politics, even its evolution. This Italian movement counts on the role of the Internet and technology to promote this impetus and reduce the distance between political institutions and the people. Nevertheless, the use of technology made by this movement has not affected the self-other relationship within politics. Accordingly, the criterion of the presence of alternative sovereignty is currently not satisfied and the political turnaround promoted by the 5SM, although commonsensically presenting some 'revolutionary' elements in respect to the historical analysis of the Italian political system (Vespa, 2018), cannot, at least for now, be associated with the presence of a(n) (r)evolution of politics. This is particularly evident in the light of 5SM's governmental experience in coalition with the Italian political party League headed by Matteo Salvini. This unequivocally places the 5SM's political trajectory, regardless of any possible opposite rhetoric,²¹ in the context of international politics that addresses the state sovereignty issue in a way incompatible with alternative sovereignty. This is witnessed by the international populist connection between, on the one hand, League's leader Matteo Salvini – whose political promotion of sovereignty concerns is far from being alternative (Pusterla, 2020b) – and, on the other hand, the former Chief Strategist for Trump administration Steve Bannon's approach to the communication turnout within politics. Indeed, 'The best way to understand Bannon is to picture him as a travelling salesman peddling ideas that he hopes might take root. Trump, Bannon once said, was an "imperfect vessel" for his revolution: personally flawed, ideologically flexible, but great on TV' (Scheuermann, 2018).

In this regard, though conceived to serve a political turn – be it progressive or accelerationist (Srnicek, 2013) – technology does not appear to be politically revolutionary in an evolutionary sense yet. This assessment does not exclude the digital revolution from contributing to one or more (r)evolutions of politics in the future. Accordingly, regarding the heuristic needs of contemporary politics, the deconstructionist analysis presented here demonstrates how presumed events and reasons for political revolution require further reflection on their effective ability to determine the truly evolutionary character of a so-called political revolution. Finally, the current validity of this assessment is consistent with the issue concerning the political turn of Derrida's thought that has always been or may have always been political but that, over time, becomes an authentic landmark of political (r)evolution, particularly concerning the human character of sovereignty that politics brings about.

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Notes

1. See, among others, Kimberly [Hutchings \(2018\)](#) and [Hom \(2018\)](#).
2. For instance: rolling back, turning, turning back, falling, falling back, shrinking, bringing back, unwinding or unrolling again a book, rereading a book, turning the thought to, rethinking, reflecting, reconsidering, recounting, repeat something, to return, narrate, etc. ([Castiglioni and Mariotti, 1994](#): 990)
3. Naas puts Derrida ‘not *on* but *at* the wheel’ ([Naas, 2008](#): 113), suggesting the painfulness but also a stable condition of a philosopher ‘at the center of a spinning disk, a master craftsman at his wheel, spinning his materials at the center of a turning machine’ ([Naas, 2008](#): 113).
4. ‘It is through Derrida’s work that a generation of philosophers associated with him and with deconstruction were influenced by Levinas. Indeed, much of the ‘ethical turn’ can be seen as a response to Derrida’s own Levinas-influenced shift of emphasis over his prolific career from linguistic and epistemological questions (broadly understood) to ethical and political ones’ ([Eaglestone, 2010](#): 215).
5. In *The Beast and the Sovereign*, ‘Readers of Derrida will recognize many of the themes that wind their way through the eclectic texts including the concept of sovereignty – sovereign power, national sovereignty, and sovereign selves – at the heart of Rogues [...]’ ([Rasmussen, 2013](#): 1125).
6. See also Paul [Patton \(2017\)](#).
7. Derrida uses the term *time* (in French *fois, à chaque fois*) to illustrate the circularity of the process that applies to the logical and political issues and events that he is going to investigate and that over time turn and return without apparent solution of continuity. Given the importance of understanding their essential circularity, Derrida opens the *return* of their analysis as follows: ‘And the essay opens with the necessity of ‘returning more than one time,’ more than ‘*una volta*’, as one says in Italian, to these vicissitudes. Each time in order to confirm a dangerous law of supplementarity or iterability that forces the impossible by forcing the replacement of the irreplaceable’ ([Derrida, 2005](#): 7). Derrida describes the circular iteration of the time, *la volta* – Italian word that also indicates the curving surface of the vault, just as for the celestial vault in astronomy – and visually suggests the image of a process of constant movement of change that is also always same to itself, so different and deferred as in *différance*, and that looks like a spinning wheel.
8. ‘It goes without saying that, while taking this argumentation of Schmitt’s seriously, but without subscribing to it through and through, what I am seeking elsewhere but in particular in this seminar, is the prudent deconstruction of this logic and of the dominant, classical concept of nation-state sovereignty (which is Schmitt’s reference), without ending up with a

