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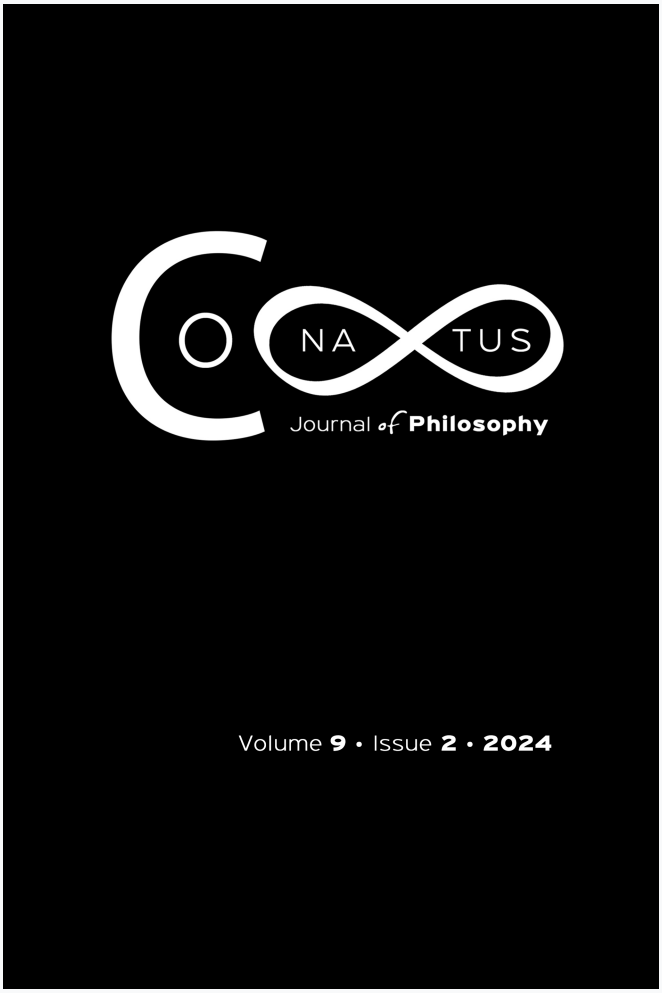

Authoritarian Leaders as Successful Psychopaths: Towards an Understanding of the Role of Emotions in Political Decision-making

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Authoritarian Leaders as Successful Psychopaths: Towards an Understanding of the Role of Emotions in Political Decision-making

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Abstract

In this paper, we seek to understand the psychology and cognitive strategies of people with the psychological profile of authoritarian leaders. To understand their personality traits, we compare them with literature concerning successful psychopaths. We also see both personalities in the light of literature in the field of self-help for success in business. We say these psychological profiles are shaped by culture, as self-help literature shows. Our intention in comparing successful psychopaths and authoritarian leaders is not to reinforce the idea that authoritarian leaders are unemotional, but rather the opposite. We wish to explore this relationship from the perspective of embodied cognition, according to which emotions are a fundamental part of decision-making, including political decision-making. Traditionally, both successful psychopaths and authoritarian leaders are understood as unemotional and therefore completely rational: here we explore the idea that this apparent rationality hides a particular emotional profile and a certain stubbornness and impulsivity regarding previously set goals. Also, as self-help literature reveals, set goals are closely associated with their identity, so that compromise regarding goals is seen as a loss of said identity. The study of the authoritarian leader as a gnoseological category helps us think about the relationship between volition, rational thought, identity, and emotions in decision-making; and to understand the way of acting of authoritarian leaders, and the way they succeed and fail.

Keywords: *psychopathology; authoritarianism; political behavior; emotions in decision-making processes; leadership in business; Machiavellianism*

Obstacles do not exist to be surrendered to, but only to be broken.
Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*[1]

Failure will never overtake me if my determination to succeed is strong enough.
Og Mandino, *The Greatest Salesman in the World*

I. Introduction

How do we make decisions? What are the roles of reason and emotion in this process? Pascal's famous quote, "Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connait point"[2] seems to point to the same kind of opposition between reason and emotion that is evident in Descartes' *Passions of the Soul*[3]: the heart moves us in ways that are opposed to, and not explicable through, deductive reasoning. However, a more subtle reading is possible: reason is not aware of how it is moved by the heart; it fancies itself the master when it is, unbeknownst, the servant. Or, perhaps, the reasons of the heart aid reason to come to wise decisions, in ways that are yet to be reasoned-out. In this text, we explore the relationship between reason and the heart by examining a particular kind of decision-making mechanism, that of the authoritarian leader. As we will see, this exploration yields interesting consequences for both philosophy of mind and political philosophy.

Although the label "authoritarian" is usually used to designate a politically conservative ideology, it is also used to designate a certain kind of psychological profile. Regardless of ideology, authoritarians support authority and conventional thinking,[4] and therefore this label includes, e.g., the stalwart defenders of the Soviet Regime when it was in power. There is much scholarship around the authoritarian personality, which is defined by certain traits such as support for the power of authority over individuals, defense of conventional values, and enthusiasm for violent retaliation against offenders.[5]

The authoritarian personality type has, crucially, two subdivisions: authoritarian followers and authoritarian leaders. When this issue was

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[1] Adolph Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 20.

[2] Blaise Pascal, "The Heart has its Reasons which Reason Itself does not Know," in *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. Honor Levi, ed. Anthony Levi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 158.

[3] Rene Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul and Other Late Philosophical Writing*, trans. Michael Moriarty (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 191-192.

[4] Bob Altemeyer, "Nacionalismo y Autoritarismo de Derechas entre Legisladores Americanos," *Psicología Política* 7 (1993): 8.

[5] Geoff Boucher, "Class Politics and the Authoritarian Personality," *International Critical Thought* 12, no. 3 (2022): 483-500.

first approached no clear distinction was made,[6] but it is an important one to keep in mind to understand the relationship between the authoritarian personality and its social and political role: authoritarian leaders and followers act in different ways, have different goals, and relate differently to others.[7]

In this paper we will focus on the personality and mode of acting of the authoritarian leader, a person characterized by his[8] narcissism and self-centeredness. We are interested in the personality of people who are very emphatic in the decisions they take, unwaveringly believe that these decisions are right, and do everything in their power to achieve their goals.[9] We propose that this kind of self-centeredness of the authoritarian leader and his decision making has illuminating similarities with another psychological type that has been studied in psychology and philosophy of mind: namely, the *successful psychopath;*[10] the person that, although possessing the traits of a clinical psychopath such as lacking in sympathy (that being, not being capable of reacting emotionally to the emotions of others)[11] and being self-centered, can nevertheless fit in social contexts and achieve leadership roles.

