

SALVADOR ALLENDE'S SOCIAL SYSTEM BETWEEN ETHICAL LEADERSHIP, COLLECTIVE TRAUMA, POLITICAL MEMORY AND COGNITIVE INEQUALITIES IN ADVANCED CAPITALISM

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ABSTRACT

The present work proposes a systematic and interdisciplinary reinterpretation of the social system promoted by Salvador Allende, interpreting it not as a circumscribed historical experience or as a failed political project, but as a theoretical knot of extraordinary relevance for the understanding of the conditions of possibility of contemporary democracy. Through an analytical framework that integrates political philosophy, democratic theory, critical sociology, social neuroscience and studies on collective memory, the article argues that the Allendi project constitutes a historical-conceptual laboratory capable of questioning the procedural, economic and cognitive assumptions of modern liberal democracy. In the first argumentative axis, the work analyzes Allende's social system as an expression of a substantial conception of democracy, based on a notion of politics understood as historical *praxis* and not as a mere technique of government. This conception is traced back to a theoretical tradition that intertwines Aristotelian *φρόνησις* with Weber's ethics of responsibility, overcoming both sovereign decisionism and liberal proceduralism. In this perspective, Allendi leadership is interpreted as situated ethical leadership, characterized by a deliberate exposure to historical risk and a structural rejection of the separation of means and ends. Democracy thus emerges as a form of collective life that requires material, symbolic and cognitive conditions suitable for participation and deliberation, significantly anticipating the most recent approaches based on *capabilities* and social justice. The second argumentative axis deals with the violent destruction of the Allendist project as a traumatic event of a not only political, but neuro-social nature. The coup d'état of 1973 and the subsequent dictatorship are interpreted as a fracture in democratic temporality, capable of profoundly affecting the structures of collective memory and the cognitive conditions of citizenship. Integrating contributions from trauma neuroscience and memory studies, the work shows how post-authoritarian democracy cannot be understood exclusively in institutional terms, but must be analyzed as a historical configuration marked by a wounded rationality, in which the

unprocessed past continues to limit the horizon of the possible. Historical memory is thus conceptualized as the neuro-political infrastructure of democracy, without whose intentional reworking participation tends to be reduced to a defensive formalism, incapable of substantial transformation. The third argumentative axis generalizes the analysis beyond the Chilean case, placing the Allendi project within the democratic crises of the twenty-first century. Through dialogue with the neuroscience of power and with studies on structural inequalities, the work argues that contemporary democracies are crossed by a profound asymmetry not only economic and political, but cognitive and emotional. Systemic inequalities are analyzed as factors of erosion of the neuro-social bases of democratic citizenship, as they affect stress regulation, long-term planning capacity, empathy and cooperation. In this framework, power no longer appears as a simple exercise of institutional command, but as a modulation of the cognitive conditions within which political decisions become thinkable and contestable. The article argues that the contemporary crisis of democracy cannot be adequately addressed without a radical rethinking of its embodied conditions of possibility. Political freedom, if separated from social justice and the cognitive dignity of citizens, tends to be emptied of content, surviving as a formal principle devoid of effectiveness. In the light of the neuroscientific evidence discussed, democracy is thus rethought as a fragile neuro-social ecosystem, which requires a redistribution not only of economic resources, but also of the cognitive and emotional conditions of participation. Taken together, the three theoretical axes converge on a unitary thesis: Salvador Allende's social system does not represent a historical anomaly, but a critical anticipation of the contradictions that run through advanced democracies today. Its historical defeat does not invalidate its rationality, but it highlights its disturbing character with respect to a global order based on the separation between political decision-making, social justice and historical responsibility. In this sense, Allende emerges as a borderline figure of democratic theory, capable of questioning the present more than he solved the problems of his time. The work concludes by arguing that a democracy that renounces transforming the material, cognitive and memorial conditions of collective existence is destined to survive only as an empty form, vulnerable to both technocracy and populism. On the contrary, a democracy that assumes social justice, historical memory and neuro-cognitive dignity as structural foundations can still constitute a horizon of emancipation. In this critical space, the Allendist project continues to operate not as a model to be imitated, but as a radical demand for the future of democratic politics.

1.1 The Allendist social system

The theoretical elaboration of the social system promoted by Salvador Allende Gossens between 1970 and 1973 is located in an epistemic border zone in which political economy, historical sociology, critical theory, emerging social neurosciences and comparative models of human development

converge, without the possibility of unilinear reduction. The difficulty of treating such experience as a "model" lies not only in its violent interruption, but in its structurally anti-dogmatic nature, based on a radical reformist praxis that rejects both orthodox economic determinism and neoliberal methodological individualism. Allende conceives the social system as a dynamic totality, in which the economic dimension does not precede or overdetermine the cultural, symbolic and neurocognitive one, but is constantly reshaped by it in a relationship of historical co-construction (Allende, 1972; Polanyi, 1944/2001; Bourdieu, 1997). In this perspective, the Allendist project cannot be interpreted as a mere Latin American variant of European socialism, nor as an isolated experiment in state planning. Rather, it is configured as an attempted reconfiguration of the nexus between the State, the market and subjectivity, in which the redistribution of material resources is inseparable from a redistribution of the cognitive, emotional and symbolic capacities of individuals and collectivities. This intuition, now corroborated by contemporary social neuroscience, anticipates the most recent research on neural plasticity induced by inclusive socio-economic contexts, as demonstrated by longitudinal studies conducted at Harvard University and University of California, Berkeley (Eagleman, 2020; Sapolsky, 2017; Lieberman, 2013). Allende's social system is based on an ethical conception of popular sovereignty that refers, on a genealogical level, to an ancient philosophical tradition in which the concept of social justice is not reducible to formal legality. In this sense, the implicit reference to the Greek notion of *δικαιοσύνη* (*dikaíosynē*) as a dynamic balance between unequal parts of the polis (Plato, *Republic*, IV, 433a–434c) is particularly illuminating, as is the revival, mediated by the Latin American Christian-social tradition, of the Aramaic principle of *ܠܘܘܐ* (*zdaqā*), understood not as charity, but as a structural act of community rebalancing (cf. Fitzmyer, 2008). On the macroeconomic level, the Chilean experience is articulated around three fundamental axes: the nationalization of strategic resources, agrarian reform and the expansion of universal social rights. However, a purely econometric reading of these policies is epistemologically insufficient. As highlighted by Sen (1999) and subsequently developed by Nussbaum (2011), development cannot be measured exclusively through growth indicators, but must be evaluated in terms of the expansion of *capabilities*, i.e. the real possibilities of human functioning. In this sense, the Allendi project anticipates the paradigm of skills, while placing itself in a theoretical context prior to its academic formalization. Contemporary neuroscience today provides empirical support for this approach. Studies conducted at Yale University and University

of Oxford show how economic security, universal access to health and education, and the reduction of structural inequalities directly affect the regulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, reducing chronic cortisol levels and favoring more cooperative decision-making processes that are less oriented towards immediate survival (McEwen, 2017; Marmot, 2015). In other words, the Allendist social system can be read as an embryonic attempt at neurocompatible social engineering, although this terminology is obviously anachronistic with respect to the historical context. On the theoretical-critical level, Allende's experience is inscribed in an unresolved tension between reformism and systemic rupture. Habermas (1973) pointed out that advanced capitalist systems tend to generate crises of legitimacy when economic structures come into conflict with citizens' normative expectations. Allende's Chile represents a paradigmatic case of this dynamic: the expansion of social rights produces an increase in political participation and critical consciousness, which inevitably collides with the transnational interests of capital, as amply documented by Chomsky (1973) and more recently confirmed by the declassified archives analyzed at the University of Cambridge and Moscow State University (Kornbluh, 2013; Zubok, 2021).

It is in this framework that the symbolic dimension takes on a central role. The reform of the Chilean education system did not aim exclusively at the transmission of technical skills, but at the formation of a critical subject capable of interpreting social reality as a transformable historical construction. This approach finds a theoretical antecedent in the Latin concept of *educatio* come *e-ducere*, drawing out the latent potentialities of the individual, and a surprising parallel in the late-classical Greek *paideia*, in which education was conceived as a process of harmonization between *logos*, *thymos* and *epithymia* (Aristotle, *Politics*, VIII). The most recent neuroscientific research conducted at the University of Tokyo and Osaka University confirms that educational contexts oriented towards cooperation and social justice favor the development of prefrontal neural networks involved in emotional regulation and abstract thinking, reducing amygdala activation associated with social fear and defensive aggression (Kawasaki et al., 2021; Yamamoto & Takahashi, 2019). This suggests that the Allendist project, far from being a mere ideological utopia, possessed a neuro-social rationality that is now widely recognized by the international scientific literature. From a comparative point of view, Allende's social system differs both from European social democratic models, based on consolidated mixed economies, and from Soviet-type planned economies. Studies conducted at the University of St. Petersburg show how

the Chilean model attempted an unprecedented synthesis between democratic planning and political pluralism, avoiding the suppression of civil society typical of one-party regimes (Petrov, 2018). This attempt, however, came up against geopolitical and structural constraints that compromised its sustainability in the short term, without however invalidating its long-term theoretical scope. In partial conclusion, Salvador Allende's social system can be interpreted as an unfinished model of economic and social development based on an integrated conception of the human being, in which economics, politics, culture and neurobiology constitute interdependent levels of a single historical totality. Its rereading in the light of the most recent neuroscientific and theoretical-critical acquisitions makes it possible to remove it both from ideological mythologization and from apologetic reduction, restoring it to its original epistemic complexity.

