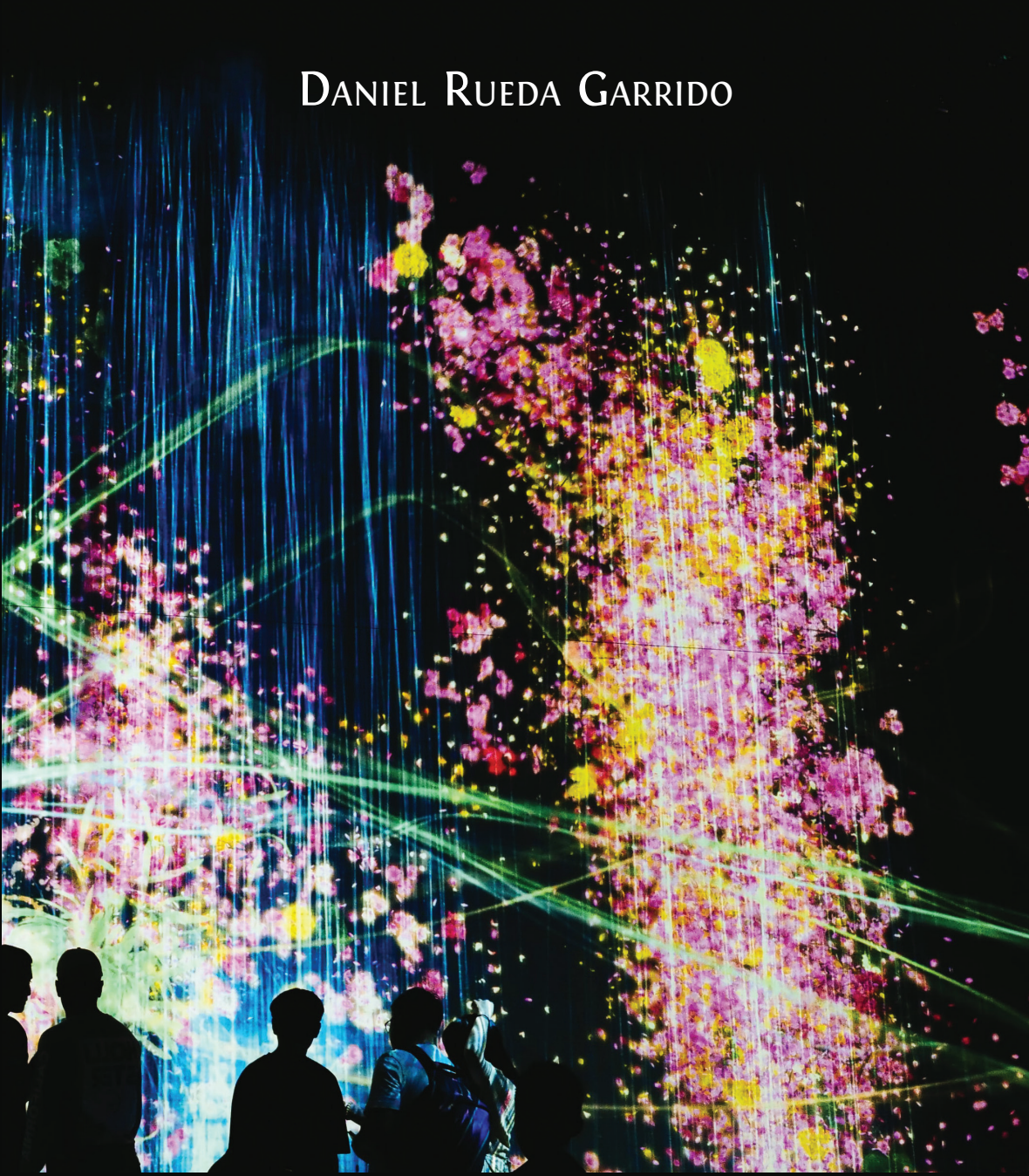
Daniel Rueda Garrido



Forms of Life and Subjectivity

Rethinking Sartre's Philosophy

FORMS OF LIFE AND SUBJECTIVITY

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Preface

If we are asked what *a* form of life is, we may respond abstractly by stating that it is what people in a particular location do and think. If then we are asked to respond more precisely what *our* form of life is, we will probably begin to make an inventory of what we do and think on a daily basis.

We would begin, most likely, in a temporal order, from the moment we wake up. We would describe our breakfast in relation to the work we are going to do during the day and how breakfast keeps us energized until the next meal; we would describe our journey by car or public transport to the workplace, the music we listen to as we travel and the people we meet; we would describe a working day, the activities we do and what we are paid for; we would describe our communication with co-workers and with those other people who are not present but with whom we communicate via mobile phone using some Internet application; we would describe how we get along with them, those we dislike, those we admire and those with whom we compete; and we would describe the return home, the leisure hours, perhaps video-conferencing with friends or chatting with a partner or family, perhaps exercising our body in the gym; and we would describe the shopping we have done on the way home in some supermarket or, once there, through some online shop, and how the car or motorbike we see parked next to our building moves us to want to buy a similar one in the future, perhaps when we get the expected pay rise or success in a business we have invested in; and finally, we would describe how, while having a snack, we relax watching a film or TV series to empty our minds of the daily hustle and bustle, and get ready to sleep and come back the next day with renewed energy to do it all over again.

If we were now asked to bracket everything we have just described and answer again the question of what *a* form of life is, we would

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undoubtedly have some difficulties in answering. After all, what we have put into brackets is what we consider to be *our* form of life, and yet the imagined inquisitive questioner forces us to go further: to describe what a form of life is without resorting to the particular description of everyday action and emotion. This means describing the form of life in what we can call its conditions of possibility; that which makes possible the content we have just put into brackets. This fundamental description must therefore be not of actions but of what makes us perform those actions. We are thus confronted with our consciousness as a whole, whose content we have put into brackets. And yet this whole continues to shape our consciousness. That emptied whole—at least emptied of that which we have brought to reflection—is the principle that governs everything that is between the brackets. Everything, right now, only has a reason to exist because of that emptied whole. The actions between brackets cease to have—temporally—meaning in themselves. What they are is due to that whole that we now stop to contemplate. The content between the brackets cannot exist without this emptied whole. It is that without which nothing of what is described would take place. It is its constitutive or ontological principle. And this is what we can call our first discovery on the way to answering what a form of life is after having put its content into brackets.

A form of life is thus an ontological principle that constitutes all our daily actions. But should we be satisfied with this finding? —We are asked. Our interlocutor would add that it is also important to bracket this principle, at least to see what happens. And, learning from the first experience, we could also aspire to show what is the foundation or *raison d'être* of this principle, which, in turn, constitutes our first bracket. Thus inspired by our interlocutor, we bracket that principle which we have found to be constitutive of our form of life. 'When not only the content or the parts but also the whole itself is put into brackets, what is left?'—We are asked. We are tempted to answer that nothing is left. But let's think about it for a moment: can anything emerge from nothing? If the whole appears out of nothing, what makes it appear? After meditating, we answer that 'If we put the whole into brackets, what remains is its possibility.' Our interlocutor does not show any signs of surprise, and asks us again: 'What is the difference between nothingness and possibility?' We meditate for another moment. From nothingness

as such, the whole cannot emerge. For it to emerge there must at least be its possibility to do so, and the latter is a mode of being. There must be a difference between nothingness and possibility. If there were not, everything would be possible, even when there is no possibility, that is, when there is nothing. Our interlocutor then invites us to conclude: 'If it is not nothingness, but rather possibility that remains after bracketing the whole, what is this possibility?' We become aware that we are about to lay the foundations of the constitutive principle of a form of life. And we meditate one last moment. The possibility of the whole is the whole as a possibility. But as possibility, it is not yet enacted. It is rather the negation of the whole as actuality. We therefore conclude that 'The possibility of the whole is the negation of the constitutive principle insofar as it is its possibility of being.' Our interlocutor looks at us with an elusive gaze.

We have reached the second important finding in order to answer the question of what our form of life is. Putting both the content of our daily actions and the whole into brackets, we are left with negation as a possibility. 'And what exactly does this mean?' our interlocutor asks us once again. So we meditate on the negation of the constitutive principle of our actions. That the negation of this is its possibility means that in order to be, let us say, in actuality, the constitutive principle of our form of life has had to deny its negation. Our possibility, then, is that which denies us, for only by denying it, in turn, can we be who we are. Before our meditation turns into a string of meaningless tongue twisters or riddles, we meditate and answer our interlocutor: 'Negation as possibility is the negative constitution of our ontological principle. This means that our form of life as a whole arises from its negative principle. The whole that we have put into brackets is first of all its possibility, and this is its negativity.' Let us sum up the road we have covered and state now that the content of our first bracket depends on the possibility of our constitutive principle. We would not act as we act if it were not for the fact that with our actions we deny (or flee from) the *negation* of our constitutive principle.

We think that our interlocutor is now going to leave us alone, having reached our two important findings. But we are wrong; our interlocutor now asks us: 'What is the difference between the constitutive principle and its negation, if the latter is the possibility of the former?' We meditate

once more and answer: 'The possibility of the constitutive principle is also, in a sense, the constitutive principle, for without it, the constitutive principle would not be.' Our interlocutor looks at us patiently. We confront him and reply that 'Without the possibility, there is no being, but being carries in itself its possibility. Therefore, the negation of the principle is constitutive of the principle itself. It is its original possibility.' And we conclude that 'Our form of life is the content of a whole that carries within itself its negation. So our form of life persists in its being without ever moving away from its negation, which, in turn, is its permanent possibility.' It is like the shadow wanting to move away from our figure or us wanting to stop breathing because the dioxide ages our cells and kills us.

Once again, we are forced to go beyond, and show the consequences of our meditation. If our form of life consists of the actions bracketed and the constitutive principle that grounds them from their own original possibility, who are we? Are we something other than or equal to that form of life? Do we exist outside of it? This meditation is certainly taking us far, and yet we can see that we are still exploring the answer to the initial question of 'What is *a* form of life?' So, we close our eyes and set ourselves once again to meditate. If we admit that we are something distinct from our form of life, because we are that which performs the actions (distinguishing between action and agent), we would have to admit equally that we are distinct from the constitutive principle, for we have found that the form of life is not only those actions we perform but also the constitutive principle in which they are contained as their whole. But are we distinct from the constitutive principle of our form of life? That would mean that whatever it is that we refer to as 'we' or our 'I' is distinct from both the whole and its possibility. But what is distinct from the whole and its possibility, what is beyond the one and the other? Now it seems that the answer is 'nothing'. For the whole has in itself its possibility, and the latter constitutes it. Therefore, if there is something that we are, and that we call 'I', it must be included in the whole of our form of life, or at least it must also arise from its constitutive principle and its original negativity. Our interlocutor is no longer looking at us. But we are ready to respond and we draw his attention. '"We" or our "I" cannot be outside the form of life and its possibility, therefore we

conclude that we are our form of life. That is also what we can call our subjectivity.'

The interlocutor makes us reflect for the last time: 'And are we, then, in the actions we have put into brackets, or in the constitutive principle that governs them, or in both?' Now we have no more doubts, we reply without fear: 'We cannot be outside the form of life, and our subjectivity cannot, therefore, be different from it, so our subjectivity is both the constitutive principle and its original negativity and the actions it constitutes.' The actions between brackets governed by the principle can be considered our habits. And all together this is our subjectivity. Answering now our interlocutor's question more precisely, we conclude that 'We are in our constitutive principle as much as in our habits.' Our interlocutor, acquiescing, then summarizes the journey we have made: 'In our meditation on the form of life we have accounted for our daily actions, their constitutive principle and the possibility of the constitutive principle or its negativity, and all this has led us to identify the form of life with our habits or principled actions and the latter with our subjectivity.' And, in an affectionate tone, he encourages us to continue meditating on the particular principle of *our* form of life and its original possibility.

The philosophical inquiry to be found in the pages that follow assumes the *attitude* to which this initial meditation has predisposed us. A meditation, thus, that aims to facilitate the philosophical quest that is presented in this book as arising from our own inner search.

Introduction

All forms are alike, and none is quite like the other;
and thus the chorus points to a secret law
[*Alle Gestalten sind ähnlich, und keine gleichet der andern;*
Und so deutet das Chor auf ein geheimes Gesetz]

Goethe, 'Metamorphosis of Plants'[1]

1. Sartre's Dichotomies

This book is a development of Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy. And the goal is to make Sartre's work relevant for issues in contemporary philosophy in a new way. The relevance of the French philosopher for the study of human beings lies in two essential dichotomies that pervade his thought. That is, the dichotomy of freedom/facticity and that of individual/group. If the subject appears isolated in his consciousness in *Being and Nothingness* (*L'être et le néant*, 1943), in his next great work, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (*Critique de la raison dialectique*, 1960), the subject now appears subsumed under society in what Sartre calls serial groups or groups in seriality or *sérialité*: '[the collective] structures the subjects' relationships of practical entities according to the new rule of the series'.[2] The meeting point between the individual and the group does not seem to be found in the French philosopher's work until his last writings, where the concept of the universal singular appears for referring to the subject, especially in *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert, 1821–1857* (*L'Idiot de la Famille*, 1981). This individual, now taken as universal singular, is an advance towards a holistic consideration of

1 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Selected Verse*, ed. by David Luke (London: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 147–48.

2 '[Le collectif] il structure leurs rapports d'organismes pratiques selon la règle nouvelle de la série'. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), I, p. 308.

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human beings, as one whose being participates in a larger context, in a particular time and place. In Sartre, thus the universal singular refers to a historical-cultural context.[3] Compared to a certain solipsism attributed to his early writings, this has the advantage of showing the individual as a temporary being subjected to the changing conditions of society. Thus, the individual, who freely accepts the behaviour of a given social group, tends to be trapped in its constraining and demanding nature: freedom becomes facticity or external necessity, and praxis becomes practico-inert or fixed and repetitive behaviour (*le champ pratico-inerte*). However, precisely because of this, in this view of the relationship between society and the individual, the possibility of the individual freely maintaining the behaviour dictated by society (or part of the society) is left aside. And precisely the reason for this is the ambiguous and blurred concept of society.

In these pages, I hold that the solution lies in a unitary and ontological conception of culture as a form of life, and society as a plurality of forms of life. In this way, the culture of a society as a particular way of being and acting is limited. And in this limitation, those ways of being and acting that the individual shares with other individuals are highlighted, while in the abstract concept of society the different types of forms of life that it may comprise are not distinguished. From the concept of 'form of life', it can be understood that the individual who shares or incarnates it (I will refer to this Sartrean concept below) does so both freely and by duty, or better, by a duty freely assumed. For the form of life as a particular way of being and acting, and not society as a general, abstract concept, is what the individual identifies with. So if this identification takes place, the individual wants to be what he should be. This is the main advantage of postulating a form of life as an ontological unit, namely, that the individual is simultaneously a freedom that imposes on himself what he understood as necessary and a necessity that is continuously and freely sustained. And this allows us to contribute to the search for the longed-for synthesis beyond the dualism between subjectivism and objectivism already advocated by Simone de Beauvoir in 'What is

3 Joseph S. Catalano, 'Sartre's Ontology from *Being and Nothingness* to *The Family Idiot*', in *Sartre Today: A Centenary Celebration*, ed. by Adrian van den Hoven and Andrew Leak (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 17–30 (p. 28).

Existentialism?' ['Qu-est-ce que l'existentialisme?']:[4] 'The fact is that the old labels, idealism-realism, individualism-universalism, pessimism-optimism, cannot be applied to a doctrine that is precisely an effort to surpass [*dépasser*] these oppositions in a new synthesis, respecting the fundamental ambiguity of the world, of man, and of their relationship.'[5] In the form of life as an ontological unit, that is, as a shared way of being and acting, my facticity is freely sustained by me and the freedoms of daily life are given by my facticity; likewise, the shared way of being and acting is my own way of being and acting, and with it, I not only identify myself with a 'We', but also I distinguish myself from those who do not share it. This is an attempt to understand our subjectivity not only dependent on intersubjectivity but also on the world as an objective level where our shared behaviours ground our own identity.

2. Forms of Life

The expression 'forms of life' has its contemporary origin in the natural sciences and, in particular, in Biology. A form of life in this original context referred to the fundamental characteristics of the organisms of the different biological realms in relation to their environment.

From the scientific field, it then moved on to historical and anthropological studies to refer to the indigenous ways of configuring life in different societies. However, the informative and elaborate works that Giorgio Agamben has carried out in the last decades on the concept of form of life confirm that this expression in its Latin version 'forma vitae' was already used in the monastic texts of the first centuries of Christianity to refer to the common life that the monks led in relation to the monastic rule (cenobitic life).[6]

Wittgenstein was the first to use the term 'form of life' (*Lebensform*) in a philosophical sense. Just as the form of language is logic, and this limits that which can be not only said but also thought (*Gedanke* or the

4 Writen by Beauvoir for the weekly newspaper *France-Amérique*, June 29, 1947, 1, 5.

5 Simone de Beauvoir, 'What is Existentialism?', in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Margaret A. Simons (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 323–36 (p. 326).

6 Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

logical picture of a fact),[7] since, according to the isomorphism that the Viennese author assumes—indebted to Bertrand Russell—the limits of our language are the limits of our world,[8] the form of life would be the framework that makes possible the flow of our living.[9] If the form of language or logical essence does not allow us to think beyond it, our form of life does not allow us to live in a different way, that is, to behave inconsistently with it. This form is the totality of our possible behaviours.[10] In Wittgenstein, however, the distinction between form of life and form of language is not entirely clear. Rather, he seems to identify the two, so that the form of life would be reduced to the use of language, as 'to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life'.[11] The form of life would be a language game, or at most a macro language game, that would determine all possible language games in a community.[12] This last interpretation would converge with the thesis of those who defend a continuation between the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* and that of the *Philosophical Investigations*.[13]

In fact, David Kishik asserts that in the work of the Viennese philosopher just as reference is made not only to different language games but also to human language as *the* language game par excellence, so 'we find ourselves speaking not only about different forms of life but also about *the* form of life, which is what we sometimes call "humanity"'.[14] The union of the two is where the ambiguity seems to be created, for it seems that if there is a form of life, it is fundamentally linguistic, i.e. it is a language game. But a language game in Wittgenstein's radical conception is a type of activity.[15] And as such an activity it has to be made possible and constituted by the same underlying foundation

7 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1961/1921), §3: 'The logical picture of a facts is the thought'.
8 *Ibid*., §5.62.
9 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), § 23.
10 David Kishik, *Wittgenstein's Form of Life* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), pp. 25–26.
11 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §19.
12 The notion of language games in Wittgenstein is not clear either, but it could be defined as the functions with which language is used in specific contexts, a community, a social group, etc.
13 Paul Winch, 'The Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy', in *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, ed. By Peter Winch (London: Kegan and Paul, 1969), pp. 1–19.
14 David kishik, *Wittgenstein's Form of Life*, p. 39.
15 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 23.

as other behaviours we engage in. Language in its use is equivalent to actions that we carry out, such as apologising, greeting, ordering, praying, praising, etc. Therefore, our linguistic behaviour is part of our form of life, which is the totality in which we make sense of it. The form of life is not the language, but the language is born out of the form of life as the constitution of our consciousness and practical experience, of what it makes sense for us to do. In one of the notes to his lecture on private experience and sense data, Wittgenstein himself seems to have realized that his insistence on understanding human experience from language, in its enunciation and communication, led him to ignore the source of that experience, that is, the world of consciousness as a phenomenological totality that makes individual experience (*Erlebnis*) possible. In these notes, the philosopher seems to understand the need for a phenomenological turn:

> But aren't you neglecting something—the experience or whatever you might call it? Almost *the world* behind the mere words? [...] It seems that I neglect life. But not life physiologically understood but life as consciousness. And consciousness not physiologically understood, or understood from the outside, but consciousness as the very essence of experience, the appearance of the world, the world.[16]

According to Wittgenstein's conclusion, the linguistic approach is insufficient. We need to reveal the being of our consciousness in order to understand our behaviour and hence our language as activity. Hence, it seems sensible to hold that the form of life is that totality of our consciousness in which our experiences and possible behaviours are determined. This concept of 'form of life' must be related to the phenomenological concept of the 'life-world' (*Lebenswelt*), which originated in Husserl's work. Husserl conceived this concept as the horizon of our actual and possible human experiences, independent of the subject and object itself: 'The world is pre-given to us [*die Welt ist uns*] [...] not occasionally but always and necessarily as the universal field of all actual and possible praxis, as horizon [*als Universalfeld aller wirklichen und möglichen Praxis, als Horizont vorgegeben*]. To live is always to

16 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions, 1912–1951*, ed. by J. Klagge and A. Nordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), p. 255.

live-in-certainty-of-the-world' [*Leben ist ständig In-Weltgewißheit-leben*].[17] This quotation from Husserl puts us on the right path to understand human praxis as part of a form of life. To take this step, we must turn to Sartre and his existentialist ontology, which guarantees that the subject as a universal singular depends in its being and acting on a transcendent principle, which, however, the French author will not be able to delimit or characterise sufficiently.

In *Being and Nothingness*, the above-mentioned concept of facticity (*facticité*) was defined and explored in relation to that of being-in-itself (things) and being-for-itself (consciousness).[18] The being is presented in internal negation, so that from that denial comes the for-itself or *l'être-pour-soi* as a way of revealing and recognizing the being-in-itself or *l'être-en-soi*.[19] Thus, Sartre accounts for the union while separating things and consciousness. Consciousness as being-for-itself is being in so far as it depends on the being-in-itself. On the other hand, facticity is that which is presented to us as given, that which surpasses us or that transcends us and over which we have no freedom. The concept of facticity thus refers to existence before the for-itself takes on a project,

17 Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 142.

18 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956 [1943]), pp. 91, 102, 110, 122, 137, 140, 146, 202, 245, 269. Note Hazel E. Barnes' explanation that Sartre would treat for-itself and the human being as conscious being or human reality as synonyms, although she acknowledges that in many other cases Sartre seems to identify for-itself directly with consciousness. See Hazel E. Barnes, 'Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. by Christina Howells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 13–38. I understand the for-itself to be a dimension of being, or of human reality, but as for-itself it is not exactly identifiable with the latter, which is also in-itself: 'consciousness derives for itself its meaning as consciousness from this being [it refers to the human reality]. This being comes into the world along with consciousness, at once in its heart and outside it' (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 91); it would be dimensions of the human reality in any case. On the other hand, if for-itself is used in an additional sense to that of consciousness, it would be that of self-consciousness, whereas consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. These annotations serve to give consistency to my analysis. In any case, as will be seen below, for me a form of life is both *action*—in the world—which can be understood as being-in-itself or being perceived, and *meaning*, which I associate with the for-itself, but which I divide into praxical image or consciousness of an action and anthropical image or consciousness of oneself, as the image of the human being that one is and wants to be—from which the praxical image is born.

19 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 123, 175, 176.

or as Sartre repeats, borrowing it from Martin Heidegger, to the fact that we are 'beings thrown in the midst of the world' (*in-der-Welt-sein*).[20] Human existence thus takes its ultimate foundation from that facticity, which is the being-in-itself, that is, 'the for-itself appears as being born from the world, for the in-itself from which it is born is in the midst of the world'.[21] If that is the foundation (because the being-for-itself arises as an internal negation of the being-in-itself), that is where the strength of any philosophy of existence is.