It seems that certain people can be socially successful precisely because of their "cold heart." The lack of sympathy enables this kind of people to enter social relationships without the difficulties created by affective dilemmas.[12] The successful psychopath can establish relationships without the intersubjective implications that this normally entails; for example, without being affected by the decisions and opinions of others.

Our intention, in comparing successful psychopaths and authoritarian leaders, is not to reinforce the idea that authoritarian leaders are unemotional, but rather the opposite. We wish to criticize the idea that

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[6] Theodor Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality: Studies in Prejudice Series* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 1-56.

[7] Bob Altemeyer, *The Authoritarians* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 2006), 8.

[8] We have decided to refer to authoritarian leaders using the male pronoun with a view towards simplicity of language and because, historically, a great majority of authoritarian leaders have been male.

[9] Altemeyer, *The Authoritarians*, 160.

[10] Robert Hare, *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of Psychopaths Among Us* (New York: The Gilford Press, 1999), 113; Somogy Varga, "Identifications, Volitions and the Case of Successful Psychopaths," *Dialectica* 69, no. 1 (2015): 87-106.

[11] Jérôme Englebert, "A New Understanding of Psychopathy: The Contribution of Phenomenal Psychopathology," *Psychopathology* 48, no. 6 (2015): 368-375.

[12] Varga, 89.

cognition is a set of processes guided by purely rational criteria, by taking an enactive and embodied perspective.[13] This perspective posits that cognitive processes are extended to the body, the environment, and other cognitive agents; and that emotions play a relevant normative role in cognition, in that they link the individual with others when taking moral decisions.[14] We posit that, authoritarian leaders are not unemotional, and therefore not particularly rational, but, rather, have a particular emotional makeup that gives prevalence to certain emotions over others.

To explore the mind of the authoritarian leader, we delve into the philosophical discussion of the mind of successful psychopaths. From the perspective of embodied cognition, philosopher Somogy Varga suggests, against popular belief, that people with this kind of personality don't really take decisions with a cool head; rather, their decision-making processes are permeated by emotion-based reasons that are strongly related to their self-image in relation to a given goal[15]. Rather than portraying these people as completely calculating, Varga portrays such pretended rationality as a façade for the impulsivity of the successful psychopath. This does help to make them successful in certain aspects: they are intensely embedded in and committed to their activities and are persistent and assertive. At the same time, however, they show a harmful lack of flexibility and sensitivity to changing environments. Therefore, successful psychopaths fall as quickly as they rise.

As a gnoseological category, the successful psychopath provides a path to the study of the authoritarian leader. Using Varga's characterization, it provides a way to explore the relationship between volition, rational thought, and emotions in the context of political decision-making. We are not suggesting, *a priori*, that all authoritarian leaders are psychopaths; we are not interested in the category of the successful psychopath as a clinical diagnostic; but we believe that using what we know about successful psychopaths as a lens to examine authoritarian leaders can bear interesting fruit.

A look at self-help literature in the field of business will help complete the picture we are trying to paint; it can help show us how successful psychopaths and authoritarian leaders come to be, and how these personality profiles are related to social dynamics in which suc-

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[13] Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), 9.

[14] Giovanna Colombetti, *The Feeling Body* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014), 94.

[15] Varga, 97.

cess is associated with emotional control.[16] Self-help books recommend a laser-like focus on specific goals, a Machiavellian attitude towards associates (that is, they are only valuable to me as much as they help me further my goals), and a conscious disregard for the feelings of others. That self-help books recommend attitudes that are quite similar to those of authoritarian leaders and successful psychopaths is an interesting (and perhaps worrying) symptom of our times, but it also provides us with clues to account for the kind of success and failure that are experienced by authoritarian leaders.

We interpret self-help literature as showing that the perspective that portrays the success of "cold hearted" political and business leaders as a result of the cultivation of rational thought is wrong; rather, what is cultivated is a certain emotional profile: self-help books that promote a supposedly rational style of acting do not ask their readers to practice calculus or syllogisms, but to prioritize certain feelings and disregard others.

Using these sources, we will argue that 1) neither successful psychopaths nor authoritarian leaders have a "cool head" (a reasoning process that is unhindered by emotions); 2) that this emotional makeup is the result of their identity being intertwined with a chosen goal; and 3) that the resolution and steadfastness of such personality types comes at the price of stubbornness, and an inability to change course.

II. From followers to leaders

Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents,*[17] can be read together with Freud's epistolary exchanges with Einstein[18] to understand the relationship between power, law, and violence, and how the relationship between these factors and the individual psychical makeup is an obstacle to the achievement of peace. For Freud, society is founded on the necessity of dominating the individual drive to violence, so that this violence is guided toward the benefit of a community. However, in social power dynamics, this domination tends to benefit some at the expense of others. This kind of domination implies that a few (who exercise power) repress the primary drives of the rest: this entails repressing not only aggressive

[16] Mark Fisher, *The Instant Millionaire: A Tale of Wisdom and Wealth* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1990), 37-44; Og Mandino, *The Greatest Salesman in the World* (New York: Bantam, 1983), 63-67; Robert Kiyosaki, *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* (Scottsdale, AZ: Plata Publishing, 2017), 129-145.

[17] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010).

[18] Sigmund Freud, "Why War?" in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, Volume 22, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), 199-215.

drives, but also drives associated with love and care for others (that is, drives associated with life), that need to be sublimated (that is, subject to controlled exteriorization) according to the interests of the rulers.

Freud's writings were a diagnosis and a warning about the future of human societies; but above all, they implied recognizing that politics, social organization, and psychological structures are interrelated. Freud's findings are of a piece with the political realism of authors such as Han Fei[19] and Machiavelli:[20] politics, rather than a matter of rational consensus building and cooperation, is more about the psychologically motivated struggle for power.

A few decades after *Civilization and its Discontents*, and in the context of World War II, the relationship between political power and psychology was again brought to the forefront through the analysis of the authoritarian personality.[21] Influenced by Freud, the work of Adorno, et. al.[22] categorizes individuals as authoritarians if their personality is governed by the super-ego: they are conventional, afraid to be seen as different from the members of their community, submissive to authority figures, tend towards religious extremism and have an inflexible sense of morality.[23] According to Adorno, et. al., the super-ego of authoritarians must face an ambivalent ego that is both submissive and narcissistically self- centered. Because of this ambivalence, authoritarians tend to attach themselves to authority figures whom they admire. They idolize the authoritarian political leader that embodies the father figure.[24]

In the 80's, and in the context of the Cold War, Bob Altemeyer used Adorno's conceptual and methodological framework to characterize authoritarianism, leaning on Albert Bandura's theory of social learning.[25] He developed the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWA) to measure the covariance of three types of attitudes that he sees as characteristic of authoritarian followers: i) authoritarian submission: a high degree of submission to the legitimate and recognized authorities of their community; ii) authoritarian aggression: a general aggressiveness directed towards people they believe to be marginal-

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[19] Panagiotis Kallinikos, "Political Realism in the Chinese Warring States Period and the European Renaissance: Han Fei and Machiavelli," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (2023): 127-166.