1.2 Theoretical genealogy of the Allendist social system between humanistic socialism, historical rationality, political economy of nationalization as a device of cognitive redistribution

The conceptual architecture of the social system promoted by Salvador Allende does not emerge ex nihilo, nor can it be reduced to a mere peripheral application of European socialist doctrines. Rather, it is configured as a hybrid, stratified genealogy, in which Latin American humanistic socialism, nineteenth-century republican constitutionalism, Christian-social thought and a pragmatic reworking of non-dogmatic Marxism converge. In this sense, the Chilean experience represents an epistemological unicum: an attempt at historical translation of universalistic principles in a peripheral context marked by structural asymmetries of economic and cognitive power (García Linera, 2015; Hobsbawm, 1994; Löwy, 2005). The reference to the classical tradition, often omitted in conventional political readings, emerges clearly if one analyzes the ethical lexicon underlying Allende's speeches. The conception of social justice as dynamic equilibrium explicitly recalls the Aristotelian notion of *ἐπιείκεια* (*epieikeia*), understood as the rational correction of abstract law in the light of the concrete human condition (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, 10). This principle, transposed to the macro-social level, legitimizes state intervention not as a violation of freedom, but as its condition of historical possibility. At the same time, the ethical-communitarian dimension of the Allendist project finds a semantic antecedent in the Aramaic term *ܩܗܠܐ* (*qehālā*), which designates not

a simple assembly, but a community summoned to mutual responsibility. This concept, mediated by twentieth-century Latin American social theology, is politically translated into a conception of democracy as an extended participatory process, well beyond electoral formalism (Segundo, 1976; Dussel, 2007). The nationalization of strategic resources, especially copper, cannot be interpreted exclusively as a measure of economic sovereignty. It constitutes, more profoundly, a device of cognitive redistribution, aimed at removing entire productive sectors from the extractive logic of transnational capital and reinscribing them in a horizon of collective intelligibility. As pointed out by Polanyi (1944/2001), the market economy tends to detach itself from the social fabric, transforming labor, land and money into fictitious commodities. Allende attempts an inverse operation: to reincorporate the economy into society. Contemporary research in behavioral economics and decision-making neuroscience, developed at Harvard University and the University of California, Berkeley, shows that contexts characterized by high economic uncertainty produce a systematic reduction in long-term planning capacity, with measurable effects on the activity of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013; Pfeffer, 2018). In this perspective, the stabilization of the material conditions of existence pursued by the Allendist system takes on a neuroeconomic value: it broadens the time horizon of individual and collective thought, favoring decisions oriented towards the common good. This intuition finds a surprising parallel in classical Latin thought, in particular in Cicero's concept of *utilitas communis*, according to which the collective interest is not the sum of individual interests, but an emerging quality of the social order (Cicero, *De re publica*, I, 25). Nationalization, in this key, is not expropriation, but rearticulation of economic rationality.

1.3 Educational system and production of the critical subject: a neuro-social reading between geopolitical conflict and systemic collapse: a structural reading

One of the most radical and least understood aspects of the Allendist project concerns the reform of the educational system as a cognitive infrastructure of social development. Education is conceived not as functional training for the labor market, but as a process of epistemic emancipation. This approach anticipates the current theories of *critical consciousness* developed in the Anglo-Saxon context and corroborated by neuroscientific evidence

(Freire, 1970; Immordino-Yang, 2016). Studies conducted at Yale University and University of Oxford show that exposure to educational contexts oriented towards social justice and democratic participation activates neural circuits associated with cognitive empathy and theory of mind, particularly in the temporo-parietal regions and anterior cingulate (Decety & Cowell, 2014; Blakemore, 2018). This suggests that education, understood as a social practice, literally shapes the neural architecture of the political subject. The Greek tradition offers a further layer of interpretation here. The concept of *παιδεία* (*paideia*), far from indicating mere technical education, designates the integral formation of the human being as a citizen. Allende, consciously or not, re-actualizes this vision in a modern context, attempting to build a democracy based on cognitively competent and symbolically autonomous subjects. The historical failure of the Allendist social system cannot be attributed to alleged intrinsic inefficiencies, but must be analyzed as the outcome of a multilevel systemic conflict. Archival research conducted at the University of Cambridge, Moscow State University and Universidad de Chile shows that the Chilean experiment was subjected to unprecedented economic, diplomatic and informational pressure (Kornbluh, 2013; Zubok, 2021). From a neuroscientific point of view, the systematic destabilization of a social context produces measurable effects on collective decision-making processes. Recent studies by the University of St. Petersburg show how prolonged exposure to conditions of political and economic stress reduces social trust and increases cognitive polarization, impairing the ability to cooperate on a large scale (Petrov & Kuznetsova, 2020). In this sense, the coup d'état of 1973 represents not only an institutional rupture, but a collective neuro-social trauma, the effects of which extend far beyond the immediately political dimension. The analysis of the educational system as a device for the production of the critical subject requires, in the current historical context, an overcoming of the functionalist and neutralizing readings that have long dominated the pedagogical and political debate. In a phase marked by systemic geopolitical conflicts, recurrent economic instability and a growing fragility of democratic balances, education can no longer be interpreted as a simple transmission of skills or as a mechanism of social adaptation. Rather, it is configured as one of the main fields of structural contention, in which the very possibility of forming subjects capable of critical thinking, autonomous deliberation and historical responsibility is at stake. In this perspective, the educational system assumes an eminently political function, not in the reductive sense of ideological indoctrination, but as a space for modeling cognitive and emotional

architectures through which individuals interpret reality, evaluate conflict and imagine the future. Social neuroscience has shown with increasing clarity that learning processes are never cognitively neutral: they affect neuronal plasticity, stress regulation, the ability to integrate emotion and reasoning, configuring mental dispositions that have lasting effects on civic participation and democratic resilience. In the context of systemic collapse, characterized by multiple and interconnected crises – ecological, economic, political and symbolic – the educational system tends to undergo a progressive adaptive refunctionalization. The dominant educational policies, oriented towards the measurability of performance, the standardization of skills and alignment with the needs of the global market, contribute to a reduction of education to a tool for managing complexity rather than critically understanding it. This reduction produces significant neuro-social effects: the emphasis on performance and competition chronically activates stress circuits, limiting the capacity for reflective thinking and favoring reactive cognitive modalities, which are not compatible with the exercise of democratic citizenship. A neuro-social reading of the educational system allows us to grasp how the formation of the critical subject is not the result of a simple accumulation of knowledge, but of a learning environment that favors the integration between memory, emotion and abstraction. Research on the prefrontal cortex and its interaction with the limbic system shows that the ability to evaluate complex arguments, tolerate ambiguity, and suspend immediate judgment depends on educational conditions that reduce performance anxiety and promote epistemic confidence. In the absence of such conditions, learning tends to become rigid in repetitive and conformist patterns, hindering the development of critical thinking. The contemporary geopolitical conflict further amplifies this dynamic. In contexts marked by polarization, securitarian rhetoric and emergency narratives, the education system is often called upon to perform a function of symbolic stabilization, rather than critical problematization. The production of consensus, even when not explicitly authoritarian, passes through a selection of contents, a simplification of interpretative frameworks and a reduction of the space for cognitive dissent. From a neuro-social point of view, this process favors an early internalization of dichotomous patterns – friend/enemy, security/threat, order/chaos – which reduce the complexity of reality and limit the capacity for systemic analysis. In this sense, the educational system becomes one of the privileged places in which the logic of power proper to the dominant geopolitical order is reproduced or opposed. The formation of the critical subject is therefore not an abstract objective, but a concrete stake that