Our facticity is our body, our family, our past, the place where we were born, the place and time in which we live, the environment that forms our immediate reality, other human beings as beings in-itself (which the for-itself objectifies), and so on. None of the aforementioned depends on us to exist (we did not originate them), but, according to Sartre, in order to carry out our life project (*le project fondamental*)[22] we depend on all of them, it is what enables us but also what limits us in our projects: the for-itself has to count necessarily on its facticity, because it must be noted that, for Sartre,[23] both being-in-itself and being-for-itself are just one being (although dialectically separated into two elements tending towards an 'impossible synthesis'),[24] in such a way that the project or perspective that the for-itself (or our consciousness) freely gives itself carries the essence of its facticity or its being-in-itself. In this way, our consciousness, as essentially free, reduces the opaque reality to a coherent and unitary world, rendered meaningful for us. But in that world, the essence of the facticity that has been surpassed keeps beating.[25] This is an essential idea of his ontological phenomenology, which Sartre keeps until his last works (I elaborate on it in Chapter 1).

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20 Sartre repeats it on a number of occasions in *Being and Nothingness* (pp. 91, 102, 110, 122, 137, 140, 146, 202, 245, 269). Regarding facticity from a contemporary approach, a recommended reading is François Raffoul and Eric Sean Nelson, eds, *Rethinking Facticity* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008).

21 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 139.

22 *Ibid*., p. 480. Sartre defines it as follows: 'the fundamental project which I am is a project concerning not my relations with this or that particular object in the world, but my total being-in-the-world'.

23 *Ibid*., pp. 82, 184.

24 *Ibid*., p. 90.

25 *Ibid*., pp. 46, 82; Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948 [1940]), pp. 194, 269.

What the for-itself makes out of the in-itself is what Sartre properly calls 'situation'. The situation is not, therefore, facticity but neither it is only the free use of imagination in terms of image-consciousness. For my claim on forms of life to make sense, I must highlight precisely this aspect of Sartrean philosophy. If it is consciousness that elaborates a sense of its own by surpassing the facticity,[26] that sense, which is the project or way in which we understand ourselves and our reality (the image of the man we wish to be of which Sartre speaks in *Existentialism and Humanism*),[27] that sense, I repeat, is intentionally related to that reality (unless one has a pathology, which is studied by Sartre himself as hallucination):[28] my facticity essentially is the departure of the project that I give to myself or the way in which I understand myself.

Facticity, or the 'force of things', as Beauvoir referred to it,[29] is organized through our projects in situations (since the being-in-itself is surpassed). In fact, the way in which the for-itself grasps a situation has to do with the project it embraces and the end that it pursues, maintaining the latent force of things in that project, including the human condition as limitations.[30] That force is experienced when there is a change in the facticity, thereby demanding (not causing, because there is no causality between two elements that are not substances) a re-assessment of the situation and prompting a decision regarding the possibility of continuing with such a project in that situation. The example given by Sartre is someone who wants to go to the neighbouring town by bicycle but one of the tyres is punctured on the way.[31] The incident, that is, the puncture of the tyre as a facticity, or better, a coefficient of adversity that shows the facticity, does not cause the abandonment of the project of reaching the neighbouring town, but demands a reassessment of the situation and the project (which only will be abandoned or suspended by free decision of the for-itself, which could grasp the situation in a different way altogether and decide to stop a car to help him or else walk to the neighbouring town, but in any case, the for-itself has to deal with

26 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 123, 175, 176.
27 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. by Philip Mairet (London: Methuen, 1960 [1946]), pp. 28, 29.
28 Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, pp. 213, 215.
29 Simone de Beauvoir, *La force des choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 2014).
30 Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 46.
31 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 504–05.

an assessment of the situation as it is conditioned by the facticity). Sartre also exemplifies this point with the case of an ill person, 'who possesses neither fewer nor more possibilities than a well one': it all depends on how he assumes sickness as his own condition.[32] And this assumption of our facticity (in terms of the situation we make out of it) and the role of our projects are both fundamental aspects to understand the possibility of the concept of 'form of life' in the ontological sense suggested.

The way in which we understand reality and make a particular situation out of it, as mentioned above, is motivated by our fundamental life project or what Sartre also calls our *world* (the surpassing of the in-itself as given). And, nevertheless, the fundamental project or *world* (as a unit of meaning) of the for-itself, although it is born free and spontaneously, does not do so without any link with the in-itself, the facticity, because it necessarily arises from it, although in order to arise, it has to deny it as real or as in-itself.[33] This aspect will be developed in more detail by Sartre in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*,[34] where he recognizes the greater role that social, historical and cultural factors have in that conditioning of our facticity. That is, that the social and cultural behaviour of others as facts that constitute our existence inevitably conditions our projects (and our *world*), which in turn carry its essence or structure. In this sense, I have called that praxis that is 'fossilized' in the facticity, as the practico-inert (*le champ pratico-inerte*), that is, 'alienated praxis' and 'worked inertia',[35] a 'form of life'. A form of life is, therefore, that series of actions that defines a community or group and that imposes its structural principle on future projects (or actions) of its members. In this work, I deal with this issue in the chapters dedicated to actions and habits (see Chapters 3 and 4).

These projects, according to Sartre, can be fundamental or particular. This distinction is equivalent to the one we can establish between a particular action and a form of life—but with a clarification. The form of life as a project is the set of actions that constitute a type of human being. And in each one of those actions, that form of life is present, as the whole

32 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. by David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 432.
33 Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, p. 269.
34 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Vol. I (London: Verso, 2004 [1960]), pp. 492–93.
35 *Ibid*., p. 67.

in the part, through our consciousness. The relationship between the particular project and the fundamental project can be translated into the relationship between the action and its form of life.[36] Each individual acts according to a form of life that he has freely adopted, but, as a fossilized praxis and thus part of the facticity of each individual, it is adopted without surpassing it in its essence, which is manifested nevertheless in every action. The way in which individuals accept and adopt that form of life leads us to think about an identification process: the individuals tend to identify themselves with the principle of the actions to which they are exposed. It is as simple as saying that someone, for instance, will not understand himself in harmony with nature if in his environment the behaviour he perceives does not allow such a self-image to be desired (in terms of identification with it). That he identifies with the principle of those actions I take to be the desire to want them performed. Thus I follow Harry Frankfurt in thinking that identification is the coincidence between the subject's will and second-order volition (my wanting to want something): 'to want what he wants to want'.[37] But this wanting to want is an ontological issue, for it is the desire of being in a particular way. To the identification of the subject with a particular way of being and acting, I devote a section within the chapter concerning the onto-phenomenological structure of the form of life (see Chapter 1) and later on in the section on imitation (see Chapter 4). The concept of the 'form of life', although it is an interpretation and adjustment of the broader and richer concept of the life project proposed by Sartre, I consider to be fundamental for the understanding of the union of individual and socio-cultural levels: in the concept of form of life, social and cultural factors enter and constitute the individual domain. Human beings are identified then with their form of life, in terms of the actions and habits they carried out, and specifically with the image of human being that that particular form of life brings about. Or as Sartre put it: 'Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes

36 From now on, I will refer to them as actions and forms of life instead of fundamental project and particular project, which is more than just a change of names, as I hope will become apparent as the argument progresses.

37 Harry Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', *Journal of Philosophy*, 68:1 (1971), 5–20 (p. 17).

himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is.'[38]

In this sense, every form of life is a series of actions that are habitually carried out with a certain meaning for the members of the community who identify with it. Then, the form of life is unitary but has two aspects: the meaning with which the actions are carried out and the actions themselves. Both meaning and action constitute a unity, for an action cannot be understood without the meaning with which it is performed, nor the meaning stripped from the action that it galvanizes. And the same is true of each and every action of a particular community. Each action is indissolubly linked to the other actions that make up a particular form of life, which as an ontological unit, is an organic whole in which all actions partake. And if we understand the action or behaviour of the community as facticity, then we must conclude that at least this type of human facticity is born with a precise meaning, that is, they are principled actions. Moreover, As Eric Nelson and François Raffoul inform us, facticity comes from the Latin *factum*, 'which is not an assertion about nature, but primarily associated with human activity and production'.[39] Therefore the form of life as facticity is intrinsically meaningful, for it is both outside and inside, in the world and in our consciousness, what we freely and spontaneously do and what we share with other subjects in our community.

An analogy can be drawn between this concept of 'form of life' and the behavioural norm, defining a certain class identity that Pierre Bourdieu called 'habitus'. This would correspond to certain greetings, social manners, forms of dress and consumption habits that define what is reasonable for a certain social group:

> being the product of a particular class of objective regularities, the *habitus* tends to generate all the 'reasonable', 'common sense', behaviours (and only these) which are possible within the limits of these regularities, and which are likely to be positively sanctioned because they are objectively adjusted to the logic characteristic of a particular field, whose objective future they anticipate.[40]

38 Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 41.

39 See Raffoul and Nelson, 'Introduction', in *Rethinking Facticity*, p. 2.

40 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press 1990), pp. 55–56.

This 'habitus' is based on empirical data showing a regularity of behaviour associated with a particular social class. And it is claimed that the identity and distinctiveness of this class seems to depend on this 'habitus'.[41] The limitation of this approach, I believe, is precisely that it cannot go beyond showing certain regularities, thus missing the unifying and meaningful principle from which these behaviours arise, i.e. it neither reveals the genesis of this 'habitus' nor can it overcome the empirical limit on which these regularities are based. And without an ontological principle or onto-phenomenological unit from whose totality these behaviours freely and spontaneously emerge, the 'habitus' can only be a reproduction of meaningless actions. Or in other words, if 'habitus' can be taken as habitual behaviours with meaning, it is because they arise from a form of life, and therefore, only as constitutive parts of this form of life and as an actualization of its a priori constitutive principle can 'habitus' be the bearer of individual and inter-subjective identity.

The latter would allow us to better understand both the phenomenon of social distinction and that of class struggle, for both are nothing but phenomena within the same form of life that everyone in a community (social, national, religious, professional and so on) aspires to fully incarnate. Think that there would be no class struggle if the oppressed did not identify somehow with the form of life of the oppressors, or if a certain homogeneity was not assumed between them. That is, for two elements to be considered as opposites, they must be understood under the same criteria: 'no antithesis [...] without synthesis'.[42] Thus, there is no struggle between two social groups if both do not pursue the same essential end. Likewise, the fixation in the social class according to the data of the owned capital (including economic, social and human capital), makes us lose sight of the fact that individuals, in principle ascribable to different social classes, can lead the same form of life. That is, some in the fullest sense and others with the predicaments that lead to protest or resignation. Note that the austerity movement, for example, is in this sense no less capitalist than those towards whom the protest is

41 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996/1979).

42 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, trans. by A. E. Kroeger (London: Trübner & Co., Ludgate Hill, 1889), p. 87.

addressed. Both classes of individuals are incarnations (subjects) of the same form of life with different degrees of integration. Here, integration is understood as the process by which subjects incarnate their form of life with progressive perfection, and I take it in Sartre's sense:

> In so far as, in a synthetic unification, the part is a totalization of the whole (or of the overall totalization), incarnation is an individual form of totalization. Its content is the totalized ensemble or the ensemble in the process of being totalized [...] It realizes itself in a very real and practical sense *as totality producing itself here and now*.[43]

The subjects are individual totalization because they gradually include more practical aspects of their lives under the same totalizing principle, and therefore contribute to the totalization of the form of life in which they are contained. The subjects thus incarnate in degrees the totalizing ontological principle that drives the universal totalization, the latter being the form of life of the community with which they identify.

The question of whether a certain action can go against a form of life still needs to be asked.[44] And if the answer might well be that any action that arises as a particular project of a form of life has to be accommodated in principle to the latter, nevertheless, there might be cases in which an action in a singular situation by participating precisely in that form of life ends up denying it and suggesting its suspension or abandonment. I will briefly examine these cases in the chapter devoted to conversion (Chapter 2). In the rest of the cases, in what we can call ordinary situations, it seems that individuals act by identifying situations in accordance with their form of life. Thus, from a form of life as a freely adopted project, the action of the individual arises, an action that thereby will be part of the structure of the reality as practico-inert, contributing to the integration of the individual with his community in the mentioned form of life.

Nonetheless, one of the main points I want to make throughout this book is that although the consciousness is shot through by facticity in terms of the principle that constitutes our image of human being, the form of life with which we identify ourselves and from which we

43 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Vol. II (London and New York: Verso, 1991/1985 [1960]), p. 27.

44 Jonathan Webber, *The Existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 9.

receive our identity, does not make us less free. Moreover, it seems that, in a fundamental way, to be free is precisely to be able to act motivated by our own form of life, and more specifically by the image of human being that is enacted by that form of life (see Chapter 3, on actions and habits). However, this identification with a form of life from which the actions of the individual arise can be understood as a result of a spontaneous and free adoption of the principles that drive the actions to which we are exposed at the factual level. But, in fact, all identification seems to exclude any other alternative, in the sense that the subject acts freely even if he has only one option, as long as that option is the one he wants and with which he identifies (see Chapter 4, on conscious will and social conditioning). This proves to be a challenge to the concept of authenticity defended by Sartre. For him, to be authentic would be to recognize precisely that our form of life is superfluous, not necessary, and that, although it is freely chosen, it does not determine us as a whole. Accordingly, inauthenticity would be precisely to act as if that form of life were essential to me or my profession, to my community, my group or my nation, just like the Sartrean example of the waiter who is acting as if that were his essential way of being, as if he were nothing more than a waiter.[45] That is to say, inauthenticity and, by the same token, the self-deception in which the former is based, consists in the negation of a primordial freedom beyond our particular choices.[46]

Here we can see that for the Sartrean ethics, freedom is an essential element that is opposed to facticity, from which it flees and with which it can never be identified. But, I claim that it seems that it is in that form of life, whose fundamental principle guides me in my actions, that I can say that I am free. Freedom does not require the possibility to act otherwise. Thus, a compatibilist approach to free will emerge from these arguments (see Chapters 3 and 4). Consequently, the actions that are considered moral in my environment will be moral prescriptions for me, and I will shape the situations in which I am involved according to them. If so, these actions will be free and the form of life from which they arise can be said to have been freely chosen by the individual, because, incidentally, despite the exposure to particular behaviour and

45 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 527.

46 Walter Kaufmann, ed., *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), p. 44.

environment, it is the individual who spontaneously abides by that form of life and the principle that drives it, for as Sartre put it: 'Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.'[47]

Thus, my claim is that these Sartrean dichotomies that have been mentioned maintain a rationalist and artificial dualism that distances us from an all-encompassing conception of human beings. For Mark Meyers, this all-encompassing conception is conveyed in what he calls 'liminality': 'an ontological position that might straddle and thus mediate between the dichotomous positions of being-for-itself and being-in-itself as theorised by Sartre', for 'Sartre, at least in *Being and Nothingness*, implicitly engages the problem of liminality but does not allow it to overturn the dualism at the heart of his ontology.'[48] To suppose that subjects are somehow independent of their facticity, which they can surpass and deal with freely, or that they are independent of the community to which they belong by self-identification, is a misrepresentation no more than to think the opposite, namely, that they are *determined* by the external demands and impositions of their society. This shift away from Sartre means, among other things, capturing that common experience by which subjects, while acknowledging that a behaviour is mandatory, do not feel less free to carry it out. This indicates that the subjects feel integrated into their form of life. The subjects may become aware of the obligatory nature of certain behaviours (not having or being allowed an alternative option), but if they identify with their form of life, they will want to maintain this obligatory nature. Thus, those who identify with a religious form of life will want to maintain their habits and traditions on certain dates, such as Christmas or Easter in the West, and in the same way those who identify with a capitalist life will defend the need to maintain economic competitiveness and consumerism as purchasing power, something that will be understood as a desired necessity at the same time (see Chapters 6 and 7 regarding the subjectivity of the capitalist form of life).

The point I want to make is that the solution to Sartre's dilemma between individual and socio-cultural factors lies in thinking of that relationship as one of ontological unity, whereby subjects share or

47 Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 28.

48 Mark Meyers, 'Liminality and the Problem of Being-in-the-World: Reflections on Sartre and Merleau-Ponty', *Sartre Studies International*, 14:1 (2008), 78–105 (p. 78).

incarnate the same way of being and acting that they feel is obligatory in order to be who they *want* to be. This implies an approach whereby the form of life constitutes the subjects who freely impose the former upon themselves. Thus, the form of life becomes that unit in which the opposites of that dichotomy are synthetically united. The subjects freely give themselves a way of being and acting that constitutes their facticity. The latter, understood as a duty, is in close solidarity with desire and subjectivity. They form a unit. In a word, the form of life explains that paradoxical experience by which we want to be the one we are obliged to be, but also the resistance to act and be with respect to a form of life with which we do not identify. Hence, the separation of the two is not even possible when the subjects actually identify with their form of life as a way of being and acting shared by a community. In this sense, what society does to me can either be understood as a denial of my community as a shared way of being and acting, which I experience as a denial of my own being and identity and I resist it; or it can be understood as what one does to oneself, if by society we take the hegemonic form of life with which I identify and in which I integrate (see Chapter 5 on the concepts of hegemony and integration into the form of life).

Simone de Beauvoir soon understood that we are not absolutely free to surpass our facticity and, compared to Sartre, she tried to elaborate that synthesis by which freedom and facticity are kept in tension, as in the Hegelian dialectic: 'Perhaps the starkest difference between Beauvoir's views and those of Sartre lay in her growing conviction, evident at least as early as *Pyrrhus and Cineas* (1943), that human freedom is boundless only in principle. In reality, she was coming to see, people's choices are often hopelessly constrained by their unpromising circumstances.'[49] For this reason, she maintains in *The Second Sex* that the situation of women is one of oppression and that their own freedom is set against them:

> Society in general—beginning with her respected parents—lies to her by praising the lofty values of love, devotion, the gift of herself, and then concealing from her the fact that neither lover nor husband not yet her children will be inclined to accept the burdensome charge of all that. She cheerfully believes these lies because they invite her to follow the easy

49 Nancy Bauer, 'Introduction to "What is Existentialism?"', in Simone de Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Margaret A. Simons (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 317–26 (p. 320).

> slope [*Elle accepte allégrement ces mensonges parce qu'ils l'invitent à suivre la pente de la facilité*]: in this others commit their worst crime against her; throughout her life from childhood on, *they damage and corrupt her by designating as her true vocation this submission, which is the temptation of every existent in the anxiety of liberty* [*on la corrompt en lui désignant comme sa vocation cette démission qui tente tout existant angoissé de sa liberté*].[50]

The important thing is that here we can see already submission and freedom—I would add freedom of identification—as correlative and simultaneous. This is an advance towards a more realistic and complex vision of the relationship with our environment. The revelation of the form of life as an ontological unit underpins this relationship, because when facticity and freedom are understood as an inseparable and constitutive unit, one obtains either an attitude of voluntary 'submission' to the way of being and acting with which one identifies, by which one wishes to maintain the relationship of dependence between woman and man; or one does not identify with the form of life established as hegemonic and that shapes its facticity, in which case, the woman feels not only constrained in her freedom of action but denied in her own subjectivity, that is, in the being that she has freely given to herself. None of the latter is felt or experienced by the woman in the first case, in which what is considered to be dependence on the male is part of her form of life, with which she identifies and in which she wants to continue to integrate: in a word, she does not want it to change. Nonetheless, Beauvoir thinks that 'it must be admitted that the males find in woman more complicity than the oppressor usually finds in the oppressed. And in bad faith they take authorization from this to declare that she has *desired* the destiny they have imposed on her.'[51] But this description seems to erase the perspective of women who identify with that form of life and that, in fact, it is a destiny that they have freely imposed on themselves, or rather, that each subject of the entire community has imposed on them as the *desired* way of being and acting.[52] The attitude condemned by Beauvoir can be seen, however, in emotions that are still

50 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H. M. Parshley (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956 [1949]), p. 677. Italics are mine.

51 *Ibid*., p. 677.

52 The reader must bear in mind that when I use the term 'community', I am not referring to society, but to the subjects who share a particular form of life.

maintained today, as, for example, the *amae* in Japan, which consist of being proud of and valuing dependence on someone.[53]

If women and men learn to be women and men, it means that they do so within a form of life, and that only outside that form of life can *it* be challenged. In fact, it is from the outside that one can see the behaviour of the other form of life as that of those who *damage and corrupt* girls[54] by taking as the essence of the human being one's own form of life, which is nothing but a freely adopted way of being and acting with respect to one's own environment. Therefore, the key to understanding ourselves and others is not the notion of facticity that imposes over freedom, or the difficulty freedom has to surpass and change facticity; rather, it seems, and this is the argument of this whole book, that it is the radical notion of a form of life as an ontological unit that explains the subjectivity and the negation of it. It is from the form of life that we can understand that even what is considered as a dependency or oppression, seems to be an attitude freely adopted and desired by the subjects of that form. An attempt to change such a situation is an attempt at resistance from an alternative, non-hegemonic form of life, which struggles not to be assimilated, and the success of its struggle depends on the 'persistence' in its being, which in turn depends on other subjects following suit.

3. Cultural Phenomenology

Going beyond Sartre and Beauvoir, the relationship between the individual and society with respect to their freedom and their being has been the central theme of numerous investigations both from philosophy and from the empirical sciences. Since ancient times this question has been directed towards the search for personal identity, either through intellect, like Plato, or through faith, like St Augustine. Both solutions understood the individual as a separate or separable entity from the community. Along with them another tradition, that of cultural determinism, reached Johann Gottfried von Herder in the eighteenth

53 See Robert C. Solomon, ed., *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 39.

54 Incidentally, and rather ironically, it was Beauvoir for writing this who was seen by those subjects integrated into the hegemonic form of life (whose features I outline in Chapters 6 and 7) as damaged and corrupt. This is also proof that it is not gender but forms of life that are in a relationship of struggle.

century, and would feed the Romantic conception crystallized in the work of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel by which the individual is a blind instrument of the development of Being or Idea (*Geist*) through the nation (culture) and the state. In the last century, many studies have promoted one position or another with respect to the relationship between the subjects and their culture. This came mainly from the hands of social thought and emerging sciences such as anthropology and social psychology. The character or identity of the individuals in some of these accounts had a certain creativity with respect to their culture, as in the case of Edward Sapir, who 'argued that culture should never be seen as a superorganic entity existing over and above individuals, but could be understood only through the perceptions and responses of the various personality types who are constrained by, yet continually act upon, their world'.[55] However, in other accounts, it was the culture that dictated various modes of identity or character different from those constituted by other cultures. The latter is defended by Franz Boas' disciples, Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead. They considered culture as a totality. Individuals were determined in their own being by that totality. The feelings, actions and character of the individual were proper to and inseparable from that culture. 'Whatever the reasons for the evolution of a particular cultural form, Benedict's main point was that "most human beings take the channel that is ready made in their culture" and become the character types already provided for them.'[56] This line of thought from Sapir to Mead, together with the relativist thought that will come strengthened by Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (and especially by Richard Rorty, one of the most popular supporters of cultural incommensurability)[57] and, in some way or another, associated with the phenomenological tradition initiated by Husserl, comes to set the background of what today is considered cultural phenomenology.

The latter has sought to combine the efforts of the cultural and phenomenological perspectives, that is, the study of group conditioning

55 Charles Lindholm, *Culture and Identity* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001/2007), p. 98.

56 *Ibid*., p. 101.

57 Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of the Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980): 'views about the incommensurability of alternative theories suggested that the only notions of "truth" and "reference" we really understood were those which were relativized to a "conceptual scheme"' (p. 275).

and the analysis of individual experience. Such an approach can be seen as one of the serious attempts in the contemporary intellectual landscape to examine the human beings in inextricable union with their culture. For this reason, it is from this perspective that a rethinking of Sartrean philosophy for the study of human beings is proposed. However, first we need to elaborate a little more on what cultural phenomenology consists of and how its own current disposition requires the introduction of the ontological notion of 'form of life' for a more comprehensive understanding of human behaviour and subjectivity. Therefore, taking as our departure the contemporary uses of the term 'cultural phenomenology', I aim to examine and identify the roots of it in the phenomenological tradition.