[20] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin, 2003), 105-107.

[21] Adorno et al., 1-56.

[22] Ibid., 753.

[23] Ibid., 751 and 735.

[24] Ibid., 653 and 680.

[25] Albert Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 70.

ized by legitimate authorities; and iii) conventionalism: a high degree of adhesion to the social norms that are approved by society and by legitimate authorities.[26] The RWA scale has been used to study authoritarian personalities in such places as Israel, Palestine,[27] or Brazil.[28] It is considered to be complementary to other scales that measure right-wing personality traits such as traditionalism or conservatism,[29] and its items have been reduced and applied to large populations and diverse demographic groups.[30]

A particularly interesting trait of the RWA scale is that it distinguishes authoritarian leaders from authoritarian followers. The monolithic category of the "authoritarian personality" developed by Adorno becomes bifurcated in the work of Altemeyer[31] through the discovery of the personality type of the authoritarian leader. Although the leader shares many traits with the followers (such as aggression to outsiders and conventionalism), he does not seek to follow an authority figure but to become one. The leader, through an understanding of their mindset, can present himself as his followers' desire: he represents authority, inflexible values, ideological steadfastness; he becomes the embodiment of an externalized super-ego in collective authority.[32]

Altemeyer's perspective can be complemented with George Lakoff's study of conceptual metaphors.[33] Authoritarian attitudes are

[26] Altemeyer, "Nacionalismo y Autoritarismo," 8.

[27] Gidi Rubinstein, "Two Peoples in One Land: A Validation Study of Altemeyer's Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale in the Palestinian and Jewish Societies in Israel," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 27, no. 2 (1996): 216-230.

[28] Felipe Vilanova, Taciano L. Milfont, and Angelo Brandelli Costa, "The Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale for the Brazilian Context," *Psicologia: Refexão e Crítica* 36, no. 17 (2023): 1-12.

[29] John Duckitt and Chris G. Sibley, "Personality, Ideology, Prejudice, and Politics: A Dual-Process Motivational Model," *Journal of Personality* 78, no. 6 (2010): 1861-1894; John Duckitt, Boris Bizumic, Stephen W. Krauss, and Edna Heled, "A Tripartite Approach to Right-Wing Authoritarianism: The Authoritarianism-Conservatism-Traditionalism Model," *Political Psychology* 31, no. 5 (2010): 685-715; Bo Ekehammar, Nazar Akrami, Magnus Gylje, and Ingrid Zakrisson, "What Matters Most to Prejudice: Big Five Personality, Social Dominance Orientation, or Right Wing Authoritarianism?" *European Journal of Personality* 18, no. 6 (2004): 463-482.

[30] Boris Bizumic and John Duckitt, "Investigating Right Wing Authoritarianism with a Very Short Authoritarianism Scale," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 6, no. 1 (2018): 129-150; Ayline Heller, Oliver Decker, Bjarne Schmalbach, Manfred Beutel, Jörg M. Fegert, Elmar Brähler, and Markus Zenger, "Detecting Authoritarianism Efficiently: Psychometric Properties of the Screening Instrument Authoritarianism-Ultra Short (A-US) in a German Representative Sample," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020).

[31] Altemeyer, *The Authoritarians,* 160.

[32] Adorno et al., 683.

[33] George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004), 57.

internalized in a set of frameworks that include concepts and metaphors such as authority, leader, father, friend, enemy and hero.[34] As an example, authoritarian submission is associated with ideas such as, that to complain about the government is a sign of being lazy and undisciplined (because a good citizen was raised by a proper authoritarian parent), that going to war is to heroically defend one's country, etc.

Such frameworks are held together by the deployment of negative emotions (such as anger or fear), and of positive emotions such as gratitude.[35] When certain metaphors such as that of the strict father[36] are used, they carry with them not only a representation of what leadership should look like, but also a set of emotions. Authoritarian ideologies make use of these conceptual metaphors to trigger emotions in the public sphere.[37]

The work of Altemeyer is a good starting point to approach the authoritarian leader's personality as the embodiment of the *strict father.*[38] As he points out[39] the personality of the follower has been the subject of much more study than that of the leader. There are at least five big differences between the follower and the leader 1) the latter has a desire for power that the former does not share, a desire to control others; 2) the leader's ideological and axiological commitments (e.g., religious) tend to be adopted in order to further his search for power, rather than due to personal conviction; 3) his aggression is not channeled towards a feared "other" (as is the case with followers), but rather towards enemies that stand in the way of his goal of power 4) it seems that the leader does not suffer from the cognitive unease brought about by contradictions, reasoning problems, and compartmentalized thinking that his followers do; finally, 5) the leader does not have the tendency to seek out authorized sources in whom to place his trust.

The mind of the authoritarian follower is a set of firm and fixed (although sometimes contradictory) convictions; the mind of the leader is flexible and bends towards whatever the quest for power demands of him.[40] Whereas the follower thinks of him or herself in possession of the truth, the leader is more of a sophist that believes with Protagoras

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[34] George Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 49-66.

[35] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 188.

[36] Lakoff, *Thinking Points*, 57-58.

[37] Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York: Liveright, 1928), 28.

[38] Lakoff, *Thinking Points*, 57-58.

[39] Altemeyer, *The Authoritarians*, 161.

[40] Ibid., 170.

that "man is the measure of all things:"[41] whatever convictions lead to power are flexibly adopted by the leader. This flexibility includes what Schimmel[42] calls *pseudocognitive* acrobatics, that is, argumentative strategies that tend to appeal to fallacies or contradictions to avoid cognitive dissonance; as well as what Bandura[43] calls moral disengagement, a set of strategies for rationalizing away moral responsibility.