depoliticization, a naturalization of the political (*Entpolitisierung*), but with another politicization, a re-politicization [...]’ (Derrida, 2009: 75).

9. ‘While the indivisible presence of sovereignty traditionally has been hailed as absolute life, Derrida underscores that it is inseparable from absolute death’ (Hägglund, 2008: 29).
10. See Derrida’s reference (2009: 118–120) to Jacques Lacan’s *Subversion of the Subject* (1966).
11. This ‘ontological’ law cannot be politically turned off or *deactivated* in the guise of Agamben’s proposal. The idea of a ‘postjuridical and truly anomic space [where] truly political action’ (Attell, 2015: 262) could occur, assumes a space of political action that does not match the ‘contextual’ ontological conditions to which the politics itself is and remains subject.
12. In Derrida’s terminology, the event itself is always different, is always other and thus unpredictable (Derrida, 2007). Thus, literally, this frequently used expression ‘ordinary event’ constitutes instead a different element that captures the logical tension discussed here.
13. The kind of resistance that a revolutionary turn has to perform to avoid turning out in a *routine* is broad and again originates in the other as a source of *dissuasion* and *temptation*. These imply a constellation of threats to the undivided and individual identity of the revolutionary self, such as corruption, division, betrayal and misunderstanding indeed.
14. ‘The first of two years of a seminar that Jacques Derrida would devote to the subject of the 14 death penalty [...] precedes immediately the one devoted to “The Beast and the Sovereign”’ (Derrida, 2014: 17).
15. The revolution seems to have silently arrived and swooped on to the Sire in secret, like a wolf who, hidden, steps forward at a wolf’s pace, *à pas de loup* (Derrida, 2009: Session I).
16. On the symbol of sovereign’s decapitation, see also Derrida’s reading of Kantorowicz (Derrida, 2014: 100–101).
17. It is indeed not given that the sovereign’s reasons are accepted. Especially in contemporary politics, doubts about the governors’ reasons seem to be increasing. The political value that seems to be most scarce and therefore also coveted is that of *credibility*. Hence, the growing pressure on communication processes related to this political value (Pusterla, 2016a). Derrida addresses this question by emphasising the crucial role of fiction, of storytelling, within the notion of the state sovereignty and of sovereignty tout court (Derrida, 2009: 34–5).
18. ‘By *ipseity* I thus wish to suggest some ‘I can’, or at the very least the power that *gives itself* its own law, its force of law, its self-representation, the sovereign reappropriating gathering of self in the simultaneity of an assemblage or assembly, being together, or ‘living together’, as we say’ (Derrida, 2005: 11).
19. ‘To effectively grasp the interior psychological tension, or conflict, that sovereignty as *ipseity* has to deal with and resist, ‘Derrida refers in this respect to Freud’s description of the reality principle which, [...], acts as a delegate, slave, informed disciple or representative of the pleasure principle. The reality principle sometimes, [...], has to discipline the pleasure principle, [...]’ (De Ville, 2010: 55)’, (Pusterla, 2016a: 87).
20. As in Derrida’s praxis – and the term *différance* is an example – the alternative conceptualisation of the sovereign is here proposed, through homophony, in a form that includes the question of the wheel, of the political turn.
21. On the use of rhetoric by the 5SM, Pusterla (Pusterla, 2016b).

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