According to my sources, the term 'cultural phenomenology' only made its appearance a few decades ago, in the field of cultural and anthropological studies.[58] Nevertheless, its principles and serious implications go back to the first studies of phenomenology and, in a loose way, to certain advances in the relativistic proposals of the nineteenth century, supported by the linguistic relativism of Wilhelm von Humboldt and the *Volkgeist* (spirit of the nation) of romantic nationalism. As such, the label of cultural phenomenology does not appear in any of the usual textbooks of phenomenology or history of philosophy. I have not found any entry on this sub-discipline in any encyclopaedia and not even in the online encyclopaedia of philosophy at Stanford University, which can certainly be highlighted by the breadth of its entries and the sophistication of the information it provides. My initial surprise at such an absence was unfounded when I realized that such a branch of study, although it deploys the phenomenological method (or certain variants of it, not always well understood), comes mainly from the empirical sciences, that is, from psychology, psychiatry and anthropology. In this sense, as one of its pioneers asserts, its first vague echo dates back to a text by Sapir, in which the renowned anthropologist recommended the collaboration of psychiatry and anthropology in the study of cultures.[59] This was intended to indicate

58 Thomas Csordas, *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994/1997).

59 Edward Sapir's article is 'Cultural Anthropology and Psychiatry', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 27:3 (1932), 229–42, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/

that the empirical study of social relations, traditions and other cultural factors could only be understood in combination with how they were processed and experienced psychologically by individuals. Psychiatry approached phenomenology in this first definition, but, obviously, it moved away from it as it consisted of an empirical study of symptoms, causes and effects.

The epigones of this first attempt to study culture from the individual and the individual from culture are those that today write about cultural phenomenology. Fundamentally anthropologists and psychologists, they are producing interesting and stimulating research in which interdisciplinarity leads them to take a novel perspective, with testimonies of individual experiences that confirm hypotheses about cultural forms or individual experiences on which general patterns of explanation are induced.[60] In parallel, in cultural and literary studies, Steven Connor, a University of Cambridge professor, has also developed a certain concept of cultural phenomenology.[61] According to his website, the term came to him in the 1990s, showing a certain claim to authorship.[62] The sense in which Connor seems to take the term 'cultural phenomenology' has to do with cultural phenomena and is fundamentally artistic-literary, through which it is possible to study the features of the culture to

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h0076025, quoted in Thomas Csordas, 'Cultural Phenomenology and Psychiatric Illness', in *Re-visiting Psychiatry*, ed. by Laurence Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson and Constance Cummings (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 117–41.

60 Kevin P. Groark, 'Toward a Cultural Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity: The Extended Relational Field of the Tzotzil Maya of Highland Chiapas, Mexico', *Language & Communication*, 33:3 (2013), 278–91; Romin Tafarodi, 'Toward a Cultural Phenomenology of Personal Identity', in *Self-Continuity: Individual and Collective Perspectives*, ed. by F. Sani (New York: Psychology Press), pp. 27–40.

61 See 'Essays at Cultural Phenomenology' by Steven Connor at http://stevenconnor.com/cp.html.

62 See Steven Connor, 'CP: or, A Few Don'ts by a Cultural Phenomenologist', *Parallax*, 5:2 (1999), 17–31, https://doi.org/10.1080/135346499249678; and his 'Introduction', with David Trotter, to a collection of essays published by *Critical Quarterly*, 42:1 (2000), 1, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0011-1562.2000.00268.x. He is also the author of a short article in the same issue of the journal entitled 'Making an Issue of Cultural Phenomenology', 2–6, which can be found at http://stevenconnor.com/cp/incipit2.htm. In the same issue, an interesting text can be found which examines cultural phenomenology from a similar approach to that of Connor, that is, from the everyday experience as particular and isolated events, not as an ontology of culture or form of life, and against a transcendental foundation of subjective experience. See Stephen Clucas, 'Cultural Phenomenology and the Everyday', *Critical Quarterly*, 42:1 (2000), 8–34.

which those phenomena belong. Thus, culture would condition what is written or done to such an extent that the reality lived and expressed by the author or agent is cultural. The cultural in a broad sense is lived as a substantial reality. To reveal the ultimate meaning of what is expressed individually by the author would require certain discrimination of that cultural meaning which constitutes it. There is no claim to a specific method or procedure in Connor's work. In his articles, he does show in a certain way what his understanding of cultural phenomenology would be, in a sense close to the existentialist literature of Sartre.

In both the literary-artistic and the anthropological-psychological versions, the term phenomenology is taken loosely regarding (linguistic) transcriptions of individual experiences of different phenomena such as sickness, depression or even their personal identity. The researcher examines in isolation the data of the informant's experience, thus depriving them of any relation to the cultural domain as a whole, which is supposed to make possible the experience. The purpose of this experience, nevertheless, is neither to reveal the ultimate meaning of the phenomenon (or object of the experience) nor to show it in its being and fundamental structure. Rather, especially in anthropological use, it serves as a complement to certain theories or social forms inferred from empirical study, or at most as a reflection at the individual psychological level of certain socio-cultural factors. In any case, the phenomenological component is reduced to psychological data with a quasi-empirical value. But, focusing on particular experiences as quasi-empirical data can never disclose the essence or constitutive principle. In Sartre's words, getting to the essence by cumulating accidents is equivalent to 'reach[ing] 1 by adding figures to the right of 0.99'.[63] The cultural phenomenology in these samples is diminished precisely in its phenomenological component. Phenomenology, essentially anti-psychological, is a discipline that seeks to show the ultimate constitution of the *world* (or culture as a life-world) in consciousness and as a procedure that seeks to reveal the foundation or being of that *world* beyond both the subjective and psychological components. This phenomenological attitude is 'the properly philosophical attitude, which critically interrogates the very foundations of experience and scientific

63 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Emotions: Outline of a Theory*, trans. by Bernard Frechtman (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948 [1940]), p. 14.

thought'.[64] In short, as cultural phenomenology, it would be a matter of starting from phenomenological experience in order to elucidate not only a cultural aspect or phenomenon but also the whole culture in its constitutive principle.

But let us continue to ask ourselves about the phenomenological component of the term cultural phenomenology, for in its philosophical tradition there was already the possibility of the phenomenological study of culture. For this, we need to make culture roughly comparable to the key notion of life-world coined by Husserl, considered the father of phenomenology, and developed in his last works, especially in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936). In response to the hitherto popular trend of the philosophy of life (Wilhelm Dilthey and Karl Jaspers) and to the emerging hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger), the German philosopher examined the type of relationship that the consciousness has with our daily life. From that examination, he concluded that the intentionality of consciousness (when an object or matter is presented to consciousness) is founded on a preconception of the world that makes subjective experience possible. The world is then the set of possibilities that are required in the background in order for us to direct our consciousness into particular experiences. It is the same concept developed by Gestalt psychologists and taken up by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). All particular perception requires a background that makes it possible: 'The perceptual "something" [*le "quelque chose" perceptif*] is always in the middle of something else, it always forms part of a "field" [*est toujours au milieu d'autre chose, il fait toujours partie d'un "champ"*]. A really homogeneous area offering nothing to be cannot be given to any perception.'[65] That background is the *world* as a set of possibilities that can take the form of assumptions, beliefs, habits, and so on. This *world*, which is not the external world of naturalist discourse but the *world* of possible experiences, is what Husserl calls the life-world

64 Evan Thompson and Dan Zahavi, 'Philosophical Issues: Phenomenology', in *The Cambridge Handbook of Consciousness*, ed. by Philip David Zelazo, Morris Moscovitch and Evan Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 67–87 (p. 70).

65 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1945]), p. 4. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 10.

(translation of the German *Lebenswelt*). It is also, in his words, the horizon where our experiences can occur or are expected to occur.[66] Husserl even ventured to establish the desirability and future possibility of a life-world science.[67] In this sense, the phenomenological study of culture was certainly already being given a charter, and therefore also what could be considered the core of a cultural phenomenology.

Despite the advance that Husserl's philosophy represents for our topic, the life-world is not the ultimate goal of his analyses but the transcendental ego or fundamental unity of consciousness on which all possible life-worlds are founded.[68] He was reproached for his transcendental turn by many of his disciples and admirers. Heidegger, in particular, would make his philosophy in firm answer and opposition to that philosophy of the consciousness whose end was a theory of knowledge. Heidegger criticized his teacher's position as being burdened by theoretical and cognitive prejudices. The life-world was for Heidegger an eminently practical world where men and women act and interact. The question is transferred now from the unit of consciousness that makes possible our experience of the world as our own world (partly cultural), to the way of being or the fundamental structure of men and women as being-in-the-world, that is, as entities whose being consists of being immersed in the world. This fundamental structure is what he calls Dasein.[69] This means, in the words of this German philosopher, a return to the general question of Being: an ontology whose centre is the human being or Dasein (although he purposely rejects the label of philosophical anthropology attributed to his work).

For the purpose of this book, the ontological turn is crucial, as it gives us the basic tools and guidance to ask ourselves about culture in its fundamental being. It will also lead us to question Heidegger's findings and explore how human beings are structurally their culture, or, better, their form of life. In fact, Dasein for Heidegger has several structural

66 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, § 37, p. 142.

67 *Ibid*., § 44, p. 155.

68 For the discussion of the unity and plurality of this notion, see Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 182; and Dermot Moran, *Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 201–03.

69 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001 [1927]), p. 27.

characteristics in his Being. The essential one is that of temporality, that is, his historicity: 'Dasein is its past in the way of *its* own Being, which, to put it roughly, "historizes" out of its future on each occasion.'[70] The human being is essentially history or biography. His being is open to new possibilities precisely within that temporal structure, the possibilities that Dasein has of being are given by his history. That is to say, his past conditions his future so that all his decisions are projections from his own biography or decisions of the past. Thus, Dasein as being of possibilities is an essentially temporary being. From this fundamental characteristic of time is derived the characteristic of being thrown into its possibilities. And such possibilities of his being are given in the world with which the human being has a kind of symbiosis, because Dasein is thrown into the world: 'As something thrown, Dasein has been thrown *into existence.* It exists as an entity which has to be as it is and as it can be.'[71] This being in the world constitutes the foundation of what can be considered cultural in Heidegger's thought, for the world in which we are and in which we project our possibilities entails an interpretation given by traditions. The interpretation that we make of the world in which we live becomes more profound and fixed in what he calls *everydayness*, a state into which Dasein falls when he stops wondering about his own being. Thus, Dasein lives in the world of the tradition, the world of the 'they': an inauthentic life. Culture would be that world of traditions and *everydayness* in which the human being lives according to the interpretations that others make of the world, the interpretations that are imposed.

On the other hand, culture in Sartre is the world shared by a particular social group, that *world* referring to the experiences possible in it and the practices that have been institutionalized. Using the dialectic of the parts and the whole, each individual is an incarnation of that group's culture.[72] Thus, a whole cultural epoch could be studied in a single individual, as its incarnation. For they establish a dialectical relationship through which the historical progress of both is constituted: 'in every totalization in progress, it is always necessary to envisage, in their dialectical

70 *Ibid.*, p. 41. This is the first definition of Dasein's historicity.
71 *Ibid.*, p. 321.
72 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert, 1821–57*, Vol. I, trans. by Carol Cosman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. ix.

relations, the direct relationship between the general totalization and the singular totalization'.[73] And this is what the French thinker is devoted to in the volumes that have as their object the biographies of Gustave Flaubert, Charles Baudelaire and Jean Genet. Sartre's phenomenology of culture is not an interpretation of a previous structure of Being as in Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, but the way in which consciousness, or for-itself, gives meaning to its existence. The cultural component is defining but it only constitutes the being of the subject in an inauthentic way. That is, the subject, as for-itself, is absence of being, and therefore any identity that is given to himself cannot but be inauthentic. For, 'the for-itself is. It is, we may say, even if it is a being which is not what it is and which is what it is not', according to Sartre.[74] The cultural phenomenology in this approach can be understood as the revealing of the cultural constitution of subjectivity; for the individual consciousness arises from that world that the members of the group have in common.

Nevertheless, his phenomenology is cultural only in a very vague sense, since the notion of culture or the whole that the parts embody is blurred. This whole that in some way constitutes the subjectivity or experiences of individuals is an undifferentiated mass that is impossible to convey analytically, made up of emotions, spiritual tendencies, moral values, praxis, and so on. It is somewhat similar to the Hegelian notion of the objective spirit of a people, which he uses to refer to Russian national culture in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.[75] For Sartre, the examination of culture through the individual and of the individual through culture can only be shown through literature, or a quasi-literary exercise such as he carries out in his biographies. In fact, the study he makes in these biographies is an attempt to show the subject's lived experience of culture as a fixed and objectified consciousness, what he calls the objective spirit, using the well-known Hegelian term: 'The Objective Spirit—in a defined society, in a given era—is nothing more than culture as practico-inert.'[76]

73 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert, 1821–57*, Vol. III, trans. by Carol Cosman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 431. Quoted in Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, II, p. 192.

74 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 79.

75 Sartre, *Critical of Dialectical Reason*, II, p. 109.

76 Sartre, *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert, 1821–57*, Vol. V, trans. by Carol Cosman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 35.

This makes culture an external reality imposed on individuals, who surpass it freely in personal ways while reproducing its constitutive structure: 'the Objective Spirit—which is culture as practico-inert—can address itself to us, even in literature, only as an *imperative*'.[77] This task is implemented with the type of existential psychoanalysis that he described in *Being and Nothingness* (1943).

Existential psychoanalysis starts from a fundamental premise that separates and distinguishes it from Freudian psychoanalysis: Sartre rejects the existence of the subconscious.[78] Therefore, the analysis does not deal with certain repressed content about the past, but rather how in the present the individual positions himself in relation to his existence, that is, what perspective he takes with respect to the facts of his existence, including the past. This is what has already been mentioned above as the subject's facticity, a term borrowed from Heidegger. In this way, what existential psychoanalysis tries to show is, on the one hand, how the perspective of the subject is configured by the worldview, values and attitudes of the entire culture in which he is inserted. In other words, the subject viewed as universal singular (*universel singulier*).[79] And on the other hand, it tries to show how to discern the particular attitudes and decisions of the subject with respect to its facticity. It is in this sense that one can read Sartre's autobiography, always in a certain internal contradiction between the individual idiosyncrasy and the cultural constituent of his being, both taken from the subject's own experience. This vision of the universal singular is crucial in any cultural ontology.

In this ontology that we are unfolding, however, several discrepancies appear concerning existential psychoanalysis. These are fundamentally in regard to the decisive role that the subject has in it. This aspect is the one that has been most exploited in the psychological and psychiatric orientation of Sartre's method; that is, the individual as the central figure who becomes aware of the way in which he sees facts that are otherwise aseptic. For only the individual endows them with meaning. Therefore, what looks like hate can become kindness. It all depends on the type of individual project; that is, the decision the individual has made regarding that particular fact. The latter is justified by the freedom

77 *Ibid*., p. 45.
78 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 52–53.
79 Sartre, *The Family Idiot*, I, p. ix.

(and responsibility) that essentially characterizes the individual as embodied consciousness. Consciousness is always spontaneous and is not determined by the outside. Its motivation is only found in itself. Existential psychology tries to discriminate between these levels of consciousness and to give back to the individuals the ability to decide by showing them that they are ultimately responsible for the qualities of their existence.[80] Now, this goal, which does not cease to have a great echo in cultural ontology, clashes head-on with the experience of the impossibility of forcing a change in the worldview and personal life of the subject as well as with the ontological predicament for which the subject is considered to be constituted by his form of life. This means to accept that every subject becomes aware of his subjectivity from a particular form of life, and therefore, that his freedoms are defined by that form of life, to the point of endowing himself with certain freedoms and not others. That is, what the subject does with his life in some way is given by the form of life with which he identifies and which he incarnates. So, separating the subject from his form of life might be impossible. Existential psychoanalysis, however, assumes this separation.

4. The Phenomenological Ontology of Forms of Life

If, in the cultural phenomenology of psychological or anthropological orientation, it was the phenomenological component that was reduced to psychological data with quasi-empirical value, in the traditional phenomenological current, it is the cultural component that is diminished or unfocused. In all of them, culture is understood as an important and defining addition, but at the end of the day, an addition on a previous transcendental structure that makes it possible: either the transcendental ego, the Dasein or the Being-in-itself as existence. The definitive question is about the foundation of the respective versions of phenomenology. In a cultural phenomenology that is purely phenomenological in the sense of aiming to reveal the structure of the phenomena, the cultural component should be that essential structure. That is to say, culture would be the foundation of such a discipline,

80 Betty Cannon, 'Sartre and Existential Psychoanalysis', *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 27:1 (1999), 23–50.

besides being the ontological constituent of the subjectivity and the *world*.

In a way, the ontological approach outlined so far means a preliminary investigation of the being of culture without any particular phenomenon of culture. What does this mean? The point is to study culture ontologically, that is, from the structural characteristics of its being. Culture can be identified with the anthropological concept of a network of symbolic/meaningful actions.[81] In this sense, the culture of a community constitutes all the activities that its members carry out. Culture thus not only presents a structural unity but also seems to stand out as a tangible object of study. Even accepting this definition of culture, it is necessary to conceive it in ontological terms, that is, in its being. In this latter sense, a cultural phenomenology that seeks to be an ontological study of culture as being, cannot focus only on the phenomenological aspects, nor can it completely disengage itself from those and seek the essence in the life of the community as a mere passing of events without synthesis or coordination.

The way I understand that this ontological character of culture can be expressed is through the concept of 'form of life'. The revival of this concept in the philosophical debate and its ontological nuance with respect to previous notions is justified by the need to study human beings in a constitutive but free and authentic relationship with the community with which they identify (and this assumes that every subject identifies with a particular way of being and acting). With this ontological conception of forms of life, the Sartrean dichotomies mentioned above are surpassed and the French philosopher's thought is made to be relevant for contemporary philosophy. This ontological turn has the advantage not only of making viable the exploration in subjects' actions of the way of being and acting of the community with which they identify, but also, and essentially, the understanding of these shared ways as the constitutive elements of subjectivity. Or, what is the same, the major premise that what subjects think, do and feel is determined in their *possibilities* by that free identification with their community. This leads to an adaptation of the efforts made by cultural phenomenology in such a way that the modifications pointed out suggest a new

81 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 5.

approach expressed rather by a phenomenological ontology of forms of life. This study is proposed as an ontological foundation for similar undertakings, such as the one launched from the historical discipline by Barbara Rosenwein in 2006, in which she has detected and examined communities of feeling in various historical periods, going against the established view that feelings and their expressions are natural. This author will be taken up again throughout the pages of this book (see Chapter 7).

5. Outline of the Argument

Now that I have identified the concept that will give unity to this book, I will proceed to outline its structure. In Chapter 1, I set the foundation for a phenomenological ontology of the form of life, taking up the Sartrean concepts that have already been defined and discussed above. I begin with an analysis of consciousness in relation to action. From the experience of the subject, the images of the projected actions emerge from the consciousness as a whole, which, as self-consciousness, constitutes itself as the image of what it is to be a human being in a community. It is from that image with which the subjects identify themselves and which constitutes their self-consciousness that they act in the world. This ontology develops and expands the Sartrean distinction between principle and series, a distinction that assumed that the being-in-itself or thing was the principle, of which the images of consciousness or being-for-itself were the series. That is to say that consciousness apprehends multiple aspects of the object, which is the constitutive principle that gives unity to all those images. However, in my analysis I propose that when the object is cultural this distinction is inverted. So if the form of life is constituted by actions, and each action is an object perceived as such, the subject's consciousness is where that action and others equally under the same totality arise. Thus, consciousness is the principle that constitutes our actions as part of a series. This phenomenological approach is based on an ontological structure that is made explicit in Chapter 1. There, I specifically elaborate the concept of a form of life as being-in-itself-for-itself. For this I again take the Sartrean terminology and expand it. So, if being-in-itself is a perceived action as an object, being-for-itself is consciousness as a totality that gives meaning to that

action. Therefore, the form of life as a series of possible actions and unity of meaning is the totality incarnated by the subject, which is in that sense also a being-in-itself-for-itself. Furthermore, this ontological constitution shows that not only does the form of life have principle and meaning in itself, but that, mediated by the latter, the subjects also have in themselves the principle and meaning of their intersubjective being and existence.

In Chapter 2, the issue discussed is the constitution of subjectivity and how it gets transformed. As to transform oneself is to cease to be what one was in order to be something different, and I understand subjectivity to be constituted by a form of life, a change in the latter entails a conversion of the subject's being and subjectivity. That is, an ontological conversion. This conversion is of great importance for existentialist writers, because in it what is at stake is what the subject is or will become; and because freedom and authenticity are defined by it. The concept of the form of life as an ontological unit gives an even greater value to conversion. For if the form of life is what constitutes the being and identity of the subject, conversion is a change of the form of life. And such a change implies a freedom to change when the demand for such a change has been apprehended, as well as the authenticity of the subject thus converted, for he avoids living in bad faith, which would imply maintaining a form of life that has been understood as impossible or at least undesirable. In this same chapter, I claim that this change is based on an ontological structure that assumes a dialectical relationship between forms of life: the previous form of life, when affirmed in action, is grasped as worthy of rejection, and in such a state the possibility of a new form of life arises. The conversion of the subject is the starting point of an integration into that new form of life. This implies the adoption of new shared habits. To the exploration of the differences and similarities between action and habits as well as their relation to the form of life as an ontological unit, I devote Chapter 3. In this chapter, the habits of the subjects as constitutive of the form of life are also analyzed from the point of view of the freedom with which the subjects adopt them and of their responsibility (not so much with respect to them, but with respect to the form of life with which they identify and of which these habits are constitutive elements). In this sense, I explore habit as a behaviour that, contrary to a certain philosophical stance and popular wisdom, is

carried out not only freely but with a certain pre-reflective awareness of our actions as informed by who we want to be.

In Chapter 4, taking as a starting point the recent behaviourist proposition (from social psychology) that there is a causal connection between the perception and the imitation of other people's behaviour, I elaborate the counterargument that it is precisely this identification with the form of life that founds our will to imitate, and not a supposed biological impulse, since we do not imitate behaviour with which we do not identify. With this line of argument I aim to show that imitation is an essential procedure for the cohesion of a community, and for this reason it cannot be a blind mechanism, but rather that the perceptual stimulus is somehow selected according to one's identification with a way of being and acting. This allows me to elaborate a compatibilist conception of freedom, in which the subjects' conscious will requires the perceptual stimulus of the actions with which they identify and which they later imitate to integrate themselves more fully into that form of life. The latter is once again central to a proposal with which I provide a different way of understanding both subjectivity and intersubjectivity. This leads me to distinguish acts that are imitated from acts that are not, so that the greater the repetition of actions governed by the same principle or the same way of being and acting, the greater the social cohesion. With our own actions we condition each other, taking into account that the actions with which we identify condition us positively, because they enable us to direct and effect our freedom through their imitation. And this explains the relevance of having role models, taking into account that they are models for a particular form of life. But if we imitate that behaviour with which we identify, the behaviour that emerges from other forms of life around us—especially if it is a hegemonic way of being and acting—conditions us negatively, offering no stimulus as a motive for our actions, and denying the ontological principle that directs our own way of being and acting, for most of our actions are principled. This last aspect will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

The philosophical journey made throughout the work leads me to illustrate with a particular case the advantages and possibilities of a phenomenological ontology of forms of life. Therefore, in Chapter 6, I examine the capitalist form of life, showing how the subjectivity of the middle class in nineteenth-century England has its origin in that way of

being and acting which subjects impose on themselves and that separates them from other forms of life incarnated by other communities. The ontological concept of the form of life contributes to the apprehension of what it meant for those subjects to be human and how their essential characteristics derived from a constitutive principle condensed into the maximization of individual economic profit and status. In this chapter, I endeavour to show capitalist subjectivity as a form of life and to highlight the modifications it experienced in the process of assimilation of other forms of life. This means that I intend to explore how capitalist subjectivity changed qualitatively in its development while continuing to persist in its ontological principle. This is shown while tracing the path through which it became the hegemonic form of life in the West. For this purpose, I start from Sartre and adapt his contributions from the perspective of the phenomenological ontology of forms of life. The development of capitalism requires studying it as a totalization in process, so that gradually more subjects and more aspects of life are assimilated under its ontological principle. I call the engine of this process 'universalization'. But this process of expansion cannot occur alone if the aim is to subject everything that is not capitalist to the principle of economic maximization. This process occurs in parallel with the assimilation of other forms of life, which enter into a situation of assimilation-resistance with the capitalist form in its aspiration to hegemony. In Chapter 5, I redefine the key concepts of resistance, assimilation, integration and universalization in order to try to capture how forms of life develop and enter into opposition with each other. I thus discuss the ideas of authors such as Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger, Johann Fichte, among others. This examination aims to reveal the ontological structure of change in subjectivity, which is ultimately the foundation of social change. My analysis leads me to rethink Sartre's dialectic and to propose a dialectic that links his approach with the Hegelian-Marxist one. Moreover, I claim that the process of integration of all forms of life is equally dialectical and contradictory, hence subjectivity is always also dialectical. This is based on the fact that the 'subjectification' of the subject depends on its 'objectification', or reification, with respect to its ontological principle. So the more one reifies, the closer one is to the ontological principle that makes one a subject, i.e. the more one becomes an instrument of God,

the more perfect the incarnation of the religious form of life; the more one becomes a commodity, the more value one has in the social market where further economic maximization can be attained; the more one becomes a work of art, the more perfect the incarnation of the artistic form of life, and so on.