This is strengthened by the leader's high capacity for argumentation and for apparent mastery of his own emotions. It seems that the leader's desire for power (perhaps their only clear belief,)[44] the clarity about his own goals, is associated to a "cold heart" that contrasts with the volatility, the cognitive dissonance, and the actions based on rage and fear that characterize followers: the rational leader, in control of his emotions, offers his followers a common enemy and a clear way to channel their anxieties. In a way, followers have given the leader the task of deciding what to do with their rage and fear; and turned him into the embodiment of their passions.[45] Aggression towards the outgroup is not a result, as one may think, of adherence to such authoritarian values as loyalty, respect for authority, and purity; rather it is flexibility towards one's own values which correlates with a disposition to harm members of the outgroup.[46] People with a strong moral identity tend to extend their values towards the outgroup, whereas people with a weak moral identity are willing to negotiate and compartmentalize them. Such is the case with authoritarian followers, who give their leaders *carte blanche* in the name of their emotions.

The leader uses a totalitarian logic in which emotions such as rage and fear become an expression of a desire for justice: *x* is unfair, where *x* is what threatens the leader's power; and the leader presents himself as a restorer of justice. His plan appears perfectly logical: if *x* is unfair, *x* must be destroyed.

This argument is often presented as if it emanated from the leader's "cool head," in correspondence with his "cold heart," but the idea

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[41] Plato, *Theaetetus*, 152a.

[42] Solomon Schimmel, *The Tenacity of Unreasonable Beliefs: Fundamentalism and the Fear of Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 29.

[43] Bandura, 385.

[44] Altemeyer, *The Authoritarians*, 170.

[45] See for the case of Trump: David Norman Smith and Eric Allen, "The Anger Games: Who Voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 Election, and Why?" *Critical Sociology* 44, no. 2 (2018): 195-212.

[46] Isaac H. Smith, Karl Aquino, Spassena Koleva, and Jesse Graham, "The Moral Ties That Bind... Even to Out-Groups: The Interactive Effect of Moral Identity and the Binding Moral Foundations," *Psychological Science* 2, no. 8 (2014): 1554-1562.

that he does not suffer from paralyzing emotions is more of a persuasion strategy than a cognitive reality. Empirical evidence seems to show that people who possess the "dark triad" of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (including authoritarian leaders like Hitler or Saddam Hussein), also show several personality disorders, make difficult negotiating partners, and exhibit erratic behavior.[47]

Likewise, authoritarian regimes project an image of efficiency and rationality that doesn't correspond to their rather chaotic reality. A paradigmatic case is the Third Reich: the outward-facing image of a cold and efficient machine contrasts with a chaotic internal reality, full of improvisation, betrayals, and internal struggle.[48] Authoritarian leaders are anything but steadfast executors of a master plan; rather, their stances change with the prevailing winds, and administrative priorities change with opinion polls.[49]

This observation is in accordance with Hannah Arendt's diagnosis of totalitarianism as a complete loss of common sense:

> If it was the peculiarity of the ideologies themselves to treat a scientific hypothesis, like "the survival of the fittest" in biology or "the survival of the most progressive class" in history, as an "idea" which could be applied to the whole course of events, then it is the peculiarity of their totalitarian transformation to pervert the "idea" into a premise in the logical sense, that is, into some self-evident statement from which everything else can be deduced in stringent logical consistency.[50]

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[47] Taylor Vossen, Frederick Coolidge, Daniel Segal, and Jennifer Muehlenkamp, "Exploring the Dark Side: Relationships Between the Dark Triad Traits and Cluster B Personality Disorder Features," *Journal of Psychiatry and Psychiatric Disorders* 1, no. 6 (2017): 317-326; Frederick Coolidge and Daniel Segal, "Was Saddam Hussein Like Adolf Hitler? A Personality Disorder Investigation," *Military Psychology* 19, no. 4 (2007): 289-299.

[48] Michael Geyer, "The Nazi State Reconsidered," in *Life in the Third Reich*, ed. Richard Bessel, 57-68 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[49] For the case of China's authoritarianism, see: Xiao Tang, Weiwei Chen, and Tian Wu, "Do Authoritarian Governments Respond to Public Opinion on the Environment? Evidence from China," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 15, no. 2 (2018): 266; and for the case of Donald Trump: Hunter Schwarz, "The Many Ways in which Donald Trump was Once a Liberal's Liberal," *The Washington Post*, July 9, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/07/09/ths-many-ways-in-which-donald-trump-was-once-a-liberals-liberal/.

[50] Hannah Arendt, "Understanding Politics," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken, 2005), 317.

In totalitarianism, logic ceases to be a tool for seeking out the truth and becomes a weapon for the pursuit of power. In what follows, we compare the figure of the authoritarian leader with that of the successful psychopath to better understand their psychological and emotional makeup, and how it affects decision-making.

III. Authoritarian leaders and successful psychopaths

The scales that have served to identify right-leaning personalities,[51] do not specifically account for the personality of the authoritarian leader. They are focused on prejudices and conservative traits but are not designed to identify the manipulative tendencies and the obsession with power that are traits of the leaders and are a better suited to authoritarian followers. We believe a specific characterization of the authoritarian leader is important, and the category of the successful psychopath could be useful in this regard.

In fact, a comparison has been made between the RWA scale and the Social Dominance Scale,[52] which has found that there is no correlation between authoritarian tendencies and social dominance. Therefore, the personality of the authoritarian leader must be seen as independent from the general authoritarian personality. We hypothesize that a psychological profile that fits authoritarian leaders is that of the successful psychopath,[53] which can be detected through social dominance scales, or those that measure Machiavellianism (such as the Mach IV).

If we compare the traits of the authoritarian leader (as described by Adorno or Altemeyer) with the Psychopathy Checklist-[54] we see that there are at least 10 traits that these two profiles have in common:

Item 1. Glibness/ Superficial Charm
Item 2. Grandiose Sense of Self-Worth
Item 4. Pathological Lying
Item 5. Conning/ Manipulative
Item 6. Lack of remorse or guilt
Item 7. Swallow affect
Item 8. Callous/Lack of empathy

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[51] Altemeyer, *The Authoritarians,* 10.

[52] Ibid., 160.

[53] Varga, 87-106.

[54] Stephen Hart, David Cox, and Robert Hare, *Hare Psychopathy Checklist Screening Version (PCL:SV)* (Toronto, ON: Multi-Health Systems, 1995), 10.

Item 10. Poor behavioral controls
Item 13. Lack of realistic long-term goals
Item 14. Impulsivity
Item 16. Failure to accept responsibility for own actions

Of these items, a few are considered characteristically psychopathic[55]: narcissism (item 2), Machiavellianism (item 5) and lack of empathy (item 8) are the most studied in the case of successful businessmen.[56] We find these traits to be close to the profile of the authoritarian leader, at least according to Dutton's[57] description. However, the above-mentioned traits are accompanied by impulsivity (item 14), lack of realistic goals (item 13) and a deficient control of conduct (item 10), which seem to contradict the Machiavellianism and apparent cool head of the psychopath.

