

## Styles of Reasoning, Contingency and the Evolution of Science

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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By ‘contingency issue’ it is meant the question as to whether the history of a particular branch of our science could have taken a different route and provided results incompatible with those of our actual science. In Chap. 3, I have pointed out that, apart from Hacking’s recent comments (Hacking, 2014 chapter four), the discussions on the contingency issue have not involved the notion of style of reasoning. I want to fill this gap in the literature by drawing some important implications for the issue of contingency from the theory of styles of reasoning that I have developed so far. As far as the contingency issue is concerned, I shall address four fundamental questions. First of all, in the next section I shall discuss to which extent the emergence of styles of reasoning at a certain point of history is a contingent circumstance. In the following section I shall ask whether the endurance of styles of reasoning was inevitable by tackling the connected question as to why the styles are long lasting. Afterwards, I shall focus on the growth of knowledge by dealing with questions such as: if a certain style of reasoning continues to be employed and if Q is a ‘live question’, is science bound to converge on a single answer to Q? Finally, on the basis of my previous reflections I shall look into the question of the convergence of science in the long run. The answers to these questions will rely on some basic assumptions of the theory of styles of reasoning and imply a picture of the evolution of sciences in which *both* contingency and inevitability play a key role.

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This is chapter 8 of the book:

# History of Rationalities

Ways of Thinking from Vico to Hacking and Beyond

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-24004-1>

Abstract of the book:

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- A comparative analysis of the different notions of 'ways of thinking' introduced by philosophers
- A guiding thread running through historical epistemology in an attempt to unify the researches of its authors
- A comprehensive study of Ian Hacking's 'project of styles of reasoning' and its implications for the relativism