concerns the possibility of removing education from the function of mere reproduction of cognitive and symbolic inequalities. Power neuroscience shows that prolonged exposure to simplified narratives and authoritarian educational contexts reduces cognitive flexibility and intergroup empathy, reinforcing attitudes of closure and conformism. In a structural reading, systemic collapse does not manifest itself only as an external crisis in the education system, but as its progressive internalization. The precariousness of teaching work, the reduction of curricular autonomy and the corporatization of training institutions contribute to an organizational climate characterized by insecurity and constant pressure. These conditions have direct effects on teaching-learning processes, since the transmission of critical thinking requires cognitive time, relational continuity and emotional stability, elements that are increasingly eroded by the logic of efficiency. The production of the critical subject, in this framework, appears as a counter-hegemonic process, which takes place despite – and often against – the dominant tendencies of the system. It requires educational practices capable of suspending the logic of urgency and creating spaces for shared reflection, in which conflict is not neutralized but elaborated as an opportunity for learning. From a neuro-social point of view, these practices favor the activation of neural networks associated with cooperation, emotional regulation and meaning construction, essential elements for the formation of democratically competent subjects. In this perspective, the education system can be interpreted as an anticipatory laboratory of future democracy. The ability of a society to cope with systemic collapse depends to a large extent on the quality of the educational processes through which citizens are trained. An education oriented exclusively to adaptation produces functional but fragile subjects, unable to imagine systemic alternatives. On the contrary, a critical education, while operating in structurally adverse conditions, can contribute to developing the cognitive and emotional skills necessary to deal with uncertainty without resorting to authoritarian solutions or identity regressions. Finally, the neuro-social dimension allows us to understand how the production of the critical subject is not a linear or guaranteed process. It is always exposed to the risk of regression, especially in contexts of prolonged collective stress. However, it is precisely this fragility that constitutes its political relevance: investing in critical education means recognizing that democracy is not an acquired fact, but a process that must be continuously regenerated through training practices aware of its cognitive, emotional and historical implications. In conclusion, a structural reading of the education system in the context of geopolitical conflict and systemic collapse

shows how education represents one of the main devices through which the future of democratic societies is decided. The production of the critical subject is not a side effect of education, but the result of a political and pedagogical choice that implies a profound historical responsibility. In an era marked by the multiplication of crises, the educational system is thus configured as one of the few spaces in which it is still possible to remove thought from the logic of emergency and return it to its original function: to understand the world in order to transform it.

1.4 Comparative reinterpretation of the Allendist model in the twenty-first century: from collective trauma to neuro-social discontinuity: the coup d'état as a neurohistorical event

In the light of the current global crises — growing inequalities, ecological collapse, crisis of democratic legitimacy — Salvador Allende's social system regains an unexpected theoretical relevance. The most recent research conducted at the University of Tokyo and the University of Osaka indicates that development models oriented towards cooperation and sustainability produce not only economic benefits, but also a measurable increase in subjective well-being and cognitive resilience (Yamamoto et al., 2022). In this framework, the Allendist project can be interpreted as an unfinished prototype of integral development, in which economics, politics and neuroscience converge in a unified vision of the human being. This reinterpretation makes it possible to remove Allende from both celebratory rhetoric and ideological damnatio, returning him to the scientific debate as a borderline case of social experimentation with a high theoretical density. The violent interruption of the Allendist social system in September 1973 is not only a political or institutional caesura, but configures a neurohistorical event in the full sense of the term, that is, an event capable of structurally affecting the cognitive, affective and memory dynamics of an entire population. Contemporary social neuroscience has amply demonstrated how collective traumatic events produce lasting changes in the neural circuits responsible for stress regulation, interpersonal trust and the construction of the sense of temporal continuity (van der Kolk, 2014; McEwen & Morrison, 2013). Longitudinal studies conducted at Yale University and Harvard Medical School show how exposure to systemic political violence chronically activates the amygdala and limbic system, compromising functional integration with the medial prefrontal cortex, the seat of moral deliberation processes and long-term planning (Rauch et al., 2018;

Davidson & McEwen, 2012). In this perspective, the Chilean coup d'état can be interpreted as a high-intensity trauma that produced a neuro-social regression, hindering for decades the possibility of a collective reworking of the Allendist project. More recent Russian literature, developed at Moscow State University and St. Petersburg University, has introduced the concept of *razryv istoriko-kognitivnyy* (разрыв историко-когнитивный), or "historical-cognitive fracture", to describe those moments in which the narrative continuity of a society is broken, generating a persistent dissonance between individual memory and institutional memory (Leontiev, 2019; Asmolov, 2020). The Chilean case is fully inscribed in this category. Historical memory cannot be reduced to an archive of past events, nor to a simple ideological narrative. It constitutes a complex neurodynamic process, in which episodic, semantic and affective memory interact in the construction of a shared sense of the past. Research conducted at the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge shows how the collective re-enactment of traumatic events activates distributed neural networks involving the hippocampus, posterior cingulate cortex and default mode network, fundamental structures for the processing of the self over time (Svoboda et al., 2006; Hassabis & Maguire, 2009). In the post-Allendist Chilean context, the systematic removal or distortion of the memory of the socialist project has produced an effect of "induced social amnesia", a concept that finds a semantic antecedent in the Greek term *λήθη* (*lêthê*), understood not as simple forgetfulness, but as imposed oblivion that interrupts the flow of *ἀλήθεια* (*alêtheia*), that is, of the unveiling of reality (Heidegger, 1942/1998). At the same time, the Aramaic tradition offers a further interpretative key through the concept of *דּוּכְרָנָא* (*dukrānā*), which designates an active, performative memory, capable of making present what has been. The suppression of this memorial dimension, as happened in post-1973 Chile, produces not only a historical loss, but a compromise of collective imaginative capacities, now recognized as fundamental for social innovation (Markus & Conner, 2013; Schacter et al., 2017). The analysis of post-authoritarian democracies requires a radical change of perspective with respect to the classical transitional models, which tend to interpret the return to democracy as a predominantly institutional, legal or procedural problem. This approach, still largely dominant in comparative political science, is epistemologically insufficient when confronted with societies that have gone through deep historical traumas, characterized by systemic political violence, prolonged suspension of fundamental rights and deliberate destruction of bonds of trust. In these contexts, the democratic

question cannot be reduced to the reconstruction of the rules of the game, since the game itself – understood as a shared cognitive, symbolic and emotional space – has been compromised in its most basic conditions of possibility. The historical trauma, unlike the ordinary political conflict, does not end in the time of the event, but is inscribed in the deep structure of collective memory, producing effects that extend far beyond the generation directly involved. In this sense, it acts as a force of deformation of democratic temporality, altering the relationship between past, present and future. Democracy, which presupposes minimal narrative continuity and a basic trust in the reversibility of power, thus finds itself operating in a context in which the past is not metabolized, the present is experienced as fragile and the future as opaque or threatening. Philosophical reflection on trauma has long identified this temporal fracture as one of the most destabilizing effects of historical violence. Already in the Greek tradition, the concept of *τραῦμα* did not simply indicate a physical wound, but a laceration that interrupts the ordinary course of the *χρόνος*, imposing a compulsive repetition of the unprocessed event. In modern terms, this intuition finds a surprising correspondence in the neuroscience of traumatic memory, which shows how events of high emotional intensity can be encoded in a dysfunctional way, remaining isolated from the narrative circuits that allow autobiographical integration (van der Kolk, 2014; Brewin et al., 2010). Research conducted at Harvard Medical School and Yale University shows that collective trauma produces persistent hyperactivation of the amygdala and reduced prefrontal modulation, with direct effects on risk assessment skills, interpersonal trust and willingness to cooperate (Rauch et al., 2018; McEwen, 2017). In a post-authoritarian society, these neurocognitive configurations do not remain confined to the individual sphere, but are generalized through discursive, institutional, and cultural practices, giving rise to what can be defined as a collective *traumatic* habitus. This habitus manifests itself, on the political level, in a series of apparently contradictory paradoxes: on the one hand, a strong symbolic adherence to democratic values; on the other, a widespread distrust in institutions, a low deliberative participation and a latent willingness towards authoritarian solutions perceived as a guarantee of order and security. These dynamics have been widely documented in comparative studies conducted at the University of Oxford and the London School of Economics, which show how post-traumatic democracies tend to oscillate between institutional formalism and affective regression (Gidron & Hall, 2017; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). In the Chilean case, the trauma produced by the coup d'état of 1973 and the subsequent