The relationship between narcissism and the rational thinking of the authoritarian leader has been subsumed under the term "Machiavellianism."[58] This characterization of Machiavellian traits leads to the creation of the Mach IV scale, which sought to measure the capacity of certain people to manipulate and instrumentalize others.[59] Machiavellianism corresponds to a subgroup of psychopaths, those known as *successful psychopaths*.[60] Successful psychopaths are Machiavellians who achieve positions of power and respect in their community[61] (their success has been studied in the field of business).[62]

The category of "successful psychopath" is not nosological (that is, it has no consequences in terms of classification and treatment of a pathology), but rather gnoseological: it implies a philosophical and sociological understanding of a specific personality type.[63] Therefore, there is no diagnostic method for detecting successful psychopathy beyond that which is afforded by a diagnostic scale of psychopathy in general.[64]

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[55] Ibid., 3.

[56] Varga, 90.

[57] Kevin Dutton, *The Wisdom of Psychopaths* (New York: Scientific American, 2012), 33.

[58] Richard Christie and Florence Geis, *Studies in Machiavellianism* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 1-9.

[59] Christie and Geis, 15-33.

[60] Stephen Benning, Noah Venables, and Jason Hall, "Successful Psychopathy," in *Handbook of Psychopathy*, ed. Christopher Patrick (New York: The Guilford Press, 2018), 585-608; Varga, 87-106.

[61] Jessica Brown, "Do Psychopaths Really Make Better Leaders?" *BBC*, November 2, 2017, https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20171102-do-psychopaths-really-make-better-leaders.

[62] Varga, 90.

[63] Benning et al., "Successful Psychopathy;" Dutton, 13-20; Varga, 92.

[64] Robert Hare, *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of Psychopaths Among Us* (New

Psychopathy occupies a particular place among personality disorders; it is unlikely that a psychopath will seek psychological or psychiatric help. Therefore, diagnoses generally occur when a crime has been committed. This relationship between psychopathy and crime is quite frequent, which has led to the disease being associated with immorality.[65] On the other hand, psychopathy is understood as being the product of a lack of emotions, especially empathic emotions.[66] Therefore, the study of psychopathy has led to the idea that morality requires empathic emotions, and that those who lack them are necessarily amoral, like the psychopath.[67] Other researchers see psychopathy more as the product of a kind of control over the emotions, rather than an absolute lack.[68] This affective control is understood as adaptive, in that it allows the psychopath to achieve a given goal. Successful psychopaths organize their actions around a fixed, inflexible goal. This has to do with their reification of goals and of people: they treat goals inflexibly; and people purely as means to ends. If we bear in mind the second formulation of Kant's categorial imperative,[69] where duty is defined precisely as treating other moral agents as ends in themselves, successful psychopaths would be essentially amoral: they may act according to law when it suits them, but their decisions would never be colored by moral considerations.

This way of acting is curiously reminiscent of the advice given in certain self-help books that promise success in the field of business. A look at the kind of ideal businessman that is promoted in such literature will help us better understand authoritarian leaders, successful psychopaths, their strategies, and the way they have of succeeding and failing.

IV. Self-help and the making of successful psychopaths

In the field of business, we meet the same apparent "cold heart" of the authoritarian leader. We can even find authoritarian political leaders

York: The Gilford Press, 1999), 190.

[65] Varga, 90.

[66] Hare, *Without* Conscience, 197.

[67] David Shoemaker, "Psychopathy, Responsibility, and the Moral/Conventional Distinction," in *Being Amoral Psychopathy and Moral Incapacity*, ed. Thomas Schramme, 247-274 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014).

[68] Englebert, 368-375.

[69] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4:429-431.

who are successful businessmen or branded as such: Donald Trump and Silvio Berlusconi are good examples. The juxtaposition of both roles reveals another interesting characteristic of the personality type we are exploring: ideological flexibility. For many years, Trump styled himself as a liberal businessman, in favor of legal abortions and universal healthcare,[70] and is now a strongly authoritarian leader (if not fascistic in the mold of Hitler or Mussolini).[71] The common denominator between both roles- politician and businessman- is the achievement of power and success, and this accounts for ideological flexibility (being liberal is good for business, being conservative is good for getting elected). In Berlusconi we see a similar political trajectory, from pro-business liberal to a conservatism that flirts with fascist elements.[72]

Is the "cold heart" of the authoritarian leader similar to that of the successful businessman promoted in self-help books? According to the texts we consulted,[73] we can see two characteristic aspects related to emotional control: these books promote the idea that success is related to i) the control over emotions related to the individual (such as anxiety); and ii) to the control over emotions related to others, such as empathy.

With respect to the first class, one of Kiyosaki's main commandments for success is the control of fear. In fact, a large part of his book is dedicated to explaining how fear can impede success, and how it can be used advantageously:

> By not giving in to your emotions, you were able to delay your reactions and think. That is important. We will always have emotions of fear and greed. From here on in, it's imperative for you to use those emotions to your advantage, and for the long term to not let your emotions control your thinking.[74]

For Kiyosaki, using emotions such as fear to one's own advantage has to do with channeling them towards specific emotions that are useful in the moment: fear can be turned into courage; greed can be turned

[70] Schwarz.

[71] Warren Goldstein, "Trump, the Religious Right and the Spectre of Fascism," *Critical Research on Religion* 9, no. 1 (2021): 3-7.

[72] Giovanni Orsina, "El Berlusconismo," *Ayer* 4 (2016): 43-66.

[73] Fisher, 37-44; Kiyosaki; Mandino, 63-67.

[74] Kiyosaki, 34.

into desire, etc., according to strategic needs. Kiyosaki, therefore, proposes a specific emotional regime, strategically geared towards furthering a goal in the short term, and disregarding the long term and the wider consequences of one's actions.