I begin Chapter 7 by discussing Rosenwein's emotional communities, and then mainly explore the artistic form of life in its relationship with capitalism as a typical dialectical situation of assimilation-resistance. To do so, I focus on the figure of Baudelaire and analyze some aspects of his life and work. I show how the French poet aspires, like other artists, to incarnate Art with his own life. In other words, to identify Art with Life, so much so that the greater the reification of the poet, the greater the perfection of the artistic expression of his ideals. This is the essential structure that constitutes the forms of life. With it I submit Sartre's interpretation of Baudelaire's life to a critical analysis. On the other hand, if Baudelaire feels united with other artists in a quasi-spiritual community, his resistance is directed towards the incipient hegemonic form of life: capitalism. Such resistance I show to be ontological, for it means persistence in one's own being and identity. In this way, I reformulate the question of the loss of aura in art and lived experience that Benjamin referred to as *isolated* experience (*Erlebnis*) as opposed to *long* experience (*Erfahrung*), and suggest that such a loss was not rooted in the change of production and dominant class in the mid-nineteenth century—that is, from aristocracy to mass society—but rather captures the ways in which the subjects of a form of life relate to the hegemonic form that constrains them, in this case the artists, with Baudelaire in the lead (which is the perspective from which Benjamin argues). The *isolated* experience would refer to the way artists live in an industrialized world, where the vital principle is one of efficiency and utility for economic maximization; while the *long* experience refers to the genuine and fulfilling experience that the members of each form of life have with respect to their own way of being, feeling and acting. In the Conclusion, I take up the phenomenological ontology of forms of life, summarize the key points and discuss them critically from the standpoint of the phenomenological tradition.

1. The Phenomenological Ontology of Forms of Life

1. Introduction

I derive the conception of the form of life as an ontological unit from the ontological distinction made by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) between the principle and the series. This distinction is intended to show a unitary conception of being, for the principle refers to the being-in-itself as that which does not change and which is the condition of possibility of the series of appearances that consciousness apprehends. The distinction between the principle and the series is therefore another way of saying that if the object we experience is not the object as being-in-itself, the former is principled by the latter in our phenomenological grasp of it. This, according to Sartre, eliminates the Kantian duality between noumenon and phenomenon. The principle is not beyond the series; on the contrary, it is found constituting the series: it is in each of the elements of the series. This analysis will serve me in a fundamental way to understand human actions as objects intended by our consciousness. So, the actions I apprehend are shaped by a principle. If I have different experiences of the same action, its principle—or essence, in a general sense—will be maintained and can be grasped in it. The turn I propose at this point in the argument is that, human actions being cultural products, i.e., behaviours that are performed with a purpose that is not only individual but also cultural and social, their realization—and not only their apprehension—must require a principle that constitutes the series. The ensemble of our acts must also be a series that realizes or actualizes a principle which is in each of them and serves as their essence; it provides their unity and their coherence, that is to say, their

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0259.01

meaning. This principled series is what I call the form of life. With this shift I propose to establish a phenomenological ontology of forms of life.

In the successive sections of this chapter, I explore the consequences of the form of life now understood as a principled series. The first thing I establish is the distinction of being and meaning which completes that of principle and series. For if being is the principle that governs the series, that series takes on meaning through the principle. That is to say, if human actions are principled series, then they are actions that are performed with meaning for the one who performs them. The form of life is that unity in which being and meaning are synthetically united. For, as has been established above, it is a series of actions that are principled, that implies that without the principle not only would they not have meaning, but they would not be performed either. This leads me to examine this dichotomy from a phenomenological point of view. That is, my experience of the principled actions and of my form of life as a totality. For the series of actions that constitute my form of life can be understood as a principled series. That series constitutes my experience of my form of life. Therefore, if phenomenologically, I have experiences of each action, experiences that I call praxical images, the ensemble of my possible praxical images is a total image of my form of life, which I call anthropical image. Both are the image-consciousness, following Sartre's analysis of consciousness and imagination in *L'Imaginaire* (1940). If my possible praxical images are my possible meaningful actions, the anthropical image is the image of what it is to be human for me. The latter is the principle, in turn, that constitutes and gives meaning and coherence to the actions that I can conceive as possible for myself.

After having made my case, I submit this phenomenological ontology to critique in dialogue with a different ontology, the one held by the philosophers of new realism. I defend the ontology of forms of life against the ontology of new realism, which assumes that objects, ideas, beliefs and phenomenological experiences are equally facts. This drives me to make the ontological distinction of actuality and potentiality with respect to the praxical images (consciousness of my actions) and the anthropical image respectively (consciousness of the totality of possible actions as an image of being human). The anthropical image is the condition of possibility; the framework of meaning in which the praxical images arise. If I consider both as mere facts on the same level,

I lose the ability to establish a transcendental phenomenology, and thus to consider that my actions emerge from the consciousness I have of myself as a human being.

At this point, taking up Sartre's distinction between being-in-itself and being-for-itself, I conclude that the form of life as an ontological unit cannot be understood only as being-in-itself, for then, actions as perceived objects would be meaningless for the one who performs them. And neither can we exclude these and remain only with the being-for-itself, as the consciousness we have of our actions and the meaning they have for us, for then, the form of life would be in potentiality and not in actuality. In fact, for the form of life to exist absolutely it requires that it be understood as being-in-itself-for-itself. For not only does it have in itself its own possibility, that is, in its total consciousness or anthropical image, but also, for the ensemble or series of actions that we perform with meaning to be considered our form of life, it has to be a principled behaviour, and therefore, an object perceived and experienced with meaning. The correlate of this is that if every action is endowed with meaning, i.e., emerges as a principled action, it can only be shared as a form of life if other agents also share the principle or anthropical image from which they derive. This image is not only a self-image but also that of a human being in the midst of the world.

2. Form of Life and the Principle of the Series[1]

Sartre's onto-phenomenology, as presented in *Being and Nothingness*, gives a firm account of the nature of actions based on the distinction between the phenomenon and being. But to make more explicit the articulation between these two members of the opposition, he adduces that the phenomenon can be better considered as finite and being in terms of the infinite, what qualifies it for 'the structure of the appearance' or 'the principle of the series':

> This new opposition, the 'finite and the infinite', or better, 'the infinite in the finite' [*l'infini dans le fini*], replaces the dualism of being and

1 Sections 2 and 4 of this chapter have been expressed earlier in Daniel Rueda Garrido, 'Towards a Cultural Phenomenology of Actions and Forms of Life', *Review of Contemporary Philosophy*, 18:1 (2019), 80–118, https://doi.org/10.22381/RCP1820194.

> appearance [*l'être et du paraître*]. What appears in fact is only an aspect of the object, and the object is altogether *in* that aspect and altogether outside of it. It is altogether *within*, in that it manifests itself *in* that aspect [*Tout entier dedans en ce qu'il se manifest dans cet aspect*]; it shows itself as the structure of the appearance, which is at the same time the principle of the series [*la raison de la série*]. It is altogether outside, for the series itself will never appear nor can it appear.[2]

The first idea to be discussed is that of the infinite in the finite, which Sartre said comes to replace the phenomenological dualism: being and appearance. So if it comes to replace the old opposition mentioned, what is the contribution of this new opposition to our understanding of our phenomenological experiences? On the one hand, this new distinction gives the sense of the inexhaustibility of being, which is infinite, and thus, although within the appearance, not reduced to it. And on the other hand, to see the phenomenon as intrinsically finite is to recognize that in our experience we cannot directly grasp the being of the phenomenon, although, somehow it is as the background and the possibility for our phenomenological experience. Sartre makes a practical indication of how what is finite can be grasped as infinite. But the appearance, although finite, because it can only be understood in relation to the series to which it belongs, must be grasped as infinite: 'If the phenomenon is to reveal itself as transcendent, it is necessary that the subject himself transcend the appearance toward the total series of which it is a member. He must seize Red through his impression of red. By Red is meant the principle of the series [*le rouge, c'est-à-dire la raison de la série*].'[3] Sartre offers a powerfully intuitive statement to account for the principle or structure of the series within the phenomenological experience. And the question that he really tries to answer is the question that I need to settle to be able to consider the phenomena outside of the reductive view that conceives of them as identical to being, and conversely, thus to posit that the being of the phenomena is not exhausted within the phenomena. If we continue with the example that Sartre himself proposed, Red would fulfil the principle of my phenomenological experiences of red objects, and thus Colour would have to be the principle of my phenomenological

2 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956 [1943]), p. xlvii. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 13.

3 *Ibid*., p. xlvii. In *L'être et le néant*, p. 13.

experiences of coloured objects. And if this is true, I would have a principle for every series of phenomena. And certainly, those principles would grasp the being of the series as well as of each of its phenomena. But one question is still demanding an answer: what makes the phenomenon a phenomenon of the series? That leads us to explore the relation between the phenomenon of being and the being of the phenomenon, which can help us to understand how phenomenological images relate to their principle. The phenomenon of being is what something is itself, it refers to itself; whereas the being of the phenomenon, a more complex concept, is not what is beyond the phenomenon but a kind of condition of possibility of the phenomenon: the table exists qua table, justified in its being no more than what it appears, and 'the being of the phenomenon although coextensive with the phenomenon, cannot be subject to the phenomenal condition—which is to exist only in so far as it reveals itself—and that consequently it surpasses the knowledge which we have of it and provides the basis for such knowledge'.[4] The being of the phenomenon is thus something that does not reveal itself totally in the knowledge we have of the phenomenon. For Sartre, the being of the appearance is not just appearing; that would account for George Berkeley's approach of *esse est percipi*. He does not reduce the being of the phenomenon to what can be known of it. Our knowledge is only regarding the phenomenon of being.

But let us take one step further to provide the foundation for the next section of this work. If the phenomenon reveals being, and at the same time the being of the phenomenon is outside of it, as what does not appear, what exactly is this outside? In order to be able to answer this question, namely the relationship between the being and the appearance, Sartre adds in his analysis the third element**:** the object. Until now it has been presupposed, but now we are to identify its fundamental position within the conceptual outline just drawn. So, we could inquire for a more precise meaning of what we can hold to be outside and within at the same time, for Sartre himself indicated that what appears, that is, the phenomenon, is only an aspect of the object, but the object is altogether in that aspect and altogether outside of it. By the object, we must understand the being of what appears to us. The

4 *Ibid*., p. l. In *L'être et le néant*, p. 16.

following paragraph provides Sartre's main insight into the object to help us solve our previous inquiry:

> The object does not possess being, and its existence is not a participation in being, nor any other kind of relation. It *is.* That is the only way to define its manner of being; the object does not hide being, but neither does it reveal being. The object does not hide it, for it would be futile to try to push aside certain qualities of the existent in order to find the being behind them; being is being of them all equally. The object does not reveal being, for it would be futile to address oneself to the object in order to apprehend its being. The existent is a phenomenon; this means that it designates itself as an organized totality of qualities. It designates itself and not its being. Being is simply the condition of all revelation. It is being-for-revealing [*être-pour-dévoiler*] and not revealed being [*être dévoile*].[5]

The important notion to be addressed here is that of the identity between the object and being: the object does not reveal being, but it is being (and being is all its qualities). In the object we have the foundation of our experiences; it is considered metaphorically to be the hard rock that cannot be drilled beyond. And as the foundation does not reveal being, nevertheless it is the being revealed by the phenomena held as the essence. Being is the condition of all revelations, it is not revealed being, but being for revealing. So, in this sense, we apprehend the existent, the object, as a phenomenon, that is, as an organized totality of qualities. However, in keeping the object as the being itself, Sartre's conceptualization in its ontological scope has cancelled the possibility of dealing with cultural objects, as I hold human actions to be, for they do not designate themselves but a deeper cultural principle that can be taken as the possibility of a particular series of actions. What follows is devoted to developing further this statement.

At this point in the argument, we are ready to introduce the other key concept needed to understand the relationship between the principle or structure and the series of phenomena. Sartre conceives of a dialectical relationship between being and phenomenon in terms of potentiality and actuality: 'Thus the outside is opposed in a new way to the inside, and the being which-does-not-appear, to the appearance. Similarly,

5 *Ibid*., p. xlix. In *L´être et le néant*, ''être est simplement la condition de tout dévoilement: il est être-pour-dévoiler et non être dévoilé', p. 15.

a certain "potency" [*puissance*] returns to inhabit the phenomenon and confer on it its very transcendence, a potency to be developed in a series of real or possible appearances [*la puissance d'être développé en une série d'apparitions réelles ou possibles*].'[6] It is important to highlight that the potentiality is given to the appearance by the being which-does-not-appear. That absent being is conversely actualized by the series of phenomena, and this series can be multiplied precisely because the phenomena are the actualization of a certain being that we have already stated to be the being taken as an object, that is, as being-in-itself. This provides the real possibility of having several and distinctive experiences of the same object, and all of them can be understood as actualizations of the intrinsic possibilities of the same object, which is not exhausted in these actualizations.

If we apply the above conceptualization, related to the series and the principle, to the subject/agent of actions, then we hold that actions are apprehended as phenomena and they are in the position of showing to the subject their essence within the phenomenological experience,[7] after a reflection grounded in self-consciousness, which, according to Sartre, is the way the subject makes possible the being of the appearance: 'it is the non-reflective consciousness which renders the reflection possible [...] Thus in order to count, it is necessary to be conscious of counting [...] In other words, every positional consciousness of an object is at the same time a non-positional consciousness of itself [*la conscience non positionnelle de soi*].'[8] Only by being aware of what we are doing can we do it and only by doing it consciously can we establish the being of the phenomenological images of our doing to appear. Although that seems true of actions in terms of phenomenological images, it is not the same if we deal with a perceived action taken as an object, which, as we have shown above, is considered to be the being or principle of the series (of actions). Being does not appear itself, for it is an object. So we cannot apprehend the object as present but only as absent.[9] And here is where the Sartrean concept of nothingness or the being as non-being comes

6 *Ibid*., p. xlvii. In *L´être et le néant*, p. 13.

7 As Husserl envisaged in terms of 'being already there'; see Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. li.

8 *Ibid*., p. liii. In *L´être et le néant*, p. 19.

9 *Ibid*., p. lx. In *L´être et le néant*, 'l'être de l'objet est un pur non-être. Il se définit comme un manque', p. 27.

along, which makes possible the being of the appearances. Thus, being is concluded to be a transphenomenal being, that is, the possibility and the principle of the phenomena. Being for Sartre is thus revealed in its existence through its essence, for the phenomena of the series imply the object as the constitutive principle, which cannot be known in the way its essence is known through the phenomena, but can only be apprehended as a revealing intuition in the consciousness.

After Edmund Husserl, Sartre defines consciousness as the consciousness of something, that is, the consciousness of being conscious.[10] And that consciousness is the perfect match for being, because 'consciousness is a being whose existence posits its essence, and inversely it is consciousness of a being, whose essence implies its existence; that is, in which appearance lays claim to being'.[11] And this transphenomenal being for consciousness is itself in itself (*lui-même en soi*). The above indications of Sartre's phenomenology amount to considering the action as an object, the being of our images of it, and, thus, the principle of the series, a principle that is presupposed for the phenomenological images to be possible (and that is in itself, not designating something out of it); and finally, a principle that can only be intuited in our own consciousness, as the possibility of our experience, but that can never be reduced to our very same experience. If the object of consciousness is being-in-itself, the consciousness of the object is being-for-itself. And if the object is an action, then, the consciousness of the action (inasmuch as it is) is its meaning. Then, a series of actions that are meaningful because they share a principle is what can be denominated a 'form of life'. The form of life is, thus, the object that reveals itself insofar as its actions require meaning, for without the latter there would be no actions, that is, it is a being-in-itself-for-itself. As an object, it is being-in-itself, but, as a cultural object, it is being-for-itself, for it is an object only insofar as it is meaningful. Finally, the form of life as constitutive principle is in all the actions, but as their possibility is always beyond them.

It must be concluded that the concept of a form of life solves the Sartrean dichotomies by presenting an ontological unit in which being

10 *Ibid.*, p. lxi. In *L´être et le néant*, 'a conscience est conscience de quelque chose: cela signifie que la transcendance est structure constitutive de la conscience; c'est-à-dire que la conscience naît portée sur un être qui n'est pas elle', p. 28.

11 *Ibid.*, p. lxii.

and consciousness are necessary and complementary to the point of constituting an inseparable unity. The principle of this ontological unity is no longer being as being-in-itself—that is to say, as an external thing that always escapes us when we try to grasp it—but this thing or being-in-itself is now, as a cultural thing, principled by consciousness or for-itself. It is the turn from epistemology to the theory of action. Or, if you will, from knowledge to practical life. Being is cultural and practical, in the sense of being lived out in action. This turn puts Sartre's philosophy in the twenty-first century, in which dialogue with postmodernism, irrationalism and the technologies of life is essential. The world and humanity have definitely left behind the solidity they presented to classical philosophy, and more than ever is it urgent to understand that we are what we do and that we do what is determined by the being we have wanted to be, even without *knowing* it.

3. Actions: Being and Meaning

I claim that since actions are culturally constituted (as all action takes place in a particular socio-cultural group), then our phenomenological images of them are also 'structured' or constituted by that same cultural principle under which the actions are performed.

Following Sartre's argument, then, actions as existent are being, that is, the possibility of the phenomenon; actions have in turn an essence, but because actions are not a given in nature and rather are embedded in socially organized communities, actions are culturally constituted. Hence, the essence of being is cultural, but being is the possibility of the phenomenon, which is the one that reveals being—the phenomenon reveals being in its essence, what Merleau-Ponty calls the intrinsic characteristics of the object [*sont fondés sur quelque caractère intrinsèque de l'objet*].[12] But because the being of the phenomena is not exhausted within the phenomena, as stated by Sartre, yet it rules over the series of phenomena endowing them with unity, that is why the being of the phenomena is also the being of the series: 'it requires as phenomenon, a foundation which is transphenomenal. The phenomenon of being requires the transphenomenality of being [*Le phénomène d'être exige*

12 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1945]), p. 28. In *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 32.

la transphénoménalité de l'être]'.[13] And likewise, if the phenomenon reveals the being of an action (which is the essence of an existent), and that being is its cultural constitution (as the conventional behaviours of a form of life), then, as culturally constituted, that action is not isolated but within a network of meanings. This brings us back to the experience of the world in its cultural configuration, retracting it from the reductionist vision of empiricism; or in Merleau-Ponty's words: 'empiricism distort[s] experience by making the cultural world an illusion, when in fact it is in it that our existence finds its sustenance'. This conclusion fits with poststructuralist claims such as that of Michel Foucault, who viewed the subject as a cultural construction,[14] and partially that of Judith Butler related to gender (who denies the equivalence rather frequent in philosophical debates of poststructuralism and constructivism),[15] and generally connects with that trend of philosophical inquiries parting from Friedrich Nietzsche,[16] and together with the hermeneutic tradition itself, that holds that the world is given to us in interpretations.[17] However, if the view that I endorse is in line with the mentioned tradition, actions although cultural products are seen still as objects and thus as part of a cultural ontology. Therefore, drawing from the above, I am prepared to argue in this chapter that the phenomena (as phenomenological images of actions), although made possible by being as existent, are essentially cultural as a single phenomenon as well as a part of a series. Morover, I show that, just as in a singular action, the unity of the series of phenomena is provided by the action as an object as well as by the essential meaning of the action as it presents itself to our consciousness, so the unity of several actions is provided by a form of life and its essential meaning understood as the principle that rules the former and as their possibility of being.

13 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. L. In *L'être et le néant*, p. 16.

14 Samuel Bagg, 'Beyond the Search for the Subject: An Anti-Essentialist Ontology for Liberal Democracy', *European Journal of Political Theory* (2018), 1–37, advance online publication, https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885118763881.

15 Judith Butler, 'Reply from Judith Butler', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 96:1 (2018), 243–49.

16 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

17 For Nietzsche's constructivism, see Justin Remhof, 'Defending Nietzsche's Constructivism about Objects', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 25:4 (2017), 1132–58.

There are here some key concepts that need to be articulated within a wider phenomenological view, in particular that of Merleau-Ponty, for whom phenomenology

> is the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences [*et tous les problèmes, selon elle, reviennent à définir des essences*] [...] But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence [*replace les essences dans l'existence*], and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity'[*leur 'facticité'*] [...] It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is [*c'est l'essai d'une description directe de notre expérience telle qu'elle est*].[18]

The question that I next consider in what follows is that if actions are part of the world, and in order to give a proper account of them it requires the phenomenological reduction to essence, and if actions have a cultural genesis and principle (in terms of cultural behaviour) as even evolutionary biology have proved,[19] are we not entitled to infer that our phenomenological images of actions (essence) are culturally formed? I submit that the answer cannot be negative for human actions neither belong to a material nor to an idealistic ontology,[20] that is, actions are neither solely material nor ideal objects, but cultural. Therefore, if we hold that phenomenology searches for the essence of actions, and actions are as defined above, then their essence must necessarily entail a cultural principle (understood as the intrinsic meaning of phenomenological images and the identity and unity of the series). This last remark might be thought to conflict with Merleau-Ponty's claim that phenomenology 'places essences back into existence', if we understand existence as a bare life, but certainly is not the case if instead we hold that human life is anchored in a particular community and a particular form of life, and that, consequently, if human existence is given in a cultural world, then the existence is also cultural and thus meaningful: that is, we place essence into existence and existence into essence, without obliterating either of them.

18 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. vii. For original see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. i.

19 See Bagg, 'Beyond the Search for the Subject'.

20 See Stephen Barker and Mark Jago, 'Material Objects and Essential Bundle Theory', *Philosophical Studies*, 175:12 (2018), 2969–86.