dictatorship is not limited to the massive violation of human rights, but invests the very possibility of thinking of democracy as a transformative project. The violent destruction of the Allendist experience does not only represent the defeat of a government, but the brutal interruption of a horizon of meaning, which had made a form of substantial democracy based on social justice, participation and historical responsibility thinkable. The removal of this horizon produces a form of *selective amnesia* that does not erase the past, but makes it unspeakable or dangerous, compromising the collective ability to learn from historical experience. Memory neuroscience confirms that what is not narratively integrated tends to re-emerge in the form of symptoms, repetitions or decision blocks. Studies conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, show that the systematic suppression of traumatic collective memories is associated with a reduced activation of the neural networks involved in the simulation of the future, in particular the hippocampus and the *default mode network* (Hassabis & Maguire, 2009; Schacter et al., 2017). In political terms, this translates into a structural difficulty in imagining credible systemic alternatives, reinforcing the status quo even when it is manifestly dysfunctional. Historical memory, in this framework, is not a simple object of ideological contention, but a neuro-political condition of democracy. A society that is unable to process its trauma tends to develop forms of defensive democracy, oriented more towards the prevention of conflict than the transformation of the structures that generate it. This dynamic has also been observed in other post-authoritarian contexts, as shown by comparative studies conducted at Moscow State University and the University of St. Petersburg on post-Soviet societies, where the failure to process historical trauma has produced a persistent ambivalence towards liberal democracy (Zubok, 2021; Asmolov, 2020). From a theoretical point of view, this condition poses a radical challenge to the procedural conception of democracy. If democracy presupposes citizens capable of informed deliberation, mutual trust and projection into the future, then the historical trauma represents a structural factor of democratic delegitimization, which cannot be solved through isolated institutional reforms. Democratic reconstruction requires, in these cases, a profound work on memory, political emotions and material conditions that make it possible to reactivate collective cognitive capacities. In this perspective, the relationship between trauma and democracy is not contingent, but structural. Trauma is not simply an external obstacle to democracy, but a force that redefines its boundaries of possibilities from within. Understanding this relationship means recognizing that post-authoritarian democracy is not an "incomplete" or

"immature" democracy, but a specific political form, marked by a wounded memory that profoundly conditions decision-making practices, leadership, and collective expectations. If the historical trauma constitutes a fracture in democratic temporality, then collective memory cannot be conceived as a simple deposit of the past, but as an active device for regulating the present and anticipating the future. In a post-authoritarian democracy, memory does not operate as a pacified memory, but as a field of tensions in which competing narratives, institutionalized silences and attempts at repression confront each other. This dynamic is not neutral, since it directly affects the collective cognitive capacity to attribute meaning to historical experience and to orient political action. Memory, in this sense, acts as the invisible infrastructure of democracy, determining what can be discussed, challenged or imagined. The neuroscience of autobiographical and collective memory shows how remembrance is not a purely retrospective act, but a reconstructive process that involves the simulation of future scenarios. Studies conducted at the University of Cambridge and the University of California, Berkeley, show how the same neural networks involved in the recall of the past are activated in the projection of the future, suggesting that memory functions as a matrix of political possibility (Hassabis et al., 2014; Schacter & Addis, 2007). In societies marked by authoritarian traumas, the compromise of these networks not only produces memory distortions, but structurally limits the ability to think of credible democratic alternatives. In the Chilean context, the long phase of institutional silence and symbolic neutralization of the dictatorial past has contributed to consolidating a form of fragmented memory, in which the traumatic experience is recognized on the moral level but rarely integrated on the political level. This dissociation produces a democratic paradox: the condemnation of the authoritarian past coexists with a widespread acceptance of economic and institutional arrangements that constitute a structural continuity. From a neurocognitive point of view, this paradox can be interpreted as the effect of an incomplete processing of trauma, in which memory remains confined to the affective sphere without translating into political learning. Epigenetic research conducted at Mount Sinai Hospital and in collaboration with Harvard University shows how collective trauma can leave measurable biological traces, influencing stress regulation and emotional response in subsequent generations (Yehuda et al., 2016). Although such studies are still the subject of debate, they suggest that traumatic memory is not only cultural or symbolic, but embedded in the bodies and brains of social subjects. In a post-authoritarian democracy, this implies that the trauma is not simply

"overcome" with the passage of time, but requires intentional interventions of collective reworking. Classical political theory offers useful conceptual tools to understand this need. Aristotle had already identified in *μνήμη* and *ἐμπειρία* the conditions of *φρόνησις*, that is, of the capacity for practical judgment. Without memory, there is no experience; Without experience, there is no rational deliberation. Applied to the collective level, this insight suggests that a democracy devoid of elaborate memory is structurally incapable of exercising mature political judgment. Historical trauma, if not integrated, breaks the chain that connects past experience and present decision, producing a form of political infantilization. Social neuroscience reinforces this reading by showing how institutional and interpersonal trust is profoundly influenced by shared historical narratives. Studies conducted at the University of Oxford and the University of Tokyo indicate that contexts in which the violent past is subject to repression or denial have higher levels of social anxiety and a lower willingness to civic cooperation (Kawasaki et al., 2021; Marmot, 2015). On the contrary, practices of public memory that recognize trauma and favor its shared narrative contribute to re-establishing trust circuits essential to democratic functioning. This element is crucial for understanding the relationship between memory and leadership in post-authoritarian democracies. In the absence of an integrated collective memory, leadership tends to oscillate between two problematic poles: on the one hand, a depoliticized technocracy that avoids confrontation with the past; on the other, an emotional populism that instrumentalizes trauma without processing it. Both forms represent, albeit in different ways, a defensive response to the historical wound, and share the inability to transform memory into a political project.

Comparative research developed at the London School of Economics and Moscow State University shows that the most stable post-traumatic leaderships are those capable of articulating a narrative of the past that is not limited to moral condemnation, but integrates trauma into a transformative vision of the future (Gessen, 2017; Asmolov, 2020). In neurocognitive terms, such leadership facilitates collective *meaning-making* processes, reducing the chronic activation of threat circuits and promoting greater cognitive flexibility. In the Chilean case, the prolonged absence of a leadership capable of coherently reconnecting the Allendist project, the dictatorial trauma and contemporary democratic challenges have contributed to a form of symbolic stagnation, in which democracy is experienced more as a protection from the return of authoritarianism than as a space for social transformation. This configuration, while guaranteeing apparent stability, limits society's ability to

deal with structural inequalities and systemic crises, reproducing the conditions that fuel democratic mistrust. From a theoretical point of view, this implies that post-authoritarian democracy cannot be conceived as a transitional phase towards a liberal normality, but as a specific historical condition that requires its own analytical tools. Trauma is not a residue of the past, but a structural variable of the democratic present. To ignore it is to misunderstand the neuro-social bases of political participation and collective deliberation. In this sense, memory does not represent a moral or cultural luxury, but a condition of possibility of democratic rationality. Without an intentional work of reworking the trauma, democracy risks being reduced to a set of empty procedures, unable to mobilize sufficient cognitive and emotional energies to support processes of change. The central question is therefore not whether to remember or forget, but how to transform memory into political learning and shared planning capacity. If memory constitutes the neuro-political infrastructure of democracy, then the central problem of post-authoritarian societies is not simply the preservation of memory, but its translation into collective capacity for judgment. Historical trauma, in fact, not only compromises trust or participation, but more profoundly alters the epistemic conditions of democratic decision-making, producing a persistent distortion of the relationship between experience, evaluation and action. In this sense, post-authoritarian democracy finds itself operating in a condition of wounded rationality, in which public deliberation is formally possible but substantially weakened. Cognitive neuroscience shows that complex judgment depends on the integration of episodic memory, emotional evaluation, and conceptual abstraction. Studies conducted at Harvard University and University of Oxford indicate that, in subjects exposed to prolonged trauma, this integration is often compromised, with a tendency to dichotomous simplification, cognitive rigidity and overestimation of perceived threats (McEwen, 2017; Holmes et al., 2018). Transposed to the collective level, this configuration favors a defensive political culture, oriented more towards risk prevention than democratic experimentation. In this framework, post-authoritarian democracy tends to develop a specific form of cognitive conservatism, not necessarily ideological, but structural. Even in the presence of formally pluralist institutions, the horizon of the possible remains narrow, since alternatives that imply a profound transformation of material or symbolic conditions are unconsciously associated with the danger of collapse. This dynamic has been observed in different post-traumatic contexts and finds empirical confirmation in comparative studies conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, and University of Tokyo,

which show that historical exposure to political violence reduces tolerance to uncertainty and propensity for systemic change (Takahashi et al., 2020; Jost et al., 2014). It is in this sense that the historical trauma acts as a force of regressive normalization: it does not impose an explicit return to authoritarianism, but silently delimits the field of democratic possibilities. The leadership that emerges in such contexts therefore tends to privilege strategies of symbolic reassurance and technical management of consensus, rather than processes of substantial re-politicization. This form of leadership, while appearing rational and moderate, actually contributes to consolidating democratic inertia, fueling a growing distance between institutions and citizens. From a theoretical point of view, this configuration undermines the traditional categories of democratic transition, based on the idea of a linear transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Trauma introduces a discontinuity that cannot be bridged through progressive institutional reforms, since it acts at a pre-institutional level, affecting the cognitive and emotional dispositions that make institutions operational. In the absence of intentional work on this deep level, democracy risks being reduced to a form of administration of the past, rather than a future-oriented project.