Kiyosaki is a typical exemplar of this kind of literature: these books heavily promote the virtue of emotional control as a tool for business success.[75] Emotional control has to do with being focused on a goal[76] (e.g. "becoming a millionaire"); this control must be cultivated before putting any plan in place, and a sharp focus on the goal is more important than the actions that are undertaken.[77] Strategies toward success include the control of fear and anxiety[78] and the control of superfluous desires to focus on concrete goals.[79]

Now we turn to the second class of emotions, those related to others. In books such as Kiyosaki's, there is an emphasis on an individualistic and narcissistic "know thyself" at the expense of interpersonal relationships and resonance with others. Many self-help books implicitly suggest suppressing sympathetic resonance with others: *Rich dad, poor dad* suggests that we must suppress sympathetic resonance with people who hinder our business success, and that we must attend only to those that further it.[80] Only one kind of person is worthy of attention: those that can help us achieve our goals. Other people ought to be seen as stepping-stones or instruments: "Yes," said rich dad. "Some people say I exploit people because I don't pay as much as the sugar plantation or the government. I say the people exploit themselves. It's their fear, not mine."[81]

The instrumental view of others that is promoted in the literature even applies to a specially valued human relation, that of mentor and mentee. These kinds of books speak of a relationship between the "millionaire-to-be" and a kind of spiritual guide (the "millionaire," the "Greatest Salesman in the World," the "rich dad"). This relationship does not imply an affective commitment; the master is only a model to be followed, a source of tips and wisdom for an undertaking that is clearly individual.

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Fisher, 37-44; Ibid, 129-144.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid., 114; Amy Morin, *13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do: Take Back Your Power, Embrace Change, Face Your Fears, and Train Your Brain for Happiness and Success* (New York: William Morrow, 2017), 21-22.

[79] Kiyosaki, 68.

[80] Ibid., 23.

[81] Ibid.

It is remarkable that, contrary to what might be expected if we consider "cold hearted" successful psychopaths to be lacking in emotions, these books seem to understand that emotions are present in decision-making, and that smart decisions imply controlling and shaping them (as opposed to suppressing them). If this is true, people who are known as cold and calculating (such as Machiavellian political leaders, and a certain type of successful business leaders) are not unemotional thinking machines but rather, as Varga suggests when discussing successful psychopaths, they are driven by a particular set of emotions.

What does it say about our culture that it holds up this kind of behavior (so similar to that of both authoritarian leaders and psychopaths) as an aspirational ideal? As Englebert points out "The social function of psychopaths depends on conditions in the environment. In times of peace, we lock them up; in times of war, we count on them and cover them with medals."[82] We must eschew this interesting sociological question as it takes us too far afield from our goal of understanding the decision-making mechanism of authoritarian leaders and the role played by emotions therein. However, we can point to the work of Joel Bakan[83] as perhaps providing an important clue: corporations, according to this author, behave like psychopaths. That is, the way that corporations are legally structured (e.g., with the legal obligation to maximize shareholder value, and with the freedom to act irresponsibly provided by limited liability) makes their way of acting as single-minded and amoral as that of a psychopath. Perhaps successful psychopaths and people who can act as such (and perhaps, thereby *become* psychopathic) are successful in corporate environments because the business world is structured in such a way that it rewards this kind of behavior and mindset.

What we wish to understand is how authoritarian leaders act, the way their psychological makeup conditions their decision making. Self-help literature provides us with a clear model of a certain way of acting because it presents it in a positive manner that is free from clinical or diagnostic concerns. This gives us a perspective that eschews the issue of mental health and puts a certain kind of decision-making mechanism into focus.

V. A decision-making mechanism based on emotions

The relationship between the emotions and other bodily phenomena in cognitive processes has been observed since Aristotle,[84] and was

[82] Englebert, 372.

[83] Joel Bakan, *The Corporation* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 56.

[84] Aristotle, *De anima*, 427a 17- 429a 9.

one of the central concerns of thinkers such as Descartes or Spinoza.[85] In the twentieth century this relationship is complicated by the emergence of the computer as a metaphor for human cognition, under which it is seen as mere information processing; as well as by the rise of a neurocentrism that placed cognitive processes squarely in the brain, which was seen as the sole organ of cognition, and as something apart from the rest of the body.[86] In this perspective, decision-making was conceived as a process based on rational criteria and information processing; moral decisions were evaluated through a consequentialist lens and had to do with expectations of future results; in sum, moral reasoning was seen as wholly apart from the body and the emotions.[87]

This rationalist perspective contrasts with views that recognize the role of emotions in moral judgements. For example, Jonathan Haidt's social intuitionist theory[88] states that moral judgements (that is the evaluation of actions as good or bad) are caused by, spontaneous moral intuitions that occur without moral reasoning (and are not necessarily reliable). These moral intuitions are highly affective: good and bad are experienced in the emotions; and only later lead to moral reasoning. Similarly, Dual Process Theory[89] proposes that while some moral judgments are based on highly controlled cognitive processes, deontological judgments, such as disapproving of killing one person to save several others, are driven by emotional responses, as Haidt argues. If we look at the particular case of successful psychopaths, we can derive a concrete image of a decision-making mechanism which can contribute to this debate. What our detour through self-help books has shown is that in order to act like a successful psychopath (and reap the benefit of such clear mindedness) one must manage one's emotion in a specific way, rather than suppress them. In what follows, we will explore the kind of decision-making that is undertaken by people who manage their emotions in this way.

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[85] Descartes, 191-200; Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, tr. Robert Harvey Monro (New York: Hafner, 1949), 83-95, 136-142.

[86] Varela et al., 22.

[87] Colombetti, 94.

[88] Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review* 108, no. 4 (2001): 814-834.

[89] Joshua Greene, "Dual-Process Morality and the Personal/Impersonal Distinction: A Reply to McGuire, Langdon, Coltheart, and Mackenzie," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 45, no. 3 (2009): 581-584; Joshua Greene, "The Rat-a-gorical Imperative: Moral Intuition and the Limits of Affective Learning," *Cognition* 167 (2017): 66-77.

Kahneman and Tversky[90] critique the theory of utility according to which people take decisions by weighing risks and benefits. Utility is not the result of mathematical weighing, but of the felt worth of an experience, which has to do with the pleasure and displeasure it promises. The authors point out that "rationality" is a more complex concept than a mere mental function based on logico-mathematical operations; it is dependent on context and affective experience. If we take these thoughts to heart, we can see how suppressing negative emotions can lead to irrational behaviors. Yes, that feeling in the pit of our stomach that tells us we are entering dangerous territory or acting in a morally wrong manner is not a pleasant feeling; and yes, such a feeling can be paralyzing and hinder assertive action; but it has its role, and successful psychopaths go without it.

Emotions such as compassion, contempt, guilt, or shame, also have prosocial roles.[91] Prosocial emotions have to do with sympathetic resonance with others (e.g., I cannot feel shame if I don't experience others as assessing my actions). Even in Kanheman and Tversky's[92] economic theory, decision making has to do with attending to and resonating with the actions of others: the heuristic processes in which we base our actions are largely based on other people. This does not necessarily lead to maximally rational decisions, but they serve as a starting point for it, and something we usually count on.