But in order to hold that our phenomenological images grasp the action's principle, we need to admit that what we perceive is based on some intrinsic characteristics of objects and not merely associations or transfers from our inner world (as empiricism wants); then we can give a proper account of human life [*le 'monde humain' cesse d'être une métaphore pour redevenir ce qu'il est en effet, le milieu et comme la patrie de nos pensées*].[21] It is important to emphasize within this phenomenological tradition that in describing our images of actions, we are able to identify intrinsic characteristics of the action performed or being performed, and that these are not characteristics added by the subject or somehow merely a subjective construction. This claim can be supported by the well-known fact that phenomenology contests the universal synthesis of Immanuel Kant, in which the object becomes united in our experience. And that Husserl consequently believed that the object already had unity and that we experience it as united, hence the eidetic analysis means a description and not a reconstruction of the object. That is, our mind does not construct the object by means of psychological synthesis, yet the object is as such present to our intuition or consciousness, and only then can we describe it in its essential features, the noema.[22]

So far thus, we have argued that actions are part of the world I have experience of. But actions more than any other aspect of the world are qualified to be considered culturally formed. Therefore, actions, as given in my phenomenological experience, are also culturally formed in terms of being principled by a cultural construction that rules the series of phenomena. So, parting from Sartre, we find in Merleau-Ponty another source for the phenomenological approach I am here endorsing. If Sartre advanced that phenomena must have a principle that gives them structure and identity, we hold with Merleau-Ponty that the phenomenological images of actions are in fact telling us intrinsic characteristics of them, characteristics that informed the images and that can be known by reflection upon its description. And to that point, the horizon of the world is the horizon of the consciousness.

21 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 28. In *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 32.

22 *Ibid*., p. 10.

4. The Image as a Synthetic Unit

Sartre, in his work *L'Imaginaire* (translated as *The Psychology of Imagination*, 1948), in which he follows Husserl and Heidegger in crucial points, proposes that imagination is the essential structure of human consciousness, although not its only function. In this way, consciousness is a stream of images with which we (as situated consciousness) present objects to ourselves. These images are syntheses of different aspects and are not inside our mind, a fallacy that he calls the 'illusion of immanence', but the images themselves are our consciousness, that is, they are the matter and form of our consciousness.[23] Following Husserl, he distinguishes between matter (or *hylé*), which can be physical or psychical, and form, which is always that of being a representative entity, that is, the form of the image is to be an analogue of the object to which it is intentionally directed. This relationship is the intentionality of consciousness. Thus, to describe images is to describe how consciousness, in terms of 'complex structures', 'intends certain objects'.[24] Specifically, therefore, the images whose material is psychical, the French philosopher will tell us, are what we call mental images,[25] but he introduces within the group of images equally those

23 Sartre's criticism of the so-called 'illusion of immanence' can be traced back to the philosophy of Henri Bergson. See Henry Somers-Hall, 'Bergson and the Development of Sartre's Thought', *Research in Phenomenology*, 47:1 (2017), 85–107.

24 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948 [/1940]), p. 8.

25 The concept of mental image, although it is the hegemonic psychological concept until the nineteenth century, already in the times of Sartre was seriously discredited by the incipient behaviourism, a tendency defended equally by relevant philosophers of the analytic tradition such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Gilbert Ryle, who rejected the concept of mental image as the meaning of linguistic signs. It will be in the 1960s and 70s, with the emergence of the computational and functionalist theory of the mind, that the revival of the mental image concept occurs. Briefly, I will point out that the debate about the nature of mental images is still open today. This debate is broadly established between three proposals: (1) The quasi-pictorial or analogous theory, defended by Stephen Kosslyn, William Thompson and Giorgio Ganis, in *The Case for Mental Imagery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), which models the image as a digital photo in which the spatial distances of real objects are maintained. (2) The propositional-descriptive theory represented by Zenon Pylyshyn, who opened the debate in 1973 and who refutes the concept of mental images and proposes instead a sort of computational representation of unknown lexicon and syntax, as a *mentalese* (in Pylyshyn, 'Return of the Mental Image: Are There Really Pictures in the Brain?', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7:3 [2003], 113–18). (3) The enactive theory, which conceives the mental image as a

that are constituted by a physical material, such as paintings, sculptures, imitations, performances, and so on.

As is well known, the French philosopher made an early distinction between two levels of consciousness, that would be a fundamental concept in his work *Being and Nothingness* (1943) and that he would never abandon throughout his later work (perhaps with the exception of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*). These two levels of consciousness are that of pre-reflective consciousness and that of reflective consciousness. Although this distinction becomes more complex in later works, briefly, for the purposes of this section, it is sufficient to indicate that the pre-reflective consciousness is that which serves as a condition for the possibility of reflective consciousness, and in which a judgment has not yet been realized about the existence or not of the object; for that reason, he also denominates it non-positional consciousness (a notion that cast aside the Freudian unconscious). Reflective consciousness, also called positional consciousness, on the other hand, expresses a judgment about the object and is built on pre-reflective consciousness. The pre-reflective consciousness is the foundation of the reflective, and, as he says in *Being and Nothingness*, the cogito of Descartes is not really the ultimate foundation, because the cogito in the expression 'I think, then I exist' can only be given as a reflection on the consciousness of thinking. And that thought prior to reflection is a non-reflective thought, which in *The Psychology of Imagination* equates to the imaginative consciousness. The image is considered to be the essential structure of consciousness and thought, and that is why Sartre wrote: 'The concept can appear as pure thought on the reflective level, and on the non-reflective level, as an image.'[26] The concept as non-reflective consciousness is an image, therefore, constitutes our thinking and this, as has been stated by different authors recently, relates it to the foundation of thought made by Johann Fichte through the logic of images,[27] who, on this background, could

cognitive function parallel to that of perception, that is, by means of the activation of the same processes that are activated when we have before us an object to perceive; see Nigel J. T. Thomas, 'Are Theories of Imagery Theories of Imagination? An Active Perception Approach to Conscious Mental Content', *Cognitive Science*, 23:2 (1999), 207–45. See also, Robert R. Holt, 'Imagery: The Return of the Ostracised', *American Psychologist*, 19:4 (1964), 254–66.

26 Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, p. 162.

27 Sartre's approach resembles Fichte's Science of Knowledge (*Wissenschaftslehre*), where he supports a logic of images. For Fichte, mental images are pre-reflective

affirm 'that nothing can get into the understanding except through the power of imagination'.[28]

Since images constitute our thinking at a pre-reflective level of consciousness, before elucidating their role in the understanding of action, it is necessary to show what are the elements that intervene in the creation of the image as a synthetic unity. These elements are intentionality, knowledge, feelings and movement.

Some of the key concepts used by Sartre in his phenomenology are taken from Husserl, as is the case with intentionality, a concept that for the French author was undoubtedly one of the great contributions of Husserl (drawing on Brentano's idea). This concept, as it is known, allows a third way to the alternatives of idealism or realism. The real, external object, which is posited as existing and philosophically necessary, as Fichte also maintained (at least in his works of the Jena period),[29] is an object that consciousness reaches by presenting it as an analogue, that is, consciousness presents itself as an analogue or representative of the real object. To identify the object of consciousness is what Sartre, with the phenomenological tradition, called intentionality: 'The mental image does envision a *real thing* [*une chose réelle*], which exists among other things in the world of perception. But it envisions that thing by means of a mental content [*à travers un contenu psychique*].'[30] This mental content is what Sartre calls the analogue, which is 'as an equivalent of perception' when we cannot bring to us directly the object

thinking on which are based our reflections, according to Alessandro Giovanni Bertinetto: 'The intellect, for Fichte, is the understanding of this structure that we have just performed in virtue of our reflection on the image. [...] The basic and genetic structure of thinking is the *image* as synthesis of intuition and concept and as unity/difference with the being.' See Bertinetto, 'The Role of Image in Fichte's Transcendental Logic', in *La question de la logique dans l'idéalisme allemand, Europaea Memoria: Studien und Texte zur Geschichte der europäischen Ideen*, ed. by Guillaume Lejeune (Bruxelles: Olms Verlag, 2013), pp. 94–108 (p. 100). For a comparison between Sartre's and Fichte's philosophies, see Lucia Theresia Heumann, *Ethik und Ästhetik bei Fichte und Sartre*: *Fichte-Studien, Supplementa* (New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009).

28 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, trans. by A. E. Kroeger (London: Trübner & Co., Ludgate Hill, 1889), p. 231.

29 See Tom Rockmore, 'Fichte, German Idealism and the Thing in Itself', in *Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 9–20 (pp. 17–18).

30 Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, p. 76. In *L'imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940), p. 110.

as a perception.[31] But in addition, he maintained that the appearance of the object intended by the consciousness was made possible by elements that formed its materiality. The first one is the knowledge of the object that the consciousness intends to present to itself; in fact, all intentionality is intentional knowledge, for we can only think about what we know and in the way we know it, so the consciousness presents the object according to the knowledge it has of it, and it is, in fact, an act, for 'it is what I want to represent to myself', and thus, 'an image could not exist without a knowledge that constitutes it'.[32] And that is why the knowledge we have of an object precedes the knowledge as a constituent of the image, for the former is only knowledge of relations and meaning, while the latter is an imaginative knowledge: the knowledge in a free state (not yet contributing to the synthetic unity of the image), as mere meaning, becomes imaginative knowledge in order to foster an image-consciousness. This knowledge, as we shall see below, is given by the situation in which consciousness is found as being-in-the-world, a concept borrowed from Heidegger and developed by Sartre in his own particular way.

The feelings are also consciousness of something; that is to say, they also intend an object that is thus transcendent to our consciousness. Because he distinguishes between reflective and non-reflective consciousness, feelings enter also within this distinction. The feeling of hatred is not the consciousness of hatred: it is the consciousness of Paul as hateful (Sartre's example). That means that the non-reflective consciousness is already charged with certain feelings evoked together with the object as analogue: an emotive consciousness that only by reflection becomes object of itself, or in Sartre's words, 'a feeling is not an empty consciousness [*une conscience vide*]: it is already a possession [*il est déjà possession*]. Those hands present themselves to me under their affective form.'[33] And thus, when we desire an object, because we can only desire what already has moved us affectively, '[my] desire is a blind effort to possess on the level of representation what I already possess on the affective level'.[34] With regards to movements (what

31 *Ibid*., p. 23.
32 *Ibid*., p. 81.
33 *Ibid*., p. 101. In *L'imaginaire*, p. 141.
34 *Ibid*., p. 102.

brings us closer to the envisioning and performance of actions), the kinaesthetic impressions that we have when we write, for example, are analogues of an imaginative consciousness, since, for a movement to be completed, the image-consciousness of the complete movement seems to be required. Referring to the looping movement when drawing an eight, Sartre illustrates the point with this remark: 'If I envisioned eight as a static form through the movement, it will naturally be this form only that will be unreally visualized on the real kinaesthetic impressions'.[35] In this case the protentions of the drawing (to use a word indebted to Husserl's phenomenology of temporality), that is, the movement of a loop, can be grasped only if it is operated alongside an imaginative loop, and the direction of the loop is the meaning of the movement (that means also that knowledge about how to draw an eight is required).

We are now prepared to face the role that imaging consciousness can have for the understanding of a particular human action. Initially I follow Sartre in his description of the act of imitation or the actor's performance, a description that provides an important strategy for understanding the action carried out by another person. When an actor plays a role, that is, performs an impersonation, the body movement and everything that the actor wears and does become signs that carry meaning; our consciousness of those signs motivates the image-consciousness of the character that the actor is interpreting. It is not perception itself that causes our image of the character, but our consciousness of the meaning of the signs, the latter being real objects. The essential role of the sign is that of guiding and orientating the consciousness: 'They must clarify and guide consciousness.'[36] The consciousness of meaning, aided by the knowledge that we have of those signs, motivates the imaginative consciousness by which we bring before us not the actor but the character that he is impersonating. But the crucial point is 'how there takes place the functional transformation of the perceptive object from the state of significant material to that of representative material'.[37] Actually, it is the affective meaning, that Sartre calls the *sens*, what gives unity and density to the signs perceived, that is, the intentional knowledge of the signs awakens an affective reaction which

35 *Ibid*., p. 115.
36 *Ibid*., p. 36.
37 *Ibid*., p. 35.

is incorporated in the intentional synthesis from the very beginning; this *sens* is a feeling which constitutes our imaging consciousness of the object as a particular character (expression of the object's presence), in the same way that, while one painting of Venice makes us feel that it has grasped the *sens* of Venice, another painting does not (the *sens* is thus the emotions that accompany the image-consciousness and provides its identity and presence). Therefore, according to the above, the material of the imitation is the human body, which is the analogue of the unreal object (the image-consciousness of the actor's performing character): 'The transformation that occurs here is like that we discussed in the dream: the actor is completely caught up, inspired, by the unreal [*l'acteur est happé, inspiré tout entier par l'irréel*]. It is not the character who becomes real in the actor, it is the actor who becomes unreal in his character [*c'est l'acteur qui s'irréalise dans son personage*].'[38] The actor himself with his body, his words and affections becomes an analogue of the character. And the same happens when the actions of other people are imitated; in that case, the actions we perform are analogues to the images of those actions (as synthetic unity of our knowledge and feelings). So, by imitating the actions with which we identify ourselves, we become unreal through their analogues, and we are possessed by their unreality.[39]

The phenomenological description that Sartre presents to us of how we understand an action supports our conviction that consciousness can give us the keys to the study of human actions. So far I have focused on the explanation of how our imaging consciousness accesses the fundamental features of the character represented by the actor. And I added that in a certain way it can be understood that in society, when we imitate the behaviours of others and even our own, like the actors, we use our body, feelings and words as analogues of the action that our imaging consciousness has brought in front of itself. From now on,

38 *Ibid.*, p. 278. In *L'imaginaire*, p. 368.

39 Flynn insisted on the use of the word 'irreality', a closer translation of the French *irréalité*, instead of 'unreality', which, however, I here deploy because it is used in the English version of the work and thus also the quotations I make from it. In any case, it is important to understand unreal/irreal as the object of our imaging consciousness which is presented to us in its absence in opposition to the real objects of perceptual consciousness. See Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre: A Philosophical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 108.

I shall call the image of an action a praxical image, that is to say, that activity by which consciousness intends a certain action as an absent object.

There is, however, still a need to discuss how our consciousness of action responds to action as a real object, that is, as being-in-itself. It seems obvious that if our image-consciousness is constituted by our intentionality, knowledge and affections, a description of it, can say much about us as subjects, but can it tell us also something about the action itself, that is, about the characteristics of the action and who is doing it? In this last sense, it must be advanced that for the phenomenological ontology of Sartre, consciousness, due precisely to the intentionality, captures the essential features of the object (in this case, of the action) through a noematic reduction and insofar as we intend it as a distinctive object. Thinking of a behaviour like eating with chopsticks, first requires that we have knowledge about that practice so that we can bring it before us, and in fact, we will bring it in an affective modality, be it attraction, interest, rejection, and so on. But the truth is that our knowledge may not be complete and correct, for our feelings may be ill-founded. As we said above, therefore, the imaging consciousness of that practice will say much about the subject and something general about the real object, the being-in-itself, which will not be exhaustively assimilated. So, what guarantees can we expect for the knowledge of an action? The difficulty would be that the real object that we intend to bring before us, as an object of perception is exhausted in its externality and lack of meaning, and as an image, requires that the real world be denied or placed in parentheses, thus constituting a world in which this image makes sense. That image-consciousness can only appear if the real has been annihilated and has been made a situated world, Sartre will tell us. But what is the relationship between the image and the world, and both with regard to the real? And how can the consciousness of my actions teach me something about myself and my world, if not about the action itself as an image?

This means that to be able to think of an action, I must put the action itself in parentheses, and induce a totality in which such action could have meaning. That is how Sartre put it regarding an image in general:

> An image, being a negation of the world from a particular point of view, can never appear except on *the foundation of the world* and in connection

> with the foundation [*ne peut jamais apparaître que sur un fond de monde et en liaison avec le fond*] [...] it is just this being-in-the-world [*être-dans-le-monde*] which is the necessary condition for the imagination.[40]

This totalization is not of the whole world but of a given situation or the world from a perspective, in which this and other actions could be constituted as a whole. Such a totalization does not refer to the universal man capable of performing the particular action we want to understand, but a man in a given situation; that is why to that totalization I call the anthropical image as the specific image of human being that is projected in the particular action with which there is some identification. This anthropical image is then also the correlate principle of a certain form of life, understood as the set of actions as real objects or beings-in-themselves. In the next section, I turn to these two concepts and how they narrow down the claim for the revealing of a form of life as a meaningful being.

5. Praxical and Anthropical Images

So far, we have characterized the phenomenological method used by Sartre and we have faced some of the questions that arose when using it to understand human actions. We must emphasize that from the phenomenological approach proposed by Sartre in his early works and especially in *The Psychology of Imagination*, the study of actions, such as that of objects, seems unable to show more than a certain intelligibility of one's consciousness and the world within which the objects are intended. It tells more about the subject than about the world and the objects. Nevertheless, already in the mentioned work, an ontological approach is envisaged, indebted to Heidegger, which in *Being and Nothingness* will take on greater clarity and definition. It is from this essentially dialectical and negative approach that I propose we should now depart for the study of human actions and the outline of a philosophy of forms of life.

Before examining human actions from the phenomenological method, it is necessary to indicate the core problem from which some of its difficulties arise. The problem can be expressed through the assertive proposition that 'consciousness cannot be a faithful instrument

40 Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, p. 269. In *L'imaginaire*, p. 356.

of investigation of external reality'. The phenomenological approach proposed by Sartre is an approach in which the image-consciousness teaches us nothing. This idea is repeated on different occasions throughout his early work, both in *The Psychology of Imagination* (1948) and in *What is Literature?* (1949). And, in fact, it means that we cannot grasp out of the image anything that we did not know before or that we have not posited. But is it true that the image does not teach us anything? Does not perhaps teach us the limits of our knowledge and the intentionality of our feelings? And even more, does it not teach us the partiality of our perspective and, therefore, the situation from which we realize our understanding? At the very least, the image teaches us about our consciousness and our form of life through a reflective position. And although we admit that the image does not teach us details of the real object and does not even teach us anything general that we did not already know in some way (due to the feature of unreality of the object), the truth is that the constitutive intentionality of the image does teach us something, I claim: it teaches us what we should hold as *the essential and defining elements in the object*, otherwise, we could not even think of it. For example, when we think of chopsticks, we have *in front of us* an image of long or short sticks, white or coloured, being used or not, and so on; but the essential features of the chopsticks can be described if, in fact, we are thinking of chopsticks. Sartre himself takes this ontological position from *Being and Nothingness* onwards, and clearly in *The Family Idiot* as this quotation proves:

> While a part of the object *is revealed as it is*, by revealing to us what we are (that is, our relation to it and our anchorage), we can hope, at the end of an extended quest, to achieve that reciprocity of position (the object defining us to the same degree that we define the object) which is the truth of the human condition.[41]

According to this, and taking Sartre's theoretical apparatus further, the image can lead us to understand not only certain ontological laws of human action as a cultural product, but it can also show us the way to understand the content or meaning of actions principled by the form of

41 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert, 1821–1857*, Vol. V, trans. by Carol Cosman (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1972]), p. 5. The italics are mine.

life as a synthetic totalization, that is, as an anthropical image, pointing thus more than to a general anthropology (which would be the aim of Sartre's quotation above, that is, *the human condition*), to a philosophy of forms of life.

Returning, then, to the difficulties that this task presents, it is convenient, to begin with, to draw attention to the image that the agent has of his own action, for, by means of it, I will relate to the three criteria or laws for the study of actions. In this case, we refer to the image that the agent has formed in his pre-reflective consciousness and by which the action to be performed appears before him. But this action, as a praxical image, is not exactly what is realized in reality, for the real action, with its real consequences, is formed as an analogue to the praxical image, following Sartre in his description of the impersonation and the works of art. And, in fact, extracting consequences for the study of action, the praxical image could be the analogue of a real action, and, at the same time, the unreal object that is intended to be *translated* into reality by the representative entity or analogue that is the action performed by the agent himself. In this case (as well as in the case that the praxical image does not become a real action), the agent, as a real person, would have become unreal, since he would have been possessed by the unreal object that is the praxical image. But the unreality of the agent, insofar as it depends on the unreality of the praxical image that he tries to bring to reality, can only be given by the postulate of a world in which this image is possible and from which it receives its meaning. The praxical image, therefore, to appear, presupposes the constitution and negation of reality as a world: 'to posit the world as a world or to "negate" it [*poser le monde comme monde ou le néantir*] is one and the same thing'.[42] And that *world* postulated by the praxical image as the whole with respect to the part, that *world*, I say, is an enveloping totalization with respect to the agent, and, as such, is prior to the praxical image and, therefore, it is its condition of possibility. This totalization is, thus, a unit of meaning that, as the motive of all its possible images, is equally unreal. The possibility of the appearance of an image requires that totalization, which constitutes the intentionality, knowledge and feelings of the potential images.

42 Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, p. 267. In *L'imaginaire*, p. 354.

This totalization is, from the point of view of the agent, necessary for the realization of his action, for it is necessary for the appearance of the image of his intended action or praxical image.[43] I take this as a necessary condition for understanding and performing actions, and I denominate it the *law of totalization*. In this sense, the image requires an identification with the *world* that it is a part of. And this identification is reproduced when the agent thinks about the action, for the action arises and is made possible by this totalization, which, in turn, is the set of possible actions to which we refer as a form of life. But this form of life, as an unreal whole, expresses a way of being human, or set of all possible praxical images. As we said above, to give more precision to my conceptualization, I call anthropical image to that enveloping totalization. And, just as between the image and the totalization there is a relation of identification, the agent establishes (or reinforces) an identification with the whole when performing an action that is made possible by it. But when this identification does not obtain, but the action is required, the agent becomes alienated (this is an issue I will deal with in following chapters). We can refer to this principle or law of action as the *law of identification*.[44] The actions that are performed under this identification with the totalization tend to be constituted in proper habits, and these are those that, in turn, reinforce the form of life as a totality. And since the image is made possible by that synthetic unit that I have called anthropical image as a correlate of a form of life, the identification with it entails an imitation of those actions that appear as images, whether of actions performed by the agent himself

43 Following Sartre, I distinguish also between totality, as a fixed and external whole, and totalization, viewed as a whole in which the subjects integrate themselves progressively throughout identification. The former, I use in relation to actions and forms of life (being-in-itself or what is seen as necessary), and the latter, in relation to praxical and anthropical images (being-for-itself or what is seen as possibilities). For reasons that will become clearer as the reading progresses, because the form of life is a being-in-itself-for-itself, as a totalization it is at the same time always a totality, in the sense of containing possibilities that become necessary and vice versa, necessities that are the condition of possibility of further integration.

44 This law of identification has been endorsed throughout the history of philosophy by many authors, but recently, in the philosophy of action and mind, it is probably Harry G. Frankfurt who is its most prominent supporter, interpreting it as a 'second order desire' (reflection on and identification with the first order desire), which is the key concept for a compatibilist theory of free will, as I have already mentioned in the 'Introduction'. See Harry G. Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', *Journal of Philosophy*, 68:1 (1971), 5–20.

or another agent. As the possible actions for the agent depend on the synthetic totalization that constitutes their images, the *law of imitation* presupposes in the agents a tendency to imitate the actions of their form of life through analogues of their praxical images, which in turn, takes possession of them (as Sartre viewed the possession of actors by the unreal, the character represented).[45] These three laws, or criteria, of totalization, identification and imitation, I claim, are necessary to understand human action, which turns into habits throughout the process. It provides us with an understanding of human action from the point of view of the agents themselves, as well as their motivations for action, since it is the synthetic totalization that I call anthropical image, insofar as it is the condition of possibility of all images, which must be taken as the motivational principle of the latter; the real action as a being-in-itself is never a motive for the image.