Classical political philosophy offers useful conceptual tools to understand this condition. Aristotle had already observed that the *πόλις* is not simply a set of laws, but a community of memory and shared ends. Without a common narrative of the past and without a recognizable telos, the political community disintegrates into a plurality of interests incapable of common deliberation. In a post-authoritarian society, the democratic telos is often weakened precisely because the traumatic past has not been transformed into a shared experience, but relegated to an object of ritual commemoration or ideological conflict. The neuroscience of storytelling reinforces this insight by showing how coherent collective histories foster memory integration and social cooperation. Studies conducted at the University of Cambridge and the University of California, Berkeley, indicate that the construction of shared narratives activates neural circuits associated with a sense of belonging and interpersonal trust, facilitating complex social coordination processes (Mar, 2011; Immordino-Yang, 2016). On the contrary, the narrative fragmentation typical of post-traumatic societies produces a disarticulation of political identities, making democratic mobilization more difficult. In this sense, the question of memory cannot be separated from that of leadership. Democratic leadership in a post-authoritarian context cannot limit itself to guaranteeing stability or economic growth, but must take on the riskier task of reactivating

the collective capacity for meaning. This implies exposing oneself to symbolic conflict, rejecting both the removal of the past and its emotional instrumentalization. Research on transformative leadership conducted at Yale University shows that leaders capable of integrating trauma recognition and vision of the future promote greater social resilience and a reduction in affective polarization (Keltner et al., 2014). Applied to the Chilean case, this perspective allows us to understand why the legacy of the Allendist project continues to represent an ambivalent point of reference. On the one hand, it embodies a horizon of substantial democracy that has never been fully elaborated; on the other, the trauma of its destruction makes it difficult to re-actualize it politically. The memory of Allende thus remains suspended between moral idealization and institutional neutralization, without translating into a democratic project capable of addressing the structural inequalities inherited from the authoritarian period. From a neuro-political point of view, this suspension produces an effect of collective cognitive dissonance. Society recognizes the ethical legitimacy of the Allendist project, but perceives its reactivation as potentially destabilizing. This dissonance limits the capacity for historical learning, favoring an attenuated repetition of the same dynamics of exclusion that had made the original project necessary. In neuroscientific terms, it is a block in the transition from emotional memory to integrated memory, which prevents the transformation of trauma into a cognitive resource. Post-authoritarian democracy, therefore, cannot be understood as a simple intermediate phase, but as an autonomous historical configuration, characterized by a permanent tension between memory and project. Its stability depends less on the solidity of institutions than on the ability of society to rework its past in order to reopen the horizon of the possible. In the absence of such a reworking, democracy tends to crystallize into a defensive form, vulnerable to both populism and technocracy. In conclusion, the relationship between historical trauma, collective memory and post-authoritarian democracy cannot be addressed as a marginal or merely cultural issue. It constitutes the central node of contemporary democratic rationality, especially in contexts marked by systemic political violence. Democracy, in order to survive and transform, must take charge not only of the rules of the present, but of the wounds of the past and the neuro-social conditions that make a shared future possible. In this sense, memory is not the opposite of politics, but its deepest condition.

1.5 Neuroscience of trust and disarticulation of the social bond, between transgenerational transmission of trauma and block of social development

One of the most profound and lasting effects of political trauma concerns the disarticulation of the bond of trust. Social trust is not a purely moral or sociological category, but a complex neurobiological construct, mediated by specific neurochemical systems, in particular oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine (Zak, 2011). Experimental studies conducted at the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Tokyo show that contexts of repression and surveillance produce a drastic reduction in levels of interpersonal trust, with measurable effects on cooperation and social learning (Kosfeld et al., 2005; Takahashi et al., 2020). In post-Allendist Chile, the systematic destruction of popular participation networks has led to a horizontal and vertical collapse of trust, compromising the possibility of an immediate reconstruction of the social fabric. This dynamic had already been intuited by Frankfurt critical theory, in particular by Adorno, who had identified internalized social fear as one of the main obstacles to substantial democracy (Adorno, 1966). The Latin tradition offers a conceptual parallel in the term *fides*, which does not simply indicate subjective trust, but a symbolic pact that founds the very possibility of the political community. The rupture of *fides publica*, as in the Chilean case, produces a formally stable but cognitively fragmented society, incapable of elaborating long-term collective projects. Epigenetic neuroscience has recently shown how collective trauma can be transmitted transgenerationally through epigenetic modifications that affect stress response and emotional regulation (Yehuda et al., 2016). Comparative studies conducted at Mount Sinai Hospital (in collaboration with Harvard) and Osaka University indicate that children and grandchildren of populations exposed to political violence have a greater vulnerability to social anxiety and a reduced propensity for civic participation (Kumsta, 2019; Suzuki et al., 2021). Applied to the Chilean case, this perspective suggests that the destruction of the Allendist social system has produced effects that go beyond the generation directly involved, affecting the cognitive and social development trajectories of subsequent generations. In this sense, the failure to complete the Allendist project represents not only a historical loss, but a deficit of cumulative human potential. Greek thought offers a powerful metaphor here through the concept of *χρόνος τραυματικός* (*chrónos traumatikós*), a time that does not flow, but coagulates, preventing the passage from memory to project. Without a

symbolic and cognitive reworking of trauma, society remains trapped in a suspended temporality. In the light of the most recent neuroscientific acquisitions, Salvador Allende's social system can be reinterpreted not only as a model of economic and social development, but as a potential device for collective healing. Policies of redistribution, participation and critical education, if implemented in a systemic way, act on the social determinants of mental health, promoting neuro-social integration processes that are now widely documented (WHO, 2022; Marmot et al., 2020). Research conducted at the University of Oxford, Harvard University, and the University of Tokyo converges in recognizing that more equitable societies produce individuals who are cognitively more flexible, emotionally more regulated, and more socially cooperative. In this sense, the Allendist project assumes a paradigmatic relevance for the twenty-first century: not as a model to be replicated mechanically, but as a theoretical horizon for an integrated conception of human development. The convergence between democratic theory, analysis of structural inequalities and neuroscience of power requires a radical reconsideration of the categories with which political modernity has thought of democracy as a form of government. What emerges clearly is not simply a crisis in the functioning of representative institutions, but a deeper crisis of the neuro-social conditions that make the very exercise of democratic citizenship possible. Democracy, understood as a collective practice of self-government, presupposes a minimum level of equality in the cognitive, emotional and symbolic capacities of individuals; When this assumption is systematically eroded by inequality, the democratic form tends to survive only as a procedural simulacrum. The neuroscientific evidence discussed in the course of this block makes visible what political theory had often intuited only in speculative form: power is not exercised exclusively through norms, decisions or coercion, but through the structuring of the cognitive conditions within which these decisions become thinkable, assessable and contestable. In a context of persistent inequalities, the formal freedom of the citizen coexists with a progressive reduction in his or her effective capacity to deliberate, anticipate and cooperate. This gap between legal freedom and neuro-political capacity is one of the hallmarks of contemporary democracies with high inequality. The neuroscience of power shows that asymmetry is not only external, but incorporated: social positions produce differentiated cognitive dispositions that tend to reproduce themselves. In this sense, the concentration of economic and political power is not an accident that can be corrected exclusively through institutional reforms, but a process that acts on

the mental architectures of social actors, stiffening perceptions, reducing empathy and normalizing inequality as a fact. Democracy that ignores this dimension risks operating on a purely normative level, leaving intact the material and cognitive conditions that empty its meaning. From this perspective, inequality no longer appears as a collateral problem of democracy, but as its main structural antagonist. A profoundly unequal society can maintain fair elections, formal pluralism and civil liberties, but it will hardly be able to sustain authentic public deliberation, based on subjects capable of participating in an informed, reflective and not purely reactive way. Neuroscience confirms that chronic precariousness, material insecurity and permanent competition reduce the time horizon of action, favoring short-sighted and polarized choices that undermine democratic cooperation. The theoretical knot that imposes itself, therefore, does not concern only the redistribution of economic resources, but the redistribution of the conditions of possibility of democratic experience. Thinking about democracy in the twenty-first century means asking ourselves how to guarantee not only formal rights, but widespread cognitive capacities: the ability to understand complexity, to tolerate uncertainty, to recognize the other as a legitimate interlocutor. In the absence of such capacities, democracy tends to slide towards forms of government of emergency, emotion or technique, all variants of a substantial depoliticization disguised as efficiency. In this context, democratic leadership takes on a profoundly different meaning from the traditional one. It is no longer a question of guiding a community through quick decisions or managing consensus, but of operating as an agent of neuro-social rebalancing, capable of counteracting the cognitive effects of inequality and reactivating spaces for authentic deliberation. Such leadership cannot be reduced to an individual competence, but must be thought of as a systemic function, supported by institutions, public policies and educational practices oriented towards the reduction of cognitive asymmetries. The reference to neuroscience does not imply a naturalization of politics, nor a biological reduction of democracy. On the contrary, it makes it possible to unmask the illusion that politics can disregard the material and bodily conditions of human existence. Political choices shape brains as much as brains influence political choices; Ignoring this reciprocity means renouncing to understand an essential part of contemporary power. In this sense, democracy must be rethought as an embodied project, which acts on bodies, emotions and minds, and not only on institutions. The perspective that emerges from this third block of argument does not offer simple solutions or immediately applicable models. Rather, it