Let's think about what it means to control emotions such as fear and anxiety. To be sure, these are negative emotions that can lead to our postponing, regretting or abandoning courses of action. However, they are useful evolutionary adaptations, reactions to danger that help us survive. Furthermore, it has been suggested that negative emotions are at the basis of moral judgements;[93] the suppression of an emotion such as shame can lead to our being unable to feel the weight of moral transgressions (this is not to say that the person who does this is intellectually unaware that a given action is immoral: authoritarians are highly conventional and therefore mindful of what is socially considered right and wrong; psychopaths know the rules, but they understand them as conventional rather than moral).[94]

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[90] Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, *Choices, Values, and Frames* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 29-55.

[91] Jonathan Haidt, "The Moral Emotions," in *Handbook of Affective Sciences,* eds. Richard Davidson, Klaus Scherer, and Hill Goldsmith, 852-870 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[92] Kahneman and Tversky, 29-55.

[93] Haidt, "The Moral Emotions," 852-870.

[94] For an approach to the distinction between conventional and moral norms, see Elliot Turiel,

If we understand that negative emotions have an adaptive function, this could explain why the psychopath, by controlling them, becomes stubborn regarding goals, as well as impulsive and incapable of controlling his own behavior.[95] He is not open to the contextual signals through which we can evaluate our actions, since these signals are apprehended through emotions. The environment may give hints that a goal is not achievable or sustainable (for example, all my political allies are being incarcerated),[96] but these hints go unheeded.

Through a specific kind of control of their emotions, successful psychopaths may perhaps achieve a degree of moral blindness. The recognition of moral facts is necessary for making moral decisions and this recognition is not attained by mere rational cogitation of facts. Rather, it involves i) a *moral awareness* regarding the moral nature of a given situation, ii) a *moral sensitivity* to moral facts in general, and iii) a *moral attentiveness* to the moral saliencies in given situations.[97] If emotions play a role in these conditions,[98] a systematically skewed emotional profile may become blind to moral facts, situations, and saliences.

In general, human beings avoid relationships that go against their moral principles (e.g., interacting with an openly corrupt person), and find it troublesome to embark upon ventures that are inconsistent with what they think is right (e.g., doing business with a company that is a known polluter). Successful psychopaths don't have such hang-ups. But, according to Varga,[99] a lack of sympathy seems insufficient to explain this phenomenon. Varga[100] has pointed out that the main char-

The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 33-40.

[95] Hart et al., 1-4; Robert Hare, *Manual for Revised Psychopathy Checklist* (Toronto, ON: Multi-Health Systems, 2003).

[96] See, for the case of Donald Trump: Martha Busby, "How Many of Donald Trump's Advisers Have Been Convicted?" *The Guardian*, September 14, 2018, 201, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/aug/22/how-many-of-trumps-close-advisers-have-been-convicted-and-who-are-they.

[97] Scott J. Reynolds and Jared A. Miller, "The Recognition of Moral Issues: Moral Awareness, Moral Sensitivity and Moral Attentiveness," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 6 (2015): 114-117; Scott J. Reynolds, "Moral Awareness and Ethical Predispositions: Investigating the Role of Individual Differences in the Recognition of Moral Issues," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 91, no. 1 (2006): 233-243.

[98] Jean Decety, Kalina J. Michalska, and Katherine D. Kinzler, "The Contribution of Emotion and Cognition to Moral Sensitivity: A Neurodevelopmental Study," *Cerebral Cortex* 22, no. 1 (2012): 209; 220.

[99] Varga, 102.

[100] Ibid., 102-103.

acteristic of the successful psychopath is the relationship between his identity and the goal he pursues: the person is the goal. The psychopath holds on to a goal despite its unfeasibility because he is identified with it: to abandon it is to abandon himself. Understanding that success in a given goal is linked to the identity of successful psychopaths helps us to account for the way in which they operate and gives us clues to understand authoritarian leaders. The goal may be unrealistic, and the actions irrational, but they are held fast to, because the identity of the leader is at stake.

The notion of "identity" in this context, bears some clarification. We do not refer to the notion of personal identity in the sense discussed by e.g., Locke[101] or Hume,[102] who take on the problem of the validity of identifying a person whose thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, etc., change, as being the same over time, and e.g., being responsible for past actions. When we say that the goal of the successful psychopath is tied with their identity, we mean, rather, that the achievement of said goal is so tied up with the person's sense of self-worth, that goal and person are indistinguishable; that, e.g., people who are harmful to the goal are seen, thereby, to be harmful to the successful psychopath. However, should the psychopath fail in attaining his goal, he would still see himself as the person he was before failing.

Let us contrast this with normal self-constitution: a normal identity is many-faceted, and a given goal may have to do with one aspect of ourselves (e.g., seeing oneself as a successful businessman) but not with others (e.g., being a loving family man): normal people (while sensitive to framing and to social pressures)[103] tend to make decisions taking these multiple aspects into account. In a person with a multi-faceted identity, the possibility of regretting decisions and of re-thinking goals has to do with the cultivation of the emotions. Indeed, emotions can help us asses the situations we find ourselves in; without emotions, we may have access to sense-data about our predicaments, but emotions give salience and relevance to different aspects of them.[104] These emotions can also be extended in others; since others offer perspectives and evaluations of environments, and openness to such perspectives

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[101] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* ed. Kenneth P. Winkler (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett,1996), 133-140.

[102] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 84-85.

[103] Cass Sunstein, *Conformity* (New York: New York University Press, 2021) 11-34.

[104] Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (London: William Heinemann, 2003), 27-82.

and evaluations requires sympathetic resonance.[105] But sympathetic resonance is unavailable to successful psychopaths.

There is no evidence to indicate that the psychopath lacks either emotions or emotional understanding.[106] Rather, psychopaths control some emotions, but are controlled by those that relate to the goal they have identified themselves with. The psychopath still desires and has emotions, but his monomania causes him to desire and feel against himself.