However, the laws of action that have been described do not yet form a philosophy of forms of life, because this requires not only the way in which we perform the actions, but also precise contents that can become a description of what a human being is. A general anthropology would then require universal contents, a demand that we have tacitly denied when we realized (taking Sartre's ideas further) that our images constitute a synthetic unit or anthropical image that is the experiential correlate of a form of life. That is to say, and here we echo the ontological stance of Sartre, our praxical images and our anthropical image, although they are not caused by the actions of the form of life as real objects (the form of life would be a set of actions with a common ground), they do presuppose their existence, and the images necessarily appear as an illumination of that real world from which they distance themselves to take perspective.[46] Therefore, the image, although it does not correspond to the action as a real object in its details, does bring before us the intentional meaning, which can be taken as the essence

45 Among the authors who have argued in favour of a law of imitation as the principle of social actions is Gabriel Tarde, *Le lois de l'imitation* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1921), and William McDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology* (Kitchener, ONT: Batoche Books, 2001 [1919]).

46 Sartre seems to follow closely here, as in other parts of his thought, what Fichte endorsed in his doctrine expressed in *The Science of Knowledge*: 'image is not at all possible without a thing; and a thing—at least for the Ego—is not possible without an image' (p. 225).

of the object in question.[47] Thus the meaning of our images, made possible by that synthetic unit of our consciousness that I have called the anthropical image, always presents us with those praxical images that pertain to an imaginative totalization correlated with the actions of our form of life. So a general anthropology would be limited by those laws that we have called the laws of totalization, identification and imitation, because the agents only conceive and imitate actions that are part of the anthropical image with which they identify themselves. In this way, a description of the contents of human actions can only be carried out through an approach of partial totalities, that is, through a phenomenological ontology of forms of life. This does not mean that the agent cannot think of actions that belong to other forms of life, because, of course, as agents, we intend actions according to our real exposure to other forms of life. This only means that in order for these praxical images to be meaningful and to be freely and spontaneously brought into the real, the agent seems to require a kind of identification with them and with the anthropical image that principles them.

6. Form of Life and New Realism's Ontology: A Discussion

In this section, I would like to submit this phenomenological ontology of forms of life to confront with the recently emerged trend in philosophical ontology known as new realism. In refuting the homogeneous notion of reality as well as the status given to actions within this contemporary philosophy, I conclude that the phenomenological images of our actions are already invested with 'cultural' meaning and that they are ontologically diverse from their principle of being as actuality and potentiality respectively.

The new realism is a contemporary contribution of philosophers from different countries gathered around the idea of an ontology against that

47 The Sartrean onto-phenomenology appears as a third way between phenomenology and speculative realism. For this debate, see Lorenzo Girardi, 'Phenomenological Metaphysics as a Speculative Realism', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 48:4 (2017), 336–49; and Dan Zahavi, 'The End of What? Phenomenology vs. Speculative Realism', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 24:3 (2016), 289–309.

of postmodernism and hermeneutics. Their more outstanding members are Maurizio Ferraris, who wrote the *Manifesto of New Realism* in 2012,[48] Giuliano Torrengo and Markus Gabriel. In this section, I mean to present and discuss briefly some of Ferraris' proposals on social ontology and human actions.

Ferraris shares new realism's ontology in his social approach. According to new realism, everything that is the case is real, and thus exists.[49] Ferraris makes a first distinction between what he calls ὠ-reality: 'what is there whether we know it or not, and which manifests itself both as a resistance and as positivity',[50] and ε-reality: 'the reality linked to what we think we know about what there is'.[51] The first is an ontological reality, and refers to facts, while the second is an epistemological reality, and indicates the relation between the subject and the first type of reality, and the way in which we know it, which also is real regardless if it is true or false. In this fashion, new realism overlaps epistemology and ontology. New realism, as seen in Ferraris, distinguishes reality as facts from reality as it is known by subjects. If there are facts, then reality cannot be reduced to interpretations modelled by the subject, and this assertion goes against what Markus Gabriel calls constructivism: 'Constructivism assumes that there are absolutely no facts in themselves and that we construct all facts through our multifaceted forms of discourse and scientific methods. There is no reality beyond our language games or discourses.'[52] Within this ontology, Ferraris distinguishes four categories of objects: 1) Natural objects, which exist in time and space independently of the subjects; 2) Ideal objects, which exist outside space and time independently of the subjects; 3) Artefacts, which exist in time and space depending on the subjects for their genesis; and 4) Social objects, which exist in time and space depending on the subjects for their genesis and their persistence.[53] So, they claim that there are natural (stones, water, etc.) and ideal objects (numbers), which do not depend

48 Mauricio Ferraris, *Manifesto of New Realism* (New York: SUNY Press, 2015 [2012]).
49 Markus Gabriel, *Why the World Does Not Exist* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), p. 7.
50 Mauricio Ferraris, 'New Realism, Documentality and the Emergence of Normativity', in *Metaphysics and Ontology Without Myths*, ed. by F. Bacchini, S. Caputo and M. Dell'Utri (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), pp. 110–24 (p. 111).
51 *Ibid*., p. 110.
52 Gabriel, *Why the World Does Not Exist*, p. 3.
53 Ferraris, 'New Realism, Documentality and the Emergence of Normativity', p. 112.

on the subjects existing, while artefacts and social objects depend on subjects existing. Therefore, new realism's conceptualization poses to my proposal some unavoidable questions, regarding 1) The status of actions in terms of being and meaning, or meaningful beings; and 2) The ontological status of praxical and anthropical images.

Regarding the ontological status of actions, for new realism actions, as depending on subjects, are social objects themselves, for promises and promulgations of constitutions are both social objects. And that they are objects means they are entities, which in addition, are brought about within a social community and life. The existence and persistence of these objects depend on subjects existing, although as objects they are real, regardless of our knowledge of them, and thus they belong to the ὠ-reality; so, if actions, as endorsed in this chapter, are culturally constituted objects, are they also real regardless of our apprehension of them? The question requires that we focus on the phenomenological distinction between existence and essence in relation to actions. If new realism proposes the definition of social objects within the ontology in which objects are facts independently of our knowledge of them, I have argued that although actions are objects as existent and as the possibility of our praxical images, at the same time, only through our praxical images of them can they be (in essence), for I can only recognize an action as such if I apprehend it in its essential image, that is, in its cultural meaning. However, the possibility of their being existent is not reduced to my apprehending of them, but also requires the form of life in which that action has been generated, which entails the apprehension of the series of praxical images that are in potentiality within the anthropical image. In other words, actions are not isolated facts, which the sole denomination of facts requires, and actions would be isolated indeed if it were not because they are meaningful, and their meanings are connected in a network of connotations that constitute that image (essentially meaningful) that I denominate the anthropical image. Only by looking at actions as being and meaning, I argue, can we make sense not only of actions as essentially cultural objects, but also of the forms of life they constitute. Hence, cultural constructivism requires ontology and vice versa: the study of intrinsically meaningful objects. Therefore, because I put forward in previous sections of this chapter that actions are non-being if they are not for us and they are not given

in their essential meaning to us in our experience of them, I refute new realism's view on the grounds of this lack of insight regarding actions being intrinsically cultural and thus essentially connected to a network of meanings: bare actions are merely existent, non-being.

Regarding the ontological status of praxical and anthropical images, for new realism everything is real, and even our thoughts are facts,[54] in the sense that they have a certain ontological consistency regardless of our apprehension of them and thus beyond epistemological considerations, as expressed by Markus Gabriel: 'New realism assumes that thoughts about facts exist with the same right as the facts at which our thoughts are directed. Thoughts about facts are just more facts.'[55] If what Gabriel says is correct, then we can infer that actions are facts and in the very same logic the meaning of the actions as given to me in my apprehension of them is also a fact: The meaning of the praxical image is a fact. But what does it mean that the meaning is a fact? Although it is a sort of given, we can define a fact as something that exists (minimal definition). So, according to this definition, at least, at first sight, we cannot say that meaning exists, as in the essential meaning that we take the praxical and the anthropical image for, and the reason is that they precisely are the essence of an existent. However, we could call the essence also the being of the object (actions) as Sartre does, and thus we could rightly say that the being of the form of life is the anthropical image and the being of the actions are the praxical images. Could this allow us to conclude that both praxical and anthropical images are facts? We must bear in mind one observation before we answer that question. As can be derived from the definition above, facts are all facts, there are not types of facts or different ways of being a fact. Gabriel himself has been quoted conveying that 'thoughts about facts are just more facts'. Hence, if we give our approval to the definition of praxical and anthropical images as facts, we are saying that they have the same ontological consideration as bare actions (existent) and forms of life, and also that there are no distinctions between them, which we have proved above are respectively the series and the principle of the series. However, that does not seem a sound argument for, on the one hand, if the meaning and the object

54 Bernardo Kastrup, 'On the Plausibility of Idealism: Refuting Criticisms', *Disputatio*, 9:44 (2017), 13–34.

55 Gabriel, *Why the World Does Not Exist*, p. 6.

are equally facts, the relationship between being and essence is broken down, which in itself could be accepted, but not the consequence of it: if both are facts, both can be apprehended separately and with no relation to each other, but how can I apprehend a meaning independently of the object or the essence independently of the existent? And likewise, on the other hand, if praxical and anthropical images are facts (because they are meanings or thoughts), that ontological homogenization erases also the different modes of being from each of them. If both are meaningful images that stand for the essential meaning of an existent, the relationship between them is of potentiality-actuality, for the praxical image is the meaningful image I apprehend in my phenomenological experience of an action, but the anthropical image is the principle of it and of the remainder of the series, which unifies the praxical images from their being in potentiality. The praxical image actualizes both the anthropical image, as the ultimate meaning that every praxical image within the series connotes, and the very being of the action in our consciousness as praxical image. Likewise, the form of life is the action in potentiality and both actions and forms of life are respectively in a potentiality-actuality relationship with the praxical and the anthropical images. Hence, the potentiality is a way of being different from that of the actuality which gives sense to the relationship between our actions and our forms of life and the anthropical images and the praxical images, but if we cancel this difference by means of rendering them mere facts, then we lose sight of the principles and remain attached to the isolated members of the series as bare objects and absurd phenomena.

7. Conclusion: Form of Life as Being-in-Itself-for-Itself

However, one of the main objections we could raise to my exposition of this phenomenological ontology is an objection concerning the relation between being and meaning. Is it even possible to look at the objects as being and as meaning at the same time? Are meaning and being identical? Is there a causal relationship between them or any other sort of generating process? I believe that all those questions make sense, and they need some answers to get some secure grounds for the view endorsed above, to the extent that the soundness of my arguments depends on them. I would like to start by facing first the questions

related to the possibility of the conjunction of being and meaning, and thereafter those questions raised above concerning the type of relation between being and meaning.

Regarding the possibility of the conjunction of being and meaning, first, I have to clarify that I endorse this view only in what actions refer to, not to all objects. So, actions are objects, but not all objects are actions. Can being and meaning go together? To start with, I believe it would be useful to take a few moments to reflect on our intuitions on this matter as expressed by commonsense and conveyed by our cultural creations. It is hard to deny that on many occasions, when looking at some people's behaviour, even if we apprehend the behaviour as behaviour, nonetheless, we lack the 'type of knowledge' that renders it meaningful to us, this being the type of knowledge about what they are that is not something outside of them. That is, if we fail to grasp the meaning of their moving their arm in a certain way, then we fail to recognize this cultural meaning and miss seeing the movement as a greeting. Here I have to emphasize that the meaning, as argued above, is not a kind of label attached, a view which I refute altogether. On the contrary, I endorse the view that, in cultural settings, meaning is intrinsic to being, as identical to its essence (meaningful phenomena), to the extent that meaning is what being is for; and, in turn, being makes it possible for the meaning to appear. In terms of logic, only what exists can bear meaning. I could draw from Bertrand Russell's logical existents,[56] which were considered the possibility of the predicative component in a proposition, but I think there is no need for that at the present point of my argument, for, from the very same phenomenological tradition starting with Sartre, I can suggest a solution. For Sartre, being was held both as existent and as essence, then to be is to exist in a sense, for the object must exist as condition *sine qua non* to be apprehended in its being, considered now as essence. In a like manner, an action, in order to have meaning, first has to be, in the sense of existing; but Sartre's own account gives us also the authority to conclude that what we apprehend is actually the essence and not the action in its existence, as bare action. Therefore, in order to be for us, as subjects of phenomenological experiences, actions have to

56 See Russell Wahl, 'Russell's Theory of Meaning and Denotation and "On Denoting"', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31:1 (1993), 71–94; Mark Textor, 'Towards a Neo-Brentanian Theory of Existence', *Philosophers' Imprint*, 17:6 (2017), 1–20.

bear some meaning intertwined with the other members of the series. That is to say, although, on the grounds of its own being—as existent—an action only counts for us as culturally meaningful.

The proper question to ask at this point is how is it possible that we did not recognize the meaning of actions if we nonetheless are able to recognize them as behaviour? To deal with this objection, we need to recall Sartre's phenomenology as stated above regarding the principle of the series. We can have the image of somebody moving his arm, and miss that somebody is greeting us, even if moving his arm is the same as greeting us, and not a different action.[57] And that is because even if the praxical image is intrinsically meaningful, as image it requires the identification of the essential meaning that, in turn, requires and presupposes the totality of images or the anthropical image, that is, the principle of the series, in the same way that the praxical image in relation to the action held as being requires and presupposes the form of life. If we think of simple actions such as shaking hands, holding hands or giving a hug, all of them as represented here are objects that only through our phenomenological experience can be apprehended with meaning. For instance, shaking hands means a greeting, holding hands and giving a hug means a way of showing affection for others;[58] that is, they are perceived objects that, however, convey a meaning. But that meaning is cultural, and that, in turn, entails that it connotes other meaning held as its principle; and more importantly, as a consequence of my arguments, supported by Sartre's phenomenology, we can only know the meaning of the praxical image, which emerges from the anthropical image as meaningful unit, but remains out of the reach of our knowledge, the actions as being object and the form of life as a series of actions/objects. What we can know of in relation to actions can thus only be given in our praxical images (subjective experience), and what we can know of in relation to our forms of life can only be given in the anthropical image (the image made of all possible praxical images, and the meaning connoted by its series of meanings).

57 John Schwenkler, 'Understanding "Practical Knowledge"', *Philosophers' Imprint*, 15:15 (2015), 1–32.

58 Although it falls out of the scope of this work, from this statement can be inferred the difference between human actions and animal behaviour: animal behaviour does not bear meaning, let alone cultural meaning; according to this view, their behaviour would be closed up in itself, as bare actions, in terms of perceptual stimulus-response.

Concerning the relation between being and meaning, I think that their relationship is less problematic once we have come to terms with the previous question. As has already been argued, actions are objects whose being (essence) can be revealed in the praxical image. That they are objects has to be put in relation with the consideration that they are cultural objects (culturally produced), so in the praxical image (its essence), we apprehend the meaning of an action, which is the cultural knowledge we can have of it, and from which we can know the principle of the series, which is the anthropical image, as the meaning connoted by the intrinsic meaning of the praxical image. Therefore, meanings connote meanings and phenomena intend actions; there is not a causal or generating process between meaning and phenomena, they are two sides of the same coin. But, of course, as the two sides, they require each other: being for meaning, and meaning for being. And together, drawing from Sartre, the praxical and anthropical images are revealed being and meaning, whereas actions and forms of life are being and meaning for revealing.

The form of life as a being, and therefore, as a totality, must be understood as the principle that constitutes its series of actions. This distinction is based on Sartre's distinction explored above between the ontological principle and the series of phenomena that appear before our consciousness. Now, if the form of life is both action and meaning (or meaningful actions), so are the subjects, as incarnations of the former. Meaning is the consciousness we have of our actions, what they mean for us; for they all have a meaning, otherwise we would not carry them out. If the form of life is the constitution of all its actions, and these are objects or being-in-itself, so too is the form of life, but in both cases, being cultural objects, they are a being-in-itself that is maintained only because they are also being-for-itself. That is, if it did not have a meaning, the form of life would not be. The for-itself is the intuitive understanding of such a meaning.

But this implies, once again, that there can be no facticity—in this case, actions—without meaning. Or in other words, it cannot be that actions are mere objects and existence a mere fact; on the contrary, both existence and actions are meaningful being. That I do not recognize the meaning of an action does not imply that it has not been performed with a particular meaning (as mentioned above), and the same can be

said of existence understood as a form of life. For the form of life is existence with meaning for the one who lives it. And there cannot be pure existence, that is, being-in-itself. A similar rectification was made by Eric Voegelin with respect to the Sartrean concept of existence as a fact:

> An intellectual like Sartre, for instance, finds himself involved in the conflict without issue between his assumption of a meaningless facticity of existence and his desperate craving for endowing it with a meaning from the resources of his *moi*. He can cut himself off from the philosopher's inquiry by assuming existence to be a fact, but he cannot escape from his existential unrest. If the search is prohibited from moving in the In-Between, if as a consequence it cannot be directed toward the divine ground of being, it must be directed toward a meaning imagined by Sartre. The search, thus, imposes its form even when its substance is lost; the imagined fact of existence cannot remain as meaningless as it is but must become the launching pad for the intellectual's Ego.[59]

For Voegelin, the In-Between refers to divinity's gospel, which makes his correction to Sartre somewhat weaker, since postulating divinity in order to make sense of existence requires, in turn, postulating a justification for that divinity. The latter only succeeds in diverting the problem away from the human being to divinity, and ultimately leaving it suspended in an act of faith. If Voegelin's critique is to be effective, it has to be based on human existence itself. Hence the concept of form of life as in-itself-for-itself has advantages here. Existence is not a mere fact or a mere succession of absurd facts, existence is a form of life, or in other words, all existence is lived in a form of life, i.e., as a series of meaningful actions. And that meaning is not given to it by a divinity, but by the form of life itself. When the subjects identify themselves with a form of life, they identify with a meaningful type of existence. Only that form of life or existence with which they do not identify appears to them as absurd, without it being absurd in itself, because it is a meaningful life for those who live it and who therefore identify with its meaning. It is not necessary to postulate a divine being or gospel to explain why our form of life has meaning for us: the form of life is an existence that has in itself its meaning, and subjects adopt it by acting and living according to that meaning.

59 Eric Voegelin, *The Collected Works*, Vol. XII: *Published Essays, 1966–1985*, ed. by Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 176.

Actions and forms of life are, therefore, being-in-itself-for-itself. And this conclusion makes us see the foundation of the being that we are. For now we can answer the question that Sartre left unanswered about the being of actions: 'If we granted that being is revealed to man in "acting," [*dans le faire*] it would still be necessary to guarantee the being of acting apart from the action [*l'être du faire en dehors de l'action*].'[60] For Sartre, the being of action requires a foundation on a being that is transphenomenal. So, if we are our actions, and our being is revealed in our actions, what is the being of our acting? What the conclusion of our research leads us to suggest is that the being of acting is the form of life as anthropical image, from which all its possible actions emerge, i.e., its praxical images. The form of life, as *in-itself-for-itself*, is the being of the action as *in-itself* or perceived object in the world and the being of our acting as *for-itself* or consciousness of acting within the possibilities determined by the anthropical image.

60 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. li. In *L'être et le néant*, p. 17.

2. Forms of Life and Ontological Conversion

1. Introduction

In *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre lamented that philosophers had not paid attention to a question as important for human existence as that of conversion.[1] A few years later he partially developed his thoughts on conversion in relation to generosity in his *Notebooks for an Ethics*, written between 1947 and 1948 but published posthumously in 1983.[2] Simone de Beauvoir also devoted her attention to the theme of conversion; a theme that seems to connect with the concerns of authors of a more or less existentialist bent. Of course, the conversion that interested Sartre and Beauvoir was the one they called existential, that is to say, the one that implies a change in our way of being in the world. The so-called religious, moral, intellectual or cultural conversions ultimately respond to an existential change. From the philosophy of forms of life, this will also be the focus of my attention, bearing in mind that to exist is to engage in a particular form of life. In this sense, I take existential as equivalent to ontological.

1 Various thinkers and philosophers of times prior to Sartre have reflected on conversion, certainly not as an existential phenomenon but mainly as a religious one. Hence the French author's statement is relevant only in the first sense, that of the conversion of the way in which the subject faces his existence. It should not be forgotten that Aristotle, and to a lesser extent some pre-Socratic authors, had already conceptualized what the ontological change consisted of, that transformation from one being to another, both in its substantial and accidental aspects.

2 The original version in French, *Cahiers pour une morale*, was published in 1983 by Gallimard, although the first English translation, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, was not published until 1992 by Chicago University Press. See Ruud Welten, 'Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*: The Ontology of the Gift', *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, 15:1 (2015), 3–15.

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In this chapter I want to identify and examine the ontological structure of the phenomenon of conversion. That is, those elements present in every subjective experience of conversion. To do so, I start from the assumption that every conversion, if it is truly a conversion, is a transformation of one being into another. That is, it is an ontological conversion. The question is to discern what it is that is transformed. Or, to put in another way, it is a matter of first identifying the being and then the constitutive process of change. That is to say, the ontological unit that ceases to be what it was in order to become something different. One could say that that unit is the individual subject. But since what changes is his way of being and acting, and we can already agree that a way of being and acting constitute a form of life, I hold that the subjects change along with their form of life understood as an ontological unit. And this makes it of great importance for the study of their subjectivity, for every culture can be reduced to the form of life of its subjects, and they take their being and identity from it. Thus, the ontological conversion is at the same time a cultural conversion. However, I insist that between culture and form of life there is no direct identification. Culture responds to an ethnological and sociological level, while a form of life, as I understand it, responds to an ontological level. The latter is the foundation of the former. That is why different forms of life can be found in a single culture. The form of life of a subject does not have to respond to the national culture under which he lives. For what is called national culture is, in any case, founded on a hegemonic form of life, that is, the predominant one in a historical-geographical context.[3]

Thus, drawing on the phenomenological and anthropological analysis of rites of passage, I identify the ontological structure of all conversion through three phenomenological stages: crisis, rejection and affirmation. As I have been arguing, conversion can be explained as a change of form of life. Thus, this onto-phenomenological structure, which consists in a change of being, is essentially the passage from one form of life to another. Therefore, when the change of form of life does not occur, conversion does not occur either. By 'form of life' I mean the

3 I analyze the process in which this hegemony is based and its relationship to the subordinate forms in the last three chapters of this book, in which I explain the dialectic that structures the process of integration and development of a form of life and its subjectivity with concrete historical examples.

series of actions driven by the same principle—as I have shown in the previous chapter. And, as conversion is from one form of life to another, so, the transformation experienced by the subjects is a transformation in the pattern of their behavior and, therefore, in their way of understanding themselves.

With the above arguments, together with personal testimonies from various sources, I argue that any conversion, whether religious, moral or even intellectual, to be understood as a conversion and not as the mere evolution of its own traits with respect to a posited end, must be based on an ontological conversion. This change of being can only be radical, that is, the product of a crisis that serves as a catalyst for the rejection of the old form of life and the consequent affirmation of a new one. It is in such a way that the affirmation of the new form of life at the same time constitutes the authenticity, universality and intersubjective consciousness of the subject. It is for this last reason that this chapter on conversion should come right after the examination of the form of life as an ontological unit. The importance of conversion lies in the fact that it not only constitutes the subject as the incarnation of a form of life, but also shows the inherent, albeit paradoxical coupling between the contingency of being and the experienced necessity of transformation.

2. The Onto-Phenomenological Structure of Conversion

From the field of theology, Bernard Lonergan has examined the phenomenon of conversion and has established three fundamental types of conversion: religious conversion, moral conversion and intellectual conversion. In these three types, conversion goes from a state considered negative to a positive state, or vice versa, which he calls breakdowns.[4] But in any case, the criterion that judges conversion is that of truth, goodness and love (or the lack of them). The authenticity of the subject is in relation to the attainment or approach to the positive extreme, an attainment that is never absolute.[5] In it appear the Aristotelian-Thomistic debts of Lonergan. The negative extreme is qualified as self-closure and

4 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 240.

5 *Ibid*., p. 252.

the positive as self-transcendence,[6] in the sense of opening new horizons of experience, guided by love.