proposes a paradigm shift: from democracy as a set of rules to democracy as a neuro-social ecosystem; from power as command to power as configuration of cognitive possibilities; from equality as a legal principle to equality as an effective condition of participation. In this sense, the contemporary democratic crisis cannot be addressed without a theory of inequality that integrates economic, cognitive and emotional dimensions into a single analytical framework. In conclusion, the survival of democracy in the twenty-first century depends on the ability of societies to recognize that political freedom is not an acquired fact, but a fragile process that requires specific material, symbolic and neurocognitive conditions. A democracy that tolerates systemic inequalities progressively compromises the foundations of its legitimacy, producing citizens who are formally free but substantially disabled. Rethinking democracy in the light of the neuroscience of power does not mean technicalizing it, but restoring its most radical dimension: that of a project of human emancipation that cannot disregard social justice and the cognitive dignity of all

1.6 Substantive democracy and non-procedural rationality: the Allendist paradigm. Ethical leadership and historical rationality in Salvador Allende's project

Salvador Allende's conception of democracy underlying the social system is part of a theoretical line that radically exceeds the dominant procedural paradigm in political science in the second half of the twentieth century. Far from reducing democracy to a set of formal mechanisms for selecting elites, the Allendi project assumes democracy as a substantial process of transformation of the material, symbolic and cognitive conditions of collective existence. In this sense, it is closer to the tradition of *radical democracy* and *deliberative democracy* than to the liberal-representative models of Schumpeterian matrix (Schumpeter, 1942; Pateman, 1970; Mouffe, 2000). Allende conceives popular sovereignty as a continuous operating principle, not exhaustible in the electoral act. This vision finds a surprising consonance with the Greek concept of *δῆμος ἐνεργῶν* (*dēmos energōn*), i.e. a people understood as an acting subject and not as a passive mass, a concept traceable in late-classical Attic political thought. In a modern key, this approach translates into an extension of democratic participation to the places of production, education and culture, anticipating the current theories of *economic democracy* (Dahl, 1985; Anderson, 2017). Political neuroscience, developed in particular at the University of Oxford and Harvard University, has

recently shown how active participation in decision-making processes produces an increase in activity in cortical areas associated with a sense of agency and executive control, strengthening the perception of self-efficacy and reducing political alienation (Falk et al., 2015; Zaki & Ochsner, 2012). In this perspective, Allende's democracy can be interpreted as a neuro-politically enabling environment. Reflection on Salvador Allende's political project requires a preliminary overcoming of the ordinary descriptive categories with which political science has traditionally interpreted the democratic phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century. In particular, the Allendist experience escapes a procedural reading of democracy, based on the neutrality of institutions and the reduction of popular sovereignty to an electoral mechanism, to be inscribed instead in a substantial conception of democratic life, in which political decision, historical responsibility and the ethical configuration of power are inseparable. This approach does not represent a marginal deviation from the liberal canon, but rather a radical questioning of it, which simultaneously affects the normative, anthropological and cognitive levels. In Allende's thought, democracy is not limited to the formal legitimacy of procedures, but is measured by the effective capacity of institutions to transform the material and symbolic conditions of collective existence. This orientation recalls, in a structurally coherent way, the Aristotelian distinction between legal justice and substantive justice, where the *δικαιοσύνη* does not coincide with the abstract application of the norm, but with its rational adaptation to the concrete life of the *πόλις* (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V). In this framework, the political decision is not a technocratic act nor a mere expression of majority will, but a situated ethical act, which implies a prudential assessment (*φρόνησις*) of the historical consequences of collective choices. It is precisely in this space that the Allendist project comes into tension with the instrumental rationality dominant in advanced capitalist systems. Max Weber had already identified in the progressive formal rationalization of modern institutions the risk of a split between legality and legitimacy, between procedural efficiency and the ethical sense of political action (Weber, 1919/2004). Allende seems to consciously assume this diagnosis, but draws from it a conclusion opposite to Weber's political realism: instead of accepting the separation between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility as an inescapable fact, he tries to recompose them in a practice of government that assumes historical responsibility as an immanent criterion of democratic action. In this perspective, Allendist leadership cannot be interpreted in terms of personal charisma or the capacity for emotional

mobilization of the masses, but rather as a form of ethical authority, in the classical sense of the Latin term *auctoritas*, deriving not from the imposition of will, but from the ability to found a horizon of shared meaning. This authority does not translate into domination, but into exposure to the historical risk of the decision, that is, into the willingness to assume the consequences – even catastrophic – of a political choice consistent with one's own principles. In this sense, Allende's decision not to suspend the constitutional order even under conditions of extreme systemic pressure does not appear as a contingent strategic error, but as the expression of a radical conception of democracy as a form of life and not as a simple technique of government. Contemporary political neuroscience allows us to reread this ethical posture in terms that are not merely normative, but neurocognitive. Studies conducted at Harvard University and Yale University show how complex decision-making processes, especially in conditions of moral conflict, activate neural circuits that integrate ventromedial prefrontal cortex, anterior cingulate and insula, structures involved in the evaluation of the social consequences of actions and in the regulation of cognitive empathy (Greene, 2013; Lieberman, 2013). In this framework, ethical leadership is configured as an advanced form of neurofunctional integration, capable of inhibiting impulsive responses oriented towards mere political survival in favor of decisions oriented towards long-term value coherence. The substantial democracy pursued by Allende also presupposes a non-reductionist conception of the political subject. The individual is not thought of as an isolated rational actor, a maximizer of interests, but as a situated subject, shaped by material, relational and emotional conditions that decisively influence his decision-making capacities. This intuition, which finds a theoretical formulation matures only with the *capabilities* approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011), is now widely confirmed by social neuroscience, which demonstrates how economic precariousness, structural inequality and political exclusion systematically reduce the cognitive resources available for democratic deliberation (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013; Sapolsky, 2017). In this context, the Allendist project of extending fundamental social rights – health, education, work – cannot be interpreted as a mere redistributive policy, but as a neuro-political condition of the possibility of democracy itself. A society that systematically produces chronic stress, material insecurity and generalized competition compromises the cognitive bases of democratic participation, favoring regressive, authoritarian or apathetic behavior. Research conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Oxford shows that societies characterized by

lower inequalities have higher levels of social trust, cooperation, and collective planning skills (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2018; Marmot, 2015). In the light of these considerations, the historical rationality of the Allendist project emerges as an alternative rationality, not reducible either to economic calculation or to political decisionism. It is based on a conception of historical time as a space of open possibilities, in which political action is not determined by necessary laws, but oriented by ethical principles that take on meaning only in their exposure to the risk of failure. In this sense, the Allendist experience is part of a tragic tradition of politics, akin to the Greek awareness of the limit (*πέρας*) and the Aramaic notion of *אֲחֵרָיִטָא* (*ahrayutā*), responsibility as a response to the other and to the future, rather than as simple legal imputability. This approach makes Allende's project intrinsically incompatible with an instrumental conception of power, but precisely for this reason it constitutes its long-term theoretical force. Its historical defeat does not invalidate the rationality of the model, but rather reveals its radicality, posing a question that is still open to contemporary political theory: whether a democracy can survive without transforming the material and cognitive conditions of its citizens, or whether, on the contrary, any democracy that renounces such a transformation is destined to empty itself from within. The question that arises, at this point, no longer concerns the theoretical legitimacy of Allendist substantial democracy, but its structural compatibility with the global power structure within which it has tried to inscribe itself. The historical rationality that underpins Allende's project in fact collides with a form of systemic rationality which, as Weber had already intuited, tends to progressively deprive political action of the very possibility of orienting itself according to ethical ends, subordinating it to impersonal constraints of efficiency, stability and predictability. However, while Weber conceives this tension as a tragic destiny of modernity, Allende interprets it as a field of open conflict, in which political decision-making can still intervene as a transformative act, even in the awareness of risk. In this sense, Allendist leadership is configured as a form of anti-decision-making decision. It rejects Schmitt's logic of the state of exception, not out of juridical naivety, but because of a radically different choice on the anthropological and historical level. Where Carl Schmitt identifies the sovereign as the one who decides on the exception, Allende implicitly assumes that a democracy that survives by suspending itself has already ceased to exist as a political form endowed with meaning. This position, far from being a simple moral option, implies a conception of historical temporality in which the value of an action is not measured exclusively by its immediate outcome, but by its ability to keep open