VI. Rise and fall

The apparent cool head of the authoritarian leader hides the fact that important emotions are being suppressed, and that those emotions are necessary for re-thinking goals in accordance with a changing context. Following Colombetti[107] the medium- and long-term failure of authoritarian leadership may have to do precisely with the kind of emotions involved in authoritarian decision making. This idea is in accordance with a radical thesis, that was perhaps first formulated by David Hume[108] several centuries ago: no one can suppress the emotions, no purely rational self is in control: rather, different kinds of people are controlled by different kinds of passions, and reason is not their master but their slave. Politics is not merely a matter of game theory; ideological alignments and leadership types have to do with the way the emotions of the relevant actors are organized.[109]

The rise and fall of authoritarian leaders can be understood in this way. Their capacity to instrumentalize and manipulate followers, as well as their total commitment to their goals (which projects confidence), gives the leader a loyal following. Both the leadership and the followers practice moral disengagement: the former believe any means is valid towards their ultimate end, the latter blindly trust that they are being led somewhere good, and that the leader has contemplated and pondered the consequences of his actions: either immoral actions are reframed as morally valid, or the agent's responsibility for them is

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[105] Maria Clara Garavito, *Hacerse Mundo Con Otros. Intersubjetividad Como Co-Constitución* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2022), 319-358.

[106] Englebert, 368-375.

[107] Colombetti, 24.

[108] Antonio José Cano, "Hume y la Concepción de las Pasiones en Four Dissertations," *Araucaria. Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política y Humanidades* 20, no. 40 (2018): 285-310.

[109] Lakoff, *Thinking Points*, 56.

explained away.[110] In this way, a committed and single-minded movement, capable of "coloring outside the lines" when required, is formed. These traits give the movement the capacity for rapid and spectacular success.

What happens next? The very ability of authoritarian leaders to instantiate their projects and goals is their downfall. Since they lack the emotional tools to properly evaluate their grandiose plans, these are doomed to failure in the real world. They are, however, put in practice in some way, impossible as they are (e.g., Donald Trump's impracticable border wall).[111] Furthermore, since they have no qualms about the allies they make in order to achieve power, they can make many useful alliances; but once in power, these allies behave in a corrupt manner.[112] Therefore, spectacular rise to power is followed by spectacular failure.

The figure of Albert Speer (chief architect of the NSDAP from 1934 to 1937) serves to summarize the dynamics of the rise and fall of authoritarian leaders. Besides winning a war against most of Europe, Hitler dreamt of spectacular architectural achievements for Germany. Speer even built a few, such as the Zeppelinfeld for military parades; but the great majority of Hitler and Speers' grandiose plans (such as a stadium for 400.000 spectators) remained in the drawing board, and their architectural legacy was one of ruins. In his memoirs, written in prison after the defeat of the Third Reich, when trying to explain to himself why he was blind to the regime's shortcomings, Speer talks of massive, constant self-deceit.[113] Speer appears to have been blinded by his enthusiasm for certain goals, as if they shone too brightly and impaired his peripheral vision.

VII. Conclusion

We have consulted literature regarding successful psychopaths, as well as self-help literature in the field of business, to get a sense of the decision-making mechanism of authoritarian leaders, their way of being stubborn and steadfast: obstacles, according to the author of *Mein*

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[110] Ulf Schaefer and Onno Bouwmeester, "Reconceptualizing Moral Disengagement as a Process: Transcending Overly Liberal and Overly Conservative Practice in the Field," *Journal of Business Ethics* 172, no. 3 (2020): 525-543.

[111] Robert Cotter and Nathan Kasai, "Trump's Great Wall of Failure," *Third Way*, July 31, 2020, https://www.thirdway.org/memo/trumps-great-wall-of-failure.

[112] Sam Berger, Liz Kennedy, and Diana Pilipenko, "Confronting the Cost of Trump's Corruption to American Families," *Center for American Progress*, June 4, 2018, https://www.americanprogress.org/article/confronting-cost-trumps-corruption-american-families/.

[113] Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 291.

Kampf, exist only to be broken.[114] We have endeavored to show that i) authoritarian leaders, far from being unemotional, have a particular emotional makeup, ii) that this emotional makeup has to do with their binding their identity with a given goal, iii) that this emotional makeup gives them a focus and confidence that helps them achieve their goals, iv) that, however, it is also the reason for their disastrous failure once they are in power. Additionally, through the case of psychopathic political and business leaders, we have marshalled arguments in favor of a view of decision-making that is compatible with the perspective of embodied cognition: no mind is a mere processor of information; all human decisions have to do with the emotional makeup of the agent that makes them.

This text, therefore, is a contribution to both philosophy of mind and political philosophy. With regards to the former, we not only illustrate how human decision-making mechanisms incorporate emotions, but that they do so in a granular fashion, according to the way in which particular people manage their emotions. The implication for political philosophy is that political actors ought not to be treated as homogenous, as sharing the same kind of reasoning processes (as, e.g., neoclassical economics tends to assume).[115] There are kinds of people (e.g., followers and leaders) and they operate in a differentiated manner. Likewise, the idea of states as rational actors can be put into question: perhaps a country can share an emotional profile (e.g., a certain relationship to trauma), and therefore act in a manner that is systematically skewed by certain collective emotions.[116]

Political decision-making involves an emoting that is historical and contextual. This goes against the idea that leadership implies a cool head and a cold heart. In fact, such emotional coldness can be harmful even for the political leader. As far back as Plato's *Republic,*[117] book IX, we find reflections on the misfortune of the tyrannical leader: keeping power requires great personal and social sacrifice: friends must be betrayed, lies must be told, valuable people must be sacrificed, all in

[114] Hitler, 19-20.

[115] Héctor Malleta, "La Evolución del Homo Economicus," *Economía* 33, no. 65 (2010): 9-68; Oscar Rogelio Caloca Osorio and Cristian Eduardo Leriche Guzmán, "Racionalidad del Homo Económicus Versus Creencia Racional: Una Visión a Través de la Teoría de Juegos," *Análisis Económico* 20, no. 43 (2005): 101-124.

[116] Irit Keynan, "Collective Trauma and National Behavior in Times of Threat-The Israeli Public and the 2014 War in Gaza," *Cultural and Religious Studies* 4, no. 5 (2016): 300-309.

[117] Plato, *Republic*, 571a- 569c.

the name of power, to which the tyrant appears as enslaved.[118] History shows that authoritarian leaders tend to meet dreadful fates. Mussolini was captured in northern Italy as he was trying to flee to Switzerland, was executed along with his mistress, and their corpses were destroyed by an angry mob. It is thought that news of this occurrence contributed to Hitler's decision, after two weeks of hiding in an underground bunker, to commit suicide and have his remains burnt.[119] Quite a pair of endings indeed, for the men who believed that obstacles do not exist to be surrendered to, but only to be broken.

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[118] Ibid., 431a-d.

[119] Benjamin Soloway, "Did the Brutal Death of Mussolini Contribute to Hitler's Suicide?" *Foreign Policy*, April 28, 2015, https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/28/did-the-brutal-death-of-mussolini-contribute-to-hitlers-suicide/ .

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