For Lonergan, however, these three types of conversion are stages of the same phenomenon because they show a relationship of dependence between them. In fact, there can be no intellectual conversion without moral conversion, no moral conversion without religious conversion, and the latter is not possible without the help of divine grace.[7] In this interpretation of Lonergan, as can be seen, conversion is absolutely linked to the religious aspect and supernatural intervention (Grace). These attributes of his interpretation fall far short of my purpose, but he gives us a roadmap in exploring the phenomenon of conversion, bearing in mind that, in short, he considers a continuity between the different types of conversion. I claim, however, that these types of conversion ultimately refer to and are supported by an ontological conversion, where the being is constituted by the form of life, that is, by the particular way of being and acting that is changed.

Drawing on the above background, I suggest that in order to understand the phenomenon of conversion in its necessary ontological structure, three constitutive phenomenological stages must be distinguished: the first is the crisis, that is, the apprehension of a situation in which the subject demands of himself a change in his form of life. It is difficult to imagine a conversion in which there is not somehow a spontaneous apprehension of the need for change on the part of the subject. It must be stressed that the situation is understood as a demand for change mediated by the form of life in which one is. This form of life and the principle that drives it make up the *objective* horizon of individual experiences. From one's own form of life arises thus its antagonistic form of life in a given situation. Such a situation is the attempt to give meaning to and illuminate an event. Secondly, the demand translates into the rejection of the subject's current form of life. At this stage, there is a dialectic between the form of life and its negation, in such a way that it is from the form of life that arises the situation that calls it to disappear. It has in itself the seed of its self-destruction, which is equivalent to saying that the subject as the incarnation of a form of life in its ontological contingency always ultimately has in himself the reason

6 *Ibid*., p. 104.
7 *Ibid*., pp. 267–68.

for his being and his persistence. Rejection leads to the identification of a new form of life made possible by the same situation. Finally, this identification of a new possibility of being supposes its adoption and commitment as the form of life of the subject.

The aforementioned stages constitute the phenomenological structure of conversion, which does not eliminate the unitary character of the individual experience. But it confirms that the absence of one of these stages would show an incomplete conversion, that is, an experience of crisis, as the demand for the rejection of oneself and one's form of life, but not a conversion proper. In Søren Kierkegaard we find a description of conversion as a unitary experience but composed of these very three phenomenological stages, that is, as the recognition of the *need for change*, the rejection of what in this crisis situation is considered the *past error*, and finally, the *new life* to which the convert is born led by a new way of being and acting (which he calls the *truth*):

> Conversion cannot take place without its *being assimilated into his consciousness* or without his becoming aware that it was through his own fault, and with this consciousness *he takes leave of his former state* [...] Inasmuch as he was in untruth and now along with the condition receives the truth, *a change takes place in him* like the change from 'not to be' to 'to be'. But this transition from 'not to be' to 'to be' is indeed the transition of birth. But the person who already is cannot be born, and yet he is born. Let us call this transition rebirth.[8]

Such an onto-phenomenological structure seems to be present in every conversion experience. In the rites of passage studied by anthropologists such as Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, three stages very similar to those described so far can be observed, namely separation, transition and reincorporation or reaggregation.[9] What differentiates this pattern of rites of passage in a given society from the experience of ontological conversion is that if in the latter it is initiated by a moment of personal crisis, experienced as the awareness of the demand for a change of life, in the rites the so-called 'separation' is dictated not by the free and

8 Søren Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. by Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 123–24. The italics are mine.

9 Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 44; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 94.

spontaneous individual experience but by the group, regulated by calendars and cycles. This difference is important, because, as I discuss below, if ontological conversion means a change of way of being and acting in a new community, rites seem to have the function of fostering the integration of individuals within their own community. Moreover, the transitional stage can only take place in a symbolic ritual, not in the actual experience of the subject, who cannot remain in a limbo between being and not being; in any case, that period would be a procrastination of the rejection.

All conversion, if it truly is, is the passing from one state to another, being this change motivated in some respect. What I call crisis is precisely the experience of that motivation to leave one and affirm the other. That such a structure is present in the various experiences of conversion can be drawn from the examples below, from the religious conversion of St Augustine and St Ignatius of Loyola to first-person accounts referred to by William James and the conversion advocated by Kierkegaard and Arthur Schopenhauer. In all of them there is a crisis, which I hope to be able to show is always an ontological crisis, of form of life, which is followed by a transformation of being. Such a transformation, only when completed, can be verified intellectually, morally and religiously. For each form of life determines a particular way of understanding, acting and feeling in the world.

The crisis arises from a contradiction between the form of life and a situation in which the latter is denied. Following Sartre, I hold that the situation is the way in which consciousness grasps the world.[10] And as our consciousness is transposed by our form of life, our *world* is constituted by the latter. Thus, the crisis appears when consciousness presents this world to itself as impossible. This impossibility leads, in turn, to the opening of previously obliterated possibilities. Conversion is thus facilitated by the form of life that constitutes our consciousness. And this implies that our form of life not only determines the possibilities with which we affirm our subjectivity, that is, our habits, values and feelings, but also the possible conversions. It limits the ways in which it can express its negativity.

10 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination* (New York: Philosophical Society, 1948 [1940]), p. 269. In *L'imaginaire*: 'Nous appellerons «situations» les différents modes immédiats d'appréhension du réel comme monde.', p. 355.

The crisis as such cannot, however, be confused with conversion. If the crisis is the motor of conversion, this cannot be obtained without the rest of the stages, that is, the affirmation of a new way of being and acting. From the psychological perspective, however, the crisis has been seen as a type of conversion, the so-called non-volitional conversion.[11] This would consist of a certain awakening or inner illumination. From the philosophy of forms of life, I argue that this non-volitional conversion cannot be considered a conversion as such, but precisely the apprehension of a crisis, a demand which can only be satisfied by a free and voluntary change in the form of life.[12]

This onto-phenomenological structure, therefore, allows us to understand the procrastination of rejection after the crisis. That is to say, the case in which, although the demand for change has been grasped, neither the rejection of the current form of life nor the affirmation of the new form suggested by the situation in which the world presents itself to the subject is achieved. This is the kind of pseudo-conversion that would reflect the passage narrated by St Augustine in his *Confessions*,[13] and identified by psychology, in my opinion erroneously, as a non-volitional conversion.[14] For a long time, Augustine had, he tells us, understood the truth of the Christian life, without, however, being able to live in accordance with it:

> I had now no longer my accustomed excuse that, as yet, I hesitated to forsake the world and serve thee because my perception of the truth was uncertain. For now it was certain. But, still bound to the earth, I refused to be thy soldier; and was as much afraid of being freed from all entanglements as we ought to fear to be entangled.[15]

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11 William Paterson, *Conversion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), pp. 160–61. Throughout the history of Christianity, there have been proponents of different types of conversion. While the Church has officially defended only non-volitional conversion, i.e., that which amounts to awakening by grace or divine intervention, the so-called Pelagian school has defended conversion only through effort and willingness to change. A third position, held by the semi-Pelagian school, is closer to what I am defending in this chapter, since they considered that there is conversion only through the combination of sudden awakening or understanding and the voluntary behaviour that affirms it.

12 The latter is what psychology calls volitional conversion. It was Edwin Starbuck who came up with this distinction in 1911. See E. Diller Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion* (London: Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1911).

13 Augustine, *Confessions and Enchiridion*, ed. by Albert Cook Outler (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), pp. 151–52.

14 See Paterson, *Conversion*, pp. 160–61; Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, pp. 101–02.

15 Augustine, *Confessions and Enchiridion*, p. 164.

This non-volitional conversion is assumed by William James, who considers that conversion is fundamentally the emergence of ideas elaborated and retained in the subconscious. He calls this emergence of new ideas 'sudden conversion', which for this philosopher therefore has an intellectual character. James demonstrates this 'sudden conversion' through the case of a subject who, after having had such a conversion experience, nevertheless continued to behave as he had before the conversion, and even wondered, uneasily, why his life did not seem to change: 'I had been converted and fallen away instantly. But although I was quite full of drink (not muddled, however), I knew that God's work begun in me was not going to be wasted.'[16] The notion of conversion advocated by James is at bottom no more than a recognition of the demand, not the change itself. It is the moment of crisis. If this recognition does not lead to a change of life according to a new ontological principle born of the same crisis—as one of the possible negations of the previous form of life—conversion leads to a period of uncertainty and indecision, probably of anguish, due to the lack of inner resolve to carry out the change that has been understood as necessary, just as we see it expressed in Augustine.

Conversion, which lies on the apprehension of a crisis, that is, on a contradiction with regard to the form of life that constitutes consciousness, is cultural, for it responds to our *world*. And that means not only the triviality that conversion to Christianity or Buddhism is not possible without experience of such religious practices, but rather that conversion to such practices presupposes the apprehension of a borderline situation in which such practices are presented as the only authentic way out of the previous form of life. Thus, for example, as Benedict Anderson showed, conversion to official nationalism could only take place at a time sustained by nineteenth-century industrial capitalism (especially supported by capitalist printing), and as a reaction to the situation of imagined marginalization in which such capitalism (married to imperialism) placed the aristocratic and conservative class.[17]

16 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York, London, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras: Longmans, Green & Co., 1917), pp. 222–23.

17 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), pp. 109–10.

A paradigmatic case is that of Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*.[18] Valjean is a convict who has broken his word to return after being granted provisional freedom. Understanding that a man who has been confused with him has been imprisoned and will be condemned to the galleys for life, Valjean can only prevent it because the principle of his present form of life is to be an honest man, defined as a friend of kindness and righteousness. He can not allow another, an innocent man, to suffer on his behalf even though Valjean feels the possibility of the self-deception in taking the matter as God's will, and therefore, as a course of events that must not be altered; a thought that is, however, overwhelmed by the demand imposed on him by the situation, as Hugo masterfully describes:

> He confessed to himself that all that he had been arranging in his mind was monstrous, that 'to let the matter alone, not to interfere with God', was simply horrible, to let this mistake of destiny and of men be accomplished, not to prevent it, to lend himself to it by his silence, to do nothing, finally, was to do all! It was the last degree of hypocritical meanness! It was a base, cowardly, lying, abject, hideous crime![19]

This situation is an extraordinary one, in which the affirmation of one's own being leads to its negation. This particular character of conversion is described by Hugo as follows: 'of all these occasions, it must be said, none had ever been anything like that which was now presented'.[20] His form of life and its principle thus lead him to his denial, that is, to recognize in front of the tribunal that he is a convict who has deceived society—and therefore contrary to what his principle of honesty dictated. In such a situation, saving the innocent by sacrificing his own person leads to a form of life beyond honesty: that of the saint or the tragic hero, which is extended through the selfless care he provides for Cosette (an orphan girl taken under his responsibility). This transformation takes place precisely by Valjean acting according to the maxim of his form of life in a situation that requires his denial. This contradictory situation could only be apprehended in this way from the previous form of life (its negativity). Only through the denial of the principle of honesty can

18 Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. by Charles E. Wilbour (New York: Modern Library, 1992 [1861]), pp. 192–97.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

one reach that of the saint or hero (a self-sacrificing form of life?). That is, when in a crisis, the *honest* man recognizes himself as a dishonest one.[21] This very paradox is grasped by Schopenhauer:

> The knowledge of the contradiction of the will-to-live with itself can, through great misfortune and suffering, violently force itself on us, and the vanity of all endeavour can be perceived. Hence men who have led a very adventurous life under the pressure of passions, men such as kings, heroes, or adventurers, have often been seen suddenly to change, resort to resignation and penance, and become hermits and monks. To this class belong all genuine accounts of conversion.[22]

If for Schopenhauer the will-to-live of every being can be denied just in its affirmation, the text quoted from his major work presents us with what this philosopher describes, borrowing a line from another German author (Matthias Claudius), as a 'remarkable, catholic and transcendental change'.[23] This change precisely shows the dialectic between the affirmation of a form of life and the negation to which it leads. And he gives as an example an episode from the biography of Raymond Lull, who abandoned his life of sexual debauchery after contemplating the rotten and cancerous breast of a woman he ardently desired:

> Raymond Lull, who had long wooed a beautiful woman, was at last admitted to her chamber, and was looking forward to the fulfilment of all his desires, when, opening her dress, she showed him her bosom terribly eaten away with cancer. From that moment, as if he had looked into hell, he was converted; leaving the court of the King of Majorca, he went into the wilderness to do penance.[24]

In none of the examples given can conversion be identified with crisis. Nor can it be accepted that the demand for change in itself produces conversion, for this would be the same as cancelling human freedom. Therefore, the demand that we recognize in the crisis presents us with a challenge but does not determine us to conversion. At all times, we remain free to act according to the demand or to ignore it and continue

21 *Ibid*., p. 192.
22 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. by E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), p. 394.
23 *Ibid*., p. 394.
24 *Ibid*., pp. 394–95.

our present form of life. The latter would lead to what Sartre called bad faith or *mauvaise foi*:

> To be sure, the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of falsehood. Only what changes everything is the fact that in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth.[25]

It presents itself as a self-deception because by not acting as we have understood that we should act, we continue to live a form of life that no longer makes sense to us. The consciousness from which the demand for change is born is constituted by a form of life that has shown itself to be impossible. But since we are free to deceive ourselves or, on the contrary, to assume the challenge of the demand, the phenomenon that since Aristotelian moral doctrine has come to be called *akrasia* is always possible;[26] that is, that behaviour which is inconsistent with the knowledge of what is good for one, or as the classic saying says: 'I see the better and approve it but I follow the worse' [*video meliora proboque deteriora sequor*].[27] Ultimately, the latter is equivalent to a crisis that we have not been able to assume (due to laziness, fear, insecurity, social pressure, etc.) as a real change in our form of life. Sometimes such

25 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956 [1943]), p. 49. For an analysis of this concept in Sartre's thought, see Simone Neuber, 'Self-Awareness and Self-Deception: A Sartrean Perspective', *Continental Philosophy Review*, 49:4 (2016), 485–507.

26 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, in *Complete Works,* ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), II, 1145b 25–35, Book VII, p. 3884. 'For Socrates was entirely opposed to the view in question, holding that there is no such thing as incontinence; no one, he said, acts against what he believes best—people act so only by reason of ignorance. Now this view contradicts the plain phenomena, and we must inquire about what happens to such a man' (Book VII, p. 3884). *Akrasia*, sometimes translated as 'incontinence', refers in Aristotle to the opposition between reason and passion, i.e., I see what reason tells me, but I follow my desires. In this sense it has nothing to do with the moment of crisis that has been mentioned, because it is not the body or the passions that prevent me from acting according to my self-demand, rather it is another form of life, which has a different principle and other habits. It is the habits and the environment or the lack of assurance that cause me not to fulfil my conversion when my consciousness presents my past way of being and acting as impossible and undesirable. So, the Aristotelian *akrasia* must be adapted to a contradiction between the subject and himself as an ontological unit, and not between his body and his mind, which are after all constituted by a particular form of life.

27 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Vol. I: *Books I–VIII*, trans. by F. J. Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), Book VII: 20.

self-deception consists in appealing to deterministic forces superior to ourselves, as occurs in the aforementioned text of Hugo in which Jean Valjean tries to resist the apprehended demand on the grounds of not interfering with God's will.

The demand, which is nothing more than a self-demand, leads to a rejection which, in a sense, is also a self-rejection. William James called this stage of conversion 'self-surrender'.[28] But he did not understand it in an ontological sense, but in a cognitive one: the giving way to other ideas, to another way of conceiving the world. However, from an ontological point of view, this self-surrender must be understood as precisely the rejection of one's own being and identity.[29] In this sense, this is very much what is meant by conversion: ceasing to be one in order to become another—what Hegel expressed with the statement 'die to live'.[30] In the same examples of personal conversions offered by James, one can perceive this ontological change: 'I did not know where I was; I did not know whether I was Alphonse or another. I just felt changed and thought I was another me; I looked for myself and I couldn't find myself.'[31] The convert does not recognize himself; his former self has disappeared. In another example from James, the rejection of the subject himself implies in turn the rejection of his former *world*:

> I must first pass a sentence of death [...] upon everything that can properly be called a thing of this life, even to reckon myself, my wife, my children, my health, my enjoyments, and all, as dead to me, and myself as dead to them; to trust in God through Christ, as touching the world to come.[32]

The rejection of one's own form of life, that which is taken as the only possible way of being for the subject who identified with it, can lead to the rejection of all forms of life, in an affirmation of death or the convergence with it—experienced through constant suicidal thoughts—as the only possible way of being in the world. In this case, not committing suicide,

28 James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 208.
29 This self-surrender reflects at the level of the subject what at the level of the form of life we can call assimilation; when the community or part of the community converts to a hegemonic form of life with which it comes into contact and which it initially resists. I return to this in Chapters 6 and 7 of this book.
30 Cited in Paterson, *Conversion*, p. 129.
31 James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 225.
32 *Ibid*., p. 188.

or not making the negation of life the ontological principle of one's consciousness, is perceived as self-deception. In *A Confession*, Leo Tolstoy provides us with candid examples of this phenomenon of conversion: 'It is not good deceiving oneself. It is all vanity! Happy is he who has not been born: death is better than life, and one must free oneself from life.'[33]

Rejection as a moment of conversion exhibits the essential freedom of consciousness, as Sartre and existentialism advocated. At the pre-reflective level, consciousness freely and spontaneously surpasses itself and refuses its previous form in order to adopt a new one. This means that it is the subject in its consciousness that freely self-demands the change and freely rejects its previous self in order to affirm a new one with which he now begins to identify. This explains, or at least makes sense of, the personal experiences of those who say that before conversion they were aware of the need for change and of a certain rejection of their form of life but failed to bring it into reflective consciousness. In fact, there would be no ontological conversion without such pre-reflective recognition of the need for change. In this same pre-reflective consciousness or self-consciousness is revealed the beginning of a new way of being and acting with which the subject realizes his personal identification. This identification is followed by active commitment through behaviour (since resolutions of conversion are usually typical at this point of the experience), which aspires to express the principle of the new form of life in each of its actions, that is, a 'total commitment', for 'it is not by a particular case or particular action that you are committed altogether'.[34] The rejected form of life eliminates the possibility of acting in the world according to its principle; while the acceptance of the demand with the identification of the new form of life and the commitment assures a new way of acting. In rejection, the subject transforms his consciousness, thus escaping the anguish and distress produced by the torments of the existential crisis, a moment expressed very vividly by Schopenhauer:

> We then see the man suddenly retire into himself, after he is brought to the verge of despair through all the stages of increasing affliction with the most violent resistance. We see him know himself and the world, *change*

33 Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession and What I Believe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), p. 45.

34 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. by Philip Mairet (London: Methuen, 1960 [1946]), p. 43.

> *his whole nature*, *rise above himself and above all suffering*, as if purified and sanctified by it, in inviolable peace, bliss, and sublimity, *willingly renounce everything he formerly desired* […].[35]

The third of these phenomenological stages of conversion is, thus, the affirmation of the form of life that arises from a given situation. As an example of this last stage, which is what remains to elaborate on, we can think of the situation highlighted by many activists and scholars concerning the problems that humanity faces due to the form of life of the global, post-industrial and capitalist society.[36] In this situation, understood as a threat to the survival of the human species and the planet (stage 1), the form of life that the situation itself provides is that driven by a principle opposed to the present form (stage 2), which is associated with the destruction of the natural environment and alienation of human life, that is, the opposite would be a form of life driven by the principle of preservation and care (stage 3). In this sense, again in Tolstoy, we have the rejection of his life of denial and alienation, shared with a certain community of his time, and the affirmation of a new form of life, the life of the Russian peasants—with whom he lives and works in Yasnaya Polyana:

> I turned from the life of our circle, acknowledging that ours is not life, but a simulation of life—that the conditions of superfluity in which we live deprive us of the possibility of understanding life, and that in order to understand life I must understand not an exceptional life such as ours who are parasites on life, but the life of the simple labouring folk—those who make life—and the meaning which they attribute to it. The simple labouring people around me were the Russian people, and I turned to them, and to the meaning of life which they give.[37]

This conversion, according to Tolstoy's own confession, dragged out over years of existential crisis, meant the affirmation of a form of life that was rejected in the past, which is now once again shown to be the most natural and true way of being human. The meaning of life was restored once again in the form of the religious and traditional life of the peasants. Thus, his denial of life as form of life was rejected. This

35 Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, pp. 392–93. The italics are mine.
36 Ingolfur Blühdorn, 'Post-Capitalism, Post-Growth, Post-Consumerism? Eco-Political Hopes beyond Sustainability', *Global Discourse*, 7:1 (2017), 42–61.
37 Tolstoy, *A Confession*, p. 79.

obviously implies a series of conversions in the course of a biological life, an experience that seems not uncommon; that is, the return to a form of life that was abandoned, and which is now taken up again as an old but new way of being in the world:

> As imperceptibly and gradually the force of life in me had been destroyed and I had reached the impossibility of living, a cessation of life and the necessity of suicide, so imperceptibly and gradually did that force return to me. And strange to say the strength of life which returned to me was not new, but quite old—the same that had borne me along in my earliest days.[38]

It should be noted that the gradualness of the process to which Tolstoy refers here follows his decision to affirm a certain form of life, with its values, feelings and habits. The gradualness refers to the process of commitment and integration into one's own form of life. That is, he gradually became integrated into the life-denying form and gradually became integrated into the religious form of the Russian peasant after his free adoption of it and rejection of the previous one. The affirmation thus consists in the verification of conversion through the adoption of a new form of life, in whose habits the constitutive principle of consciousness is expressed. Thus, the change effected is verified in each of the subject's actions, as was well understood by the Methodists and Puritans, according to Max Weber: 'Only by a fundamental change in the whole meaning of life at every moment and in every action could the effects of grace transforming a man from the *status naturae* to the *status gratiae* be proved.'[39] The statuses referred to by the quotation clearly show an ontological change. Otherwise, without a new way of being and acting, there can be no real conversion.

3. Conversion and the Constitution of Subjectivity

Inasmuch as conversion is the transformation of a being, it seems inevitable at this point to ask whether there is any kind of ontological continuity on which the authenticity of the subject can be based. The answer to this question varies depending on whether conversion is

38 *Ibid*., p. 77.

39 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001 [1905/1930]), pp. 71–72.

understood as a gradual process or a radical change. Authors such as Lonergan think of conversion as a gradual phenomenon, like a progress along a straight line.[40] They understand that authenticity lies in moving closer and closer to the positive end of that line, characterized by ideals such as Truth, Goodness and Love. The latter guide us towards what constitutes our authentic selves, which are identified with human nature. Conversely, at the other end of the line would be that which separates us from our genuine nature and thus renders us inauthentic:

> Human authenticity is not some pure quality, some serene freedom from all oversights, all misunderstanding, all mistakes, all sins. Rather it consists in a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and the withdrawal is never a permanent achievement.[41]

According to this, conversion would be that state of greater or lesser authenticity in relation to these absolute ideals or criteria. However, the latter, when considered as absolute, seem to be far from the human capacity to understand and even to achieve. So it can only be up to the relevant communities and institutions, whether religious, scientific or humanitarian, to judge the attitudes of a positive conversion towards truth, goodness and love. But these, being historical and partial, may be erroneous or illegitimate at later stages of humanity's progress. So that what today is understood as an attitude revealing our genuine human nature, at later times may be judged as an inauthentic attitude. In other words, the absolute criterion thus leaves conversion to the mercy of the authority that provides and supports these criteria, and from them and only from them could a positive or negative conversion be judged; or, what is the same, its authenticity or inauthenticity (in Lonergan's terms). And this implies that the reason for its authenticity lies not in the conversion itself but in external criteria. Therefore, the subject is considered more or less authentic according to whether he adapts to these external criteria, which in reality do not imply a change of being but an evolution or an involution. Moreover, one might even question whether an evolution guided by external criteria is a path towards authenticity, and not rather one towards alienation.