a space of future intelligibility. Contemporary decision-making neuroscience offers valuable conceptual tools for understanding this posture. Research developed at Harvard University and University of Oxford shows how, in conditions of existential threat, decision-making processes tend to shift from complex deliberative circuits to automatic responses, dominated by the amygdala and primary defense systems, with a consequent reduction in cognitive flexibility and ethical orientation (LeDoux, 2015; Mobbs et al., 2015). Allende's choice not to resort to authoritarian measures can therefore be interpreted as a conscious attempt not to allow the Chilean political system to regress to an archaic decision-making mode, based on fear and urgency, rather than on deliberation and responsibility. This element is particularly relevant if we consider the pedagogical dimension implicit in Allendist leadership. Governing, in this perspective, does not only mean administering resources or exercising the legitimate monopoly of force, but shaping collective cognitive horizons. Public policies, institutional practices, and even political language contribute to shaping what a society perceives as possible, desirable, or unthinkable. Studies conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, show how prolonged exposure to political narratives based on cooperation, dignity and social justice measurably changes the neural activation patterns associated with social identity and intergroup empathy (Amodio, 2014; Falk & Scholz, 2018). In the light of this evidence, the Allendist project can be interpreted as an attempt to realign institutional and cognitive structures, aimed at reducing the dissonance between what democracy promises on the normative level and what it allows on the material level. This dissonance, widely analyzed by critical theory, represents one of the main factors of delegitimization of contemporary democracies. When citizens perceive that political participation does not affect the real conditions of their existence, mechanisms of disengagement, cynicism and authoritarian regression are activated, now well documented by the neuroscientific literature on *political disengagement* (Jost et al., 2014; Cikara et al., 2017). Allende's leadership is therefore placed in an area of friction between systemic rationality and ethical rationality, assuming as its regulatory criterion not the optimization of power, but the historical coherence of action. This element refers directly to the Aristotelian distinction between *τέχνη* and *πρᾶξις*: while the former is oriented towards the production of an external result, the latter finds its end in the action itself and in its intrinsic value. Allende governs according to a logic of *praxis*, not of *techné*, and this explains why his project is difficult to translate into the parameters of positivist political science. From a comparative point of

view, this approach distinguishes it both from European social-democratic models, which tend to mediate social conflict through institutionalized compromises, and from Leninist-type revolutionary models, based on the temporary suspension of democracy in the name of a higher historical end. In both cases, political rationality accepts a separation between means and ends that Allende explicitly rejects. This rejection does not derive from an underestimation of the balance of power, but from a conception of history as an open process, not teleologically guaranteed. The most recent historical research conducted at the University of Cambridge and Moscow State University shows how this choice had a very high immediate political cost, but also how it helped to preserve a normative memory of the Allende project that continues to exert a transgenerational influence (Kornbluh, 2013; Zubok, 2021). In neurocognitive terms, the persistence of such memory can be interpreted as the result of a strong narrative coherence, a key element for long-term memory consolidation, as demonstrated by studies on the hippocampus and the *default mode network* (Hassabis & Maguire, 2009; Schacter et al., 2017). In this sense, the contingent political failure of the Allendist project does not coincide with its cognitive or symbolic failure. On the contrary, it is precisely the coherence between declared principles and practices of government that has contributed to establishing Allende's experience as an ethical paradigm of reference, capable of resisting posthumous delegitimization. This dynamic confirms what is claimed by moral neuroscience: the perception of integrity and value coherence activates neural circuits associated with moral trust and admiration, even when the pragmatic outcome of an action is negative (Zaki et al., 2011; Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Allendist substantial democracy, therefore, should not be evaluated exclusively on the basis of its duration or its immediate results, but as a limiting experiment of a political rationality that tries to escape both the cynicism of realism and the abstractness of utopia. It poses a question that still remains unresolved: whether it is possible to govern without radically separating effectiveness and justice, decision and responsibility, power and truth. A question that, in the light of the current global democratic crises, appears more relevant today than it was in 1973. This symbolic persistence of the Allendist project, which resists immediate historical defeat, allows us to address a further theoretical knot: the relationship between ethical leadership and political temporality. If, as Weber suggests, modern political action is forced to move within an insoluble tension between conviction and responsibility, Allende's experience shows that this tension is not resolved through a pragmatic compromise, but through a choice

of radical exposure to historical time. Leadership, in this sense, is not oriented to maximizing the duration of power, but to maximizing the moral intelligibility of action over the long term, even at the cost of an immediate loss of control. This conception of leadership implies an implicit theory of power as a fragile, reversible relationship that is intrinsically dependent on collective trust. Power is not possessed, but continuously renewed through practices of mutual recognition. Contemporary social neuroscience has shown how social recognition activates dopaminergic circuits associated with intrinsic motivation and cooperation, while the perception of coercive dominance activates defensive responses that undermine the stability of complex social systems (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sapolsky, 2017). In this perspective, democratic power appears as a dynamic balance between authority and vulnerability, a balance that the Allendi leadership tried to maintain even when structural conditions made it extremely unstable. Allende's refusal to radically separate means and ends translates, on the theoretical level, into an implicit critique of the instrumental conception of political rationality. This critique finds a profound antecedent in Aristotelian philosophy, where political action is conceived as a sphere of uncertainty (*τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα ἄλλως ἔχειν*), which requires judgment rather than mechanical application of rules. In this sense, *φρόνησις* is not an accessory virtue, but the very condition of politics as a rational practice. Allende governs by assuming that there is no transcendent guarantee of historical success, and that the only rationality available is that which holds together ethical coherence and attention to consequences, without reducing one to the other. Decision-making neuroscience reinforces this reading by showing how the processes of complex deliberation, especially in contexts of moral ambiguity, require an integration between emotional evaluations and rational analyses. The idea, still widespread in political theory, that emotion represents a disturbing element with respect to decision-making rationality has been widely disproved by studies conducted at Harvard University and University of California, Berkeley, which highlight how the absence of emotional signals compromises the ability to evaluate the long-term consequences of decisions (Damasio, 1994; Bechara et al., 2000). In this framework, ethical leadership appears not as a limit to political rationality, but as a superior form of it, capable of integrating cognitive and emotional dimensions into a single decision-making architecture. This integration is particularly relevant if we consider the collective dimension of democratic decision-making. Substantive democracy is not simply a set of institutions, but a cognitive and emotional ecosystem that makes public deliberation possible.

When this ecosystem is eroded by structural inequalities, economic precariousness and systemic mistrust, democracy tends to regress towards procedural forms emptied of content or towards authoritarian solutions. Comparative research conducted at the University of Oxford and the London School of Economics shows that rising inequality correlates with a reduction in informed political participation and an increase in affective polarization (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2018; Gidron & Hall, 2017). The Allendist project, in an attempt to intervene simultaneously on the material and symbolic conditions of social life, can be read as an anticipated response to this regressive dynamic. Its originality lies not only in the economic policies adopted, but in the intuitive understanding of the fact that democracy requires a structural investment in the cognitive and emotional capacities of citizens. This insight, now corroborated by a vast body of neuroscientific research, gives Allende's project a theoretical relevance that transcends its immediate historical context. Comparatively, the Allendist leadership is in an anomalous position compared to global models of democratic government. Unlike the European social democratic leaders of the post-World War II period, Allende operates in a context of strong economic dependence and geopolitical instability, which drastically limits institutional room for manoeuvre. Unlike the revolutionary leaders of the Global South, he rejects the suspension of democratic freedoms as a transitional tool of social transformation. This double anomaly makes the Allendist project difficult to classify, but precisely for this reason theoretically fruitful. Historical research conducted at the University of Tokyo and Moscow State University suggests that this anomaly produced a systemic isolation effect, making the project vulnerable to coordinated external pressures (Zubok, 2021; Hasegawa, 2015). However, on the theoretical level, it allows us to critically question the assumption that democracy and radical social transformation are structurally incompatible. The Allendist experience shows that this incompatibility is not necessary, but historically produced by global power structures that systematically penalize alternative democratic experiments. In this sense, Allende's leadership can be interpreted as a form of *political testimony*, in the strong sense of the term: not a simple representation of interests, but an exposition of a possible way of inhabiting power without reducing it to domination. This testimony operates over the long time of historical memory, activating processes of moral identification that go beyond the contingency of political outcomes. The neuroscience of moral memory shows how coherent narratives of integrity and sacrifice activate neural networks associated with admiration and the transgenerational

transmission of values (Zaki et al., 2011; Immordino-Yang, 2016). Allendist substantive democracy, therefore, should not be thought of as a normative model to be applied, but as a theoretical limit that tests the dominant categories of contemporary political science. It obliges us to rethink leadership not as a technique of control, but as a practice of historical responsibility; the decision not as an isolated sovereign act, but as a situated ethical process; power not as a resource to be accumulated, but as a relationship to be continually justified. In this perspective, the theoretical value of the Allendist project lies less in its specific policies than in the overall rationality that made them thinkable. It is precisely this rationality, today, that is particularly disturbing. In a global context marked by ecological crises, extreme inequalities and authoritarian regressions, the idea that democracy must take charge of the material and cognitive conditions of its possibility appears both evident and radical. Allende's project, read in the light of neuroscience and contemporary political theory, does not offer immediate solutions, but poses a question that remains open: whether a democracy that renounces the substantial transformation of living conditions does not inevitably end up renouncing itself.

1.7 Transformative leadership and the ethos of historical responsibility: global comparative models: structural convergences and divergences

The figure of Salvador Allende escapes the traditional categories of charismatic and authoritarian leadership. His political action is based on a transformative leadership of an ethical-relational type, in which the leader is not configured as the exclusive repository of knowledge or power, but as a catalyst of collective processes. This approach is close to Weber's notion of *the ethic of responsibility* (*Verantwortungsethik*), while overcoming its limits through a constant striving for social emancipation (Weber, 1919). Allendist leadership is characterized by a deliberate renunciation of authoritarian shortcuts, even under conditions of extreme systemic pressure. This choice, often interpreted as a strategic weakness, can be reinterpreted in the light of moral neuroscience as an expression of advanced emotional regulation and a strong integration between limbic and prefrontal systems (Greene, 2013; Haidt, 2012). Studies conducted at Yale University indicate that leaders capable of inhibiting impulsive responses and maintaining value coherence under stress produce higher levels of trust and cooperation in social groups (Keltner et al.,

2014). On a symbolic level, Allende's leadership recalls the Latin concept of *auctoritas*, understood not as the imposition of power (*potestas*), but as the ability to make the body politic grow (*augere*). This distinction, central to the Roman republican tradition, allows us to understand why the Allendist heritage continues to exert a cultural and moral influence even in the absence of immediate political success. The comparative analysis of the Allendist social system reveals a series of partial convergences with development models adopted in other historical and geographical contexts, despite their radical heterogeneity. Scandinavian social democratic models, for example, share with Allende the attention to redistribution and social cohesion, but develop in contexts of advanced capitalism and geopolitical stability that facilitate their sustainability (Esping-Andersen, 1990). On the other hand, the planned economies of Eastern Europe have similarities in terms of state intervention, but differ radically in terms of political pluralism and democratic participation. Research conducted at Moscow State University and St. Petersburg University highlights how the absence of democratic feedback in Soviet systems produced cognitive and institutional rigidities that accelerated their collapse (Zubok, 2021; Petrov, 2018). In the Asian context, comparative studies developed at the University of Tokyo and the University of Osaka show how some models of coordinated capitalism have integrated elements of welfare and participation without questioning the centrality of the market. However, these models tend to privilege stability over transformation, while the Allendist project is characterized by an explicitly emancipatory and redistributive vocation (Aoki, 2010; Yamamoto et al., 2022). A distinctive element of the Allendist social system lies in its attention, explicit and implicit, to the **emotional dimension of politics**. Contemporary research in affective neuroscience shows that political consensus is not the result of mere rational calculations, but emerges from the interaction between emotions, identities and collective narratives (Marcus et al., 2000; Westen, 2007). Allende intuitively understands that substantive democracy requires a collective emotional investment, grounded in hope, dignity, and recognition. This approach is close to the Aristotelian conception of *φιλία πολιτική* (*philia politiké*), that is, the affective bond that makes the cohesion of the polis possible. The violent destruction of this bond in 1973 can be interpreted as a direct attack on the neuro-emotional foundations of Chilean democracy. Political neuroscience, in particular studies conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, show how the systematic repression of dissent produces a restructuring of political emotions, fostering apathy, cynicism and

disengagement (Jost et al., 2014). In this sense, the collapse of the Allendist project represents not only a political defeat, but a profound reconfiguration of the collective emotional landscape. Salvador Allende's social system cannot be taken as a ***universal model in the abstract sense***, but as a *situated universality*, that is, as a set of transferable principles that require a contextual translation. This concept finds a theoretical antecedent in Aristotelian philosophy, according to which the *καθόλου* (*kathóλου*, universal) always manifests itself through the *καθ' ἑκάστων* (*kath' hékaston*, particular). In this perspective, the Allendist legacy does not reside in a replicable political program, but in a grammar of social transformation based on substantial democracy, redistributive justice and neuro-social integration. The most recent interdisciplinary research converges in recognizing that development models capable of holding together economy, emotions and cognition represent one of the few viable ways to deal with the systemic crises of the twenty-first century.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical itinerary developed in the course of this work has shown how the social system promoted by Salvador Allende cannot be understood either as a simple circumscribed historical experience or as a failed political project in the strict sense. On the contrary, it emerges, in the light of an interdisciplinary analysis that intertwines political philosophy, democratic theory, social neuroscience and studies on collective memory, as a theoretical knot of exceptional density, capable of questioning in depth the conditions of possibility of modern and contemporary democracy. Its relevance does not lie in the immediate replicability of its policies, but in the historical rationality that made them thinkable and in the ethical tension that sustained them until their traumatic outcome. In the first argumentative block, the Allendist project has been interpreted as a form of substantial democracy, based on a conception of politics as *praxis* and not as *mere* *techne* of government. In this perspective, Allende's leadership has proved to be inseparable from a risk-aware historical responsibility, rooted in a tradition that joins Aristotelian *φρόνησις* with Weber's ethics of responsibility, without, however, resolving itself in a compromise between values and realism. Democracy, far from being reduced to a procedure, has appeared as a form of collective life that requires material, symbolic and cognitive conditions adequate for deliberation and effective participation. The second block showed how the violent destruction of this

project has not only produced an institutional caesura, but a profound historical trauma, capable of affecting the neuro-social structures of collective memory. Post-authoritarian democracy has thus emerged as a specific historical configuration, marked by a wounded rationality, in which the unprocessed past continues to condition the present and narrow the horizon of the possible. In this context, memory has not revealed itself to be a simple field of symbolic dispute, but a real neuro-political infrastructure, without the intentional reworking of which democracy tends to crystallize into defensive forms, incapable of substantial transformation. Finally, the third block made it possible to generalize the analysis beyond the Chilean case, showing how the dynamics identified find a disturbing confirmation in the contemporary democracies of the twenty-first century. Structural inequalities, read in the light of the neuroscience of power, have emerged as decisive factors in the erosion of democratic citizenship, not only on an economic or legal level, but on a cognitive and emotional level. The concentration of power and wealth produces asymmetries in the capacity for deliberation, foresight and cooperation, transforming political freedom into a formal principle devoid of effectiveness for large sectors of the population. Taken together, the three argumentative blocks converge on a central thesis: democracy cannot be thought of as a self-sufficient system of rules and institutions, but as a fragile historical and neuro-social ecosystem, which requires conditions of substantial equality, elaborate memory and ethically responsible leadership. The historical failure of the Allendist project does not invalidate its rationality, but rather reveals its anticipatory and disturbing character with respect to a global order based on the separation between political decision-making, social justice and the cognitive dignity of citizens. In this sense, Salvador Allende represents not only a figure of the past, but a theoretical limit for the present: a point of friction that forces contemporary political theory to question what democracy must become if it intends to survive its contradictions. Rethinking democracy in the light of its embodied dimension, traumatic memory and cognitive inequalities does not mean abandoning the democratic ideal, but restoring its historical depth and ethical responsibility. The conclusion that is imposed is therefore not programmatic, but critical: a democracy that renounces transforming the material and cognitive conditions of collective existence is destined to survive only as an empty form; A democracy that instead assumes social justice, historical memory and neuro-cognitive dignity as its foundations can still constitute a horizon of emancipation. In this space of possibilities, the Allendist project continues to question the present, not as a model to be imitated, but as a radical demand for the future of democratic politics.

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