In contrast to Lonergan's approach, Beauvoir argued that, in existential conversion, the convert, 'by renouncing to seek the guarantee

40 Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 104.
41 *Ibid*., p. 252.

of his existence outside of himself, he also refuses to believe in the unconditioned values that would rear up across his freedom like things'.[42] For her, it is precisely these 'absolute values' that remove us from our own authenticity. After all, for Beauvoir, authenticity consists in recognizing that one is free and that being, desires and values are never absolute, for we impose them on ourselves freely and spontaneously: 'existential conversion [*la conversion existentielle*] does not eliminate my instincts, desires, projects, or passions; it merely prevents all possibility of failure by refusing to posit as absolutes the ends toward which my transcendence throws itself [*poser comme des absolus les fins vers lesquelles se jette ma transcendance*] and by considering them in their connection with the freedom that projects them [*dans leur liaison avec la liberté qui les projette*]'.[43] Thus, for her, as for Sartre, to be authentic is to ground one's being in the essential freedom of one's consciousness.[44] So the authentic being acts recognizing that he or she could always have acted differently and therefore could always change his or her way of being, given a necessary motivation. On the contrary, the inauthentic is, for Sartre and Beauvoir, believing oneself to be natural or subject to fate and other forces that transcend our freedom.

For existentialist authors, therefore, authenticity is based not on external absolute criteria, but on the very essence of consciousness, which is freedom. To be authentic is to not betray this essential freedom, which is equivalent to being nothing in a natural and fixed way: 'To exist authentically [*exister authentiquement*] is not to deny the spontaneous movement of my transcendence [*ce n'est pas nier le mouvement spontané de ma transcendance*] but only to refuse to lose myself in it [*refuser de me perdre en lui*]', which means the refusal to surrender our freedom.[45] Elaborating on this existentialist approach, and given the relevance that conversion has for the constitution of subjectivity, what I maintain is that authenticity is based on the conversion of the subject when it has understood the need for change. And this entails a nuanced difference with respect to Beauvoir. If for her, again, one is authentic as long as one does not betray that 'essential freedom' that makes us never be what we

42 Simone de Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 293.
43 *Ibid*., p. 293.
44 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 527.
45 Beauvoir, *Philosophical Writings*, p. 293.

are, and not act as if we could not have acted otherwise, what I claim is that it is in the radical event in which the demand for conversion to a different form of life arises that our being is founded and therefore its authenticity.

Thus, based on the onto-phenomenological structure of conversion that I explored in the previous section, I believe it must be insisted that, contrary to Beauvoir and Sartre, the understanding of the demand for change, even if freely accepted, would lead to an inauthentic life if ignored.[46] So the demand born of our understanding of the impossibility of our form of life determines our authenticity. To be authentic requires in such an extreme situation the rejection of who we were and the affirmation of a new being, verified in a new form of life. This transformation is based on a self-demand, but it is still a demand and therefore a call for a necessary change. Who we become after the change is authentic as long as we continue to recognize the need to be and to act in that way. On the contrary, the inauthenticity of the subject, what we can call living an inauthentic life, means continuing to live according to the ontological principle of a form of life that has been apprehended as undesirable, unnecessary and unworthy.

Therefore, from the perspective opened up by this chapter, being authentic cannot be determined by absolute external criteria, but neither can it be grounded in the essential freedom of consciousness without further ado, for then to be authentic is always to be nothing, and that is contradictory, and arguably false, as the Aristotelian argument demonstrates regarding the assertion that everything is always changing, which is the same as saying that nothing is ever truly anything: 'if all things are in motion, nothing will be true; everything therefore will be false. But it has been shown that this is impossible. Again, it must be that which is that changes; for change is from something to something.'[47] That is, truth is that which it is, and it is so because it has been transformed into it. Therefore, it was true before and after, but it might not have been true if it had not changed when necessary. Something changes precisely by being true to what it is. Moreover, to support that we are nothing

46 For a detailed account on authenticity in existentialist terms, see Daniel Breazeale, 'Authenticity and Duty', in *Fichte und Sartre über Freiheit*, ed. by Violeta L. Waibel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 11–48.

47 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), II, 1012b 25, p. 3441.

is not to recognize the strength of the form of life as in-itself-for-itself. Thus, to be authentic is to constantly renew with our way of being and acting the conversion that we have consummated, bearing in mind that conversion is ontological and radical, and with it we cease to be who we were and become someone else. And this for the reason that we can never cease to be the incarnation of a form of life, from which our subjectivity derives. Otherwise, we would have to admit that the sustained state of a human being can exist independently of a form of life, that is, outside of a particular way of being and acting. And this is a state of limbo that is impossible even to imagine. One is always something, and incessant change is not a legitimate option either, as has been shown, neither ontologically nor psychologically. We are that being that we give ourselves in conversion, which born of a contingent situation cannot be but necessary. We are necessarily that which we have understood that we have to be, at the risk of living otherwise an inauthentic life, marked by dissatisfaction, insincerity and even guilt, as personal experiences of procrastination such as that of St Augustine show.

In this sense, one can exemplify, with these words of Henry David Thoreau, the problem of the authenticity of a form of life that is contingent but is lived as necessary: 'So thoroughly and sincerely are we compelled to live, reverencing our life, and denying the possibility of change. This is the only way, we say; but there are as many ways as there can be drawn radii from one centre.'[48] In fact, it is in the change of life that authenticity lies, for although we can live in different ways we can only live in one particular way at a time, and that determines our being and our actions until we apprehend the need for a new change. It is in the apprehension of the possibility of change that we glimpse a new authentic self.

Now, if authenticity is not the correspondence with an absolute criterion or always being someone different from what one is, but the necessary transformation of the subject's form of life by which he ceases to be what he was in order to be someone else, is it not being authentic to become another? And is this other not precisely the incarnation of a new form of life? The commitment of the convert to his new form of life is the commitment to an image of being human (as was conveyed

48 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 11.

in the Introduction and in the first chapter of this book). Therefore, in every action of the subject, this image of the human being or anthropical image is revealed. The subject's consciousness of such actions is the self-consciousness of that other which constitutes his or her form of life as a universal. The subject is thus constituted by the self-consciousness of that universal way of being.

Therefore, the otherness is the incarnation of a universal, which mirrors the Heideggerian 'thrown-project' in the world; an incarnation that as such demands of us a way of being and acting that turns us into a being that is always another, or in the words of Paul Ricoeur:

> The notion of a thrown-project [...] indeed carries to the level of concept the strangeness of human finiteness, insofar as it is sealed by embodiment, hence what we call here primary otherness, in order to distinguish it from the otherness of the foreign. One could even say that the link, in the same existentiale of state-of-mind, of the burdensome character of existence and of the task of having-to-be, expresses what is most crucial in the paradox of an otherness constitutive of the self and in this way reveals for the first time the full force of the expression 'oneself as another'.[49]

Moreover, this otherness is real not only in my incarnation but also in those other subjects who likewise incarnate this universality of the anthropical image. That other subject or co-subject is not an analogy or a projection of me in the other. As it is a common incarnation of the same way of being and acting, my co-subject is somehow another self who exists and acts in the world where we both affirm a common identity, which, without ceasing to be constitutive of our own self, neither does it cease to be that of another.

In short, converging here with Sartre, the individual is a universal singular: 'For a man is never an individual; it would be more fitting to call

49 Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 327. What Ricoeur calls 'embodiment' is what Sartre (and this book) calls 'incarnation', both referring to Husserl's notion of making the flesh or *Lieb* (lived experience of onelsef) part of the world, or also in Ricoeur's terms, 'mondanéiser la chair'. Moreover, the difference that Ricoeur points out between primary otherness and otherness of the foreign would be equivalent in the phenomenological ontology presented in this book to the difference between the incarnation of my form of life and the incarnation of another form of life by those whom I do not consider to be co-subjects. For a discussion of the phenomenological concept of flesh/lived body (*Lieb*), see Jakub Čapek, 'Oneself through Another: Ricoeur and Patočka on Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation', *META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, 9:2 (2017), 387–415.

him a *universal singular*. Summed up and for this reason universalized by his epoch, he in turns resumes it by reproducing himself in it as a singularity.'[50] But this universal condition, I insist—beyond Sartre—is given to the subject by his form of life. The latter is the identification with this image of being human as the only possible way of being. As a result, its adoption implies the assumption that to be human is to act according to the ontological principle that constitutes it. On the contrary, any individual who does not conform to it cannot legitimately call himself a human being. Therefore, the adoption of this anthropical image as the core of our subjectivity imposes a necessary appeal on others, because as Sartre said: 'in fashioning myself I fashion man'.[51] In conversion, therefore, as Kierkegaard said, the individual in giving himself a new form of life, goes beyond the universality of his previous form, so that 'the single individual isolates himself as higher than the universal'.[52] But, to be higher than the universal implies being above it, and this only happens because the consciousness of the individual transcends itself by freely giving itself a new universal, a new image of being human through the form of life that is affirmed.

Now, if we continue to elaborate on this universal-singular subject (as an incarnation of a form of life), we have to ask to what extent we require other individuals to share our form of life, and hence our image of being human, since this is in essence intersubjective (as the Sartrean concept being-for-others implies).[53] That is, the adoption of such an image necessarily dictates the possibilities of both my own behaviour and that of others. In fact, I can only take my identity as a human being because of the assumption that I share with other subjects their way of being and acting, that is, because of the potential community that is born or reborn with me in conversion. This again puts us at a crossroads with respect to Sartre's ontological phenomenology. For the French philosopher, the being-for-itself or consciousness as essentially free requires that others recognize its freedom, that is, it requires to be

50 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert, 1821–1857*, Vol. I, trans. by Carol Cosman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. ix.

51 Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 30. In *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Nagel, 1966): 'en me choisissant, je choisis l'homme.' p. 27.

52 Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, p. 105.

53 Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre: A Philosophical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 242.

treated precisely as a being-for-itself. But in the same way, it requires others to be free.[54] Therefore, consciousness or the for-itself, in order to persist in its being, requires that others take it as an end in itself, and not as a means, and, by the same token, it also requires that others—the other for-itself—take themselves as ends. Only someone who recognizes himself as free can recognize others in the same way. And at the same time, I cannot be free if others are not. This is what Sartre calls, with the Kantian expression, 'the kingdom of ends'.[55]

The issue, from the perspective of the philosophy of forms of life, is that the subject, in order to be that which he freely wants to be, requires that other individuals also freely make themselves subjects of that form of life, which is identified with the exclusive image of being human. Contrary to Sartre, it could be said that the freedom of our consciousness—that freedom with which we self-impose a new being in conversion—seems to require not only that others too are free for their conversion, but also that they freely impose on themselves a particular way of being and acting that makes them our co-subjects. The self, in order to be, needs that potential community with which it shares its form of life. This is the Ariadne's thread that leads us from freedom to imposition and from the convert to the proselytiser, as I will return to in the next section.[56]

This conclusion, however, is at odds with those who, like Emmanuel Levinas, seek to understand the individual as particular totalities—characterized by their idiosyncratic existence.[57] These totalities, that he claims to be plural, isolated and irreducible entities, which escape conceptualization and almost understanding, in the end are but mere abstractions—precisely what he tries to flee. For an element or part can only be abstract if it lacks the mediation of its totality, and in this case,

54 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. by David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992 [1983]), p. 9.

55 See this concept in relation to intersubjectivity in Sebastian Gardner, 'Sartre, Intersubjectivity, and German Idealism', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 43:3 (2005), 325–51.

56 For political and sociological factors in conversion, see Timothy Steigenga and Edward Cleary, *Conversion of a Continent* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

57 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (London, Boston, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979), p. 44. In *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité* (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971),p. 35.

of the form of life that provides its particular way of being and acting. Levinas argues that

> To affirm the priority of *Being* over *existents* [*a priorité de l'être par rapport à l'étant*] is to already decide the essence of philosophy; it is to subordinate the relation with *someone*, who is an existent (the ethical relation) [*quelqu'un qui est un étant*] to a relation with the *Being of existents* [*l'être de l'étant*], which, impersonal, permits the apprehension, the domination of existents (a relationship of knowing), subordinates justice to freedom [*subordonne la justice à la liberté*].[58]

In doing so, he stands against the ontological tradition, which homogenizes the opposite and gives priority to the same over the other, being over the existent, freedom over justice.[59] But to presuppose that the existent is prior to being is to presuppose it prior to its consciousness. And this could be admitted; it could be said that the individual exists prior to his consciousness of being; and to add that he even exists prior to his consciousness of sharing a form of life with a (potential) community. Both propositions, however, entail major problems from the existential and phenomenological point of view, as well as from the subject and the collectivity.

To start with, to say that the individual exists before he is, in any sense, conscious of it, is to say that he occupies a material place, or that he is a fact, but not that he is in a particular way. Even the face does not imply a particular way of being but rather the irreducibility of being, the infinite, the indeterminate: 'To manifest oneself as a face [*Se manifester comme visage*] is to *impose oneself* above and beyond the manifested and purely phenomenal form [*c'est s'imposer par-delà la forme, manifestée et purement phénoménale*], to present oneself in a mode irreducible to manifestation [*irréductible à la manifestation*].'[60] Thus, to present oneself as irreducible is to present oneself as unpredictable, but if the existent is pure exteriority, his irreducibility and unpredictability is also so for himself, that is, he is an unknown to himself, lacking in being and identity. The face does not imply being, only mute existence. Individuals come into being when they become conscious of themselves in the task of giving themselves

58 *Ibid*., p. 45. In *Totalité et infini*, p. 36.
59 *Ibid*., p. 47.
60 *Ibid*., p. 200. In *Totalité et infini*, p. 218.

being, imposing it on themselves in (ontological) conversion. The subject is, thus, born only in that self-giving, which also entails acting in the midst of the world. What is characteristic of the individual implies a conversion to a way of being and acting adapted to a specific context and in a particular situation. For, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty had already underlined in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, without the background, no element can appear.[61] All this implies the phenomenological expedient that what is there is there for me, including myself. What is outside me, as a different way of being and acting, questions my being, which is the being that I share with my community, which in turn I need in order to be, not only as posited universality, but as the behaviour that shapes my environment, against Levinas' claim: 'The relation with the other [*la relation avec l'Autre*] is here accomplished only through a third term [*troisième terme*]which I find in myself [*que je trouve en moi*].'[62] That third term is also out there, for my awareness of it implies my acting in the world and my exposure to the acting of other co-subjects.

Therefore, the consciousness of being is not only of being a particular subject, but also the consciousness of a community with which I share a way of being and acting. My consciousness of being is the consciousness of my form of life. In a world in which everyone is a mere sentient and desiring existent, without being or identity, subjects cannot exist primarily because their potential community, which is posited intersubjectivity—their incarnated universality—does not exist. And if, in such a world, there is justice for the others, it is achieved precisely by sacrificing their freedom, the freedom to give themselves being, as identification with an ontological principle and with a community.

4. Conversion, Subjectivity and the Other

This understanding of conversion has led me to conclude that the ontological freedom of consciousness becomes imperative by postulating a demand to other individuals to effectively realize the universality of the incarnated form of life. The problem is that once the subject has grasped the situation as the demand for a change of form of life, a

61 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1945]), p. 4. See quotation in the Introduction to this book.

62 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 44.

question emerges: can he or she really change the form of life within a group that does not? Furthermore, can there be a totally individual form of life?

There are three possible responses in this regard:

(1) Deny the demand and live in self-deception. This option would be that of those who, even though they have understood the need for change, accept different reasons for not doing so. As said previously, this is what Sartre called living in bad faith. Conversion would not be obtained, although the demand could be held in perpetual procrastination. This could be the phenomenon that St Augustine narrates in his *Confessions* and that has been identified with a non-volitional conversion (associated with an intellectual event), a label that, from the perspective traced in this section, is rejected as conversion proper because it does not give rise to any change in the form of life. Needless to say, such an understanding of the demands can remain in that state indefinitely, and even find socially accepted mechanisms to channel and somehow dissolve them.

(2) The revolution. This second option has to do with the attempt to convert others. It is the attitude of the proselytizer and even of the revolutionary—the phenomenon that has been labelled in recent times, albeit in a derogatory way, as 'social justice warriors' may enter this class. From the philosophy of forms of life that is being developed in this work, this attitude finds a coherent explanation, free of derogatory tones, and includes in it many other *revolutionary* groups; that is, groups that seek a social conversion so that they can fully realize the image of the human being with which they identify and to which they have committed themselves. Conversion, let us recall, carries with it that aspiration of universality. It is necessary to clarify that this social conversion does not necessarily involve all the men and women of the planet, but only the individuals who make up the society in which the convert lives. Today, in global and digital capitalism, a single form of life has expanded to practically the entire world, making the postulated universality almost effective. The latter, however, does not cease to be frustrated by communities considered external (i.e., refugees) or internal (i.e., anti-austerity movements).

(3) Withdraw from society. The last and least common option is to break with the society in which the rejected form of life prevails and where the convert does not feel that it is possible to develop his newly

acquired form of life. This retreat is, as with the option of revolution, an option in which conversion does not achieve fullness precisely because it does not achieve universality. For in both options, the convert has to act according to the form of life of the society in which he lives as well as his own form of life. That is to say, the universality of the actions under the chosen form of life cannot be obtained and neither can the universality of the image of the human being that it incarnates and that the proselytizer/revolutionary struggles to extend to an ever-increasing number of individuals. In this sense, the retreat from society can be phenomenological and physical, or only phenomenological. In the first group would be those hermits and seekers of solitude who, as many accounts tell us, have gone to islands, caves or mountains to live a life of retreat. In the second group, there are those who, within society, lead a different form of life, directed by a different principle to that which drives the lives of the other individuals who make up their society.[63] According to what has been said, the aspiration to universality entails in both groups an incompleteness. From the point of view of the philosophy of forms of life, that physical isolation to which conversion can lead is the fullest, because in it universality has no contradiction. And that is why these individuals have the greatest uneasiness when they see a human being appear in their vicinity: the representation of their broken universality. David Balcom informs us of several anecdotes in this regard, in particular the joy that Petrarch experienced as a result of not seeing any human creature in his long retreats to his properties at Vaucluse.[64]

But this leads us to ask ourselves, firstly, whether it is really possible to live as a convert in a society that follows another form of life, and secondly, if it is possible to live an individual form of life. With regard to the first question, the answer is that it is not only possible, but it is also fairly common. This is why converts tend to form homogeneous groups or even social classes (more abrupt in some eras and societies than in others), or sects and secret societies. From the point of view of

63 Sometimes this leads to a conflict between the individual and the predominant form of life embodied by institutions of power, as biopolitical studies relate, for example regarding the hermit Richard Rolle. See Christopher Roman, 'The Counter-Conduct of Medieval Hermits', *Foucault Studies*, 21 (2016), 80–97.

64 David Balcom, *The Great Escape: Adventures in the History of Solitude* (Lincoln NE: iUniverse, 2004), p. 17.

the philosophy of the forms of life, conversion to these groups saves the dissatisfaction of the impossible universality in larger societies. In this way, the convert avoids social practices and behaviours that are not supported by his form of life (and its principle), without this always be possible. And, in this sense, the current global form of life (capitalist, instrumental-technological and consumerist leading by profit maximization) is considered the most natural because it has achieved a purported universality of conduct and of individuals. Many individuals have converted to this form of life and others have simply accepted it. From this same form of capitalist life in the last century, other forms of life have arisen as reaction (agricultural life, projects of collective life, artistic life, intellectual life, and so on), whose conversion leads only to marginalized living in a society where the former prevails. And in the opposite sense, from the periphery or the margins, many have converted phenomenologically to the prevailing form of life, even before being physically present in the societies in which it develops (i.e., immigration and cultural colonization). The difference, then, between the last two types of attitudes, that is, that of the revolutionary and that of the hermit, is that, in the former, there is an annihilation of others as subjects (who self-impose a particular ontological principle) to demand from them (as free beings) that they follow the individual's (or community's) own form of life, while, in the latter, annihilation is a real physical distance, which implies the absence of others and, therefore, also the lack of demand. However, both strategies are deceptive. Because the first reduces the freedom of others to the choice of an imposed image of being human, that is, it jeopardizes the existence of the other as *being-for-itself* (in Sartrean terms), and the second, distancing him from others, jeopardizes the existence of the other as *being-in-itself*—this latter can be carried out even within society by means of self-imposed isolation.

Accordingly, just as Wittgenstein considered a private or individual language possible only as a mode of self-deception,[65] so it must be insisted that a strictly individual form of life is possible, but always bearing in mind that this would start from the delusion that there is no other human being than oneself—a hard solipsism. However, if every

65 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), § 243–71.

experience of a form of life is individual (*Erlebnis*), as an expression of an image of being human, it is essentially intersubjective, and thus constituted by the claim that all other individuals share it, or are in a position to share it and experience it as part of the natural and exclusive way of being human—which guarantees its universality. Thus, although the isolated subject persists in his being, like a Robinson Crusoe, pretending that anyone would act like him in his place, only when the potential community becomes actual can the subject be fully integrated into his form of life. This mean, as a consequence, that I can lead an individual form of life which, in fact, I do not share with anybody in my environment, only under the gaze that I posit it on everybody else as my potential community. This positing is what in Chapter 5 I call assimilation—or attempt at assimilation—regarding the relationship between forms of life.

5. Ontological Conversion vs. Rites of Passage

Conversion as fundamentally not symbolic but existential, i.e., ontological, which is our particular focus, is to be distinguished at least minimally from the social phenomenon of rites of passage studied by anthropology and cultural phenomenology. The point is that these cultural rites seem to be an instrument to keep the social group in balance. They help individuals to move from one state to another within the same group, as Turner's concepts of 'liminality' (transition) and 'communitas' (the realization of the group's form of life) manifest:

> The ritual subject, individual or corporate [in the final stage of the ritual], is in a relatively stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-à-vis others of a clearly defined and 'structural' type; he is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions.[66]

On the contrary, conversion in the ontological sense I am referring to is the change from one group or community (co-subjects) to another altogether different one (not only a change in social position), as it is about becoming a different subject through a new way of being and

66 Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 95.

acting, as well as the emergence of a new intersubjectivity rooted in that new being or incarnation of a particular image of being human.

Rites have an organizing and stabilizing purpose, for Van Gennep tells us that 'in such societies [among semicivilized peoples] every change in a person's life involves actions and reactions between sacred and profane—actions and reactions to be regulated and guarded so that society as a whole will suffer no discomfort or injury'.[67] By contrast, conversion as an ontological change entails a destabilization, as the individuals experience a detachment from their previous group, whose form of life they now see as undesirable, which necessitates a rejection of that previous way of being and acting, as I have shown in the examples above. In fact, from the approach of the cultural phenomenology of rites of passage, the onto-phenomenological stage that I have treated as the affirmation of a new universal image of being human, is significantly called 'reincorporation' or 'reaggregation',[68] which implies returning to the group from which the individual has been temporarily and symbolically separated, but this time in a higher state, which suggests greater integration in the group as a whole, reaffirming thus the existing social order. This integration in the system is what Catherine Bell remarks by insisting on the function of rituals for the social and political power relations of the group: 'Ritualization is very much concerned with power. Closely involved with the objectification and legitimation of an ordering of power as an assumption of the way things really are, ritualization is a strategic arena for the embodiment of power relations.'[69] According to this, rites seem to have the function of controlling and channelling social change, i.e., the ritual transition from one state to another is socially and politically imposed (through institutions such as baptism, marriage, school stages, entrance exams for higher education and trades, etc.) and aims at the integration of the individuals into the group as structural power relations. It is therefore far from being an ontological or existential conversion in the sense I have conveyed above, in which the crisis-triggering demand arises from the individuals' own consciousness, who suddenly find a new meaning to their lives by freely

67 Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p. 3.
68 Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p. 94.
69 Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 170.

giving themselves a new way of being and acting—through a constitutive and ontological principle—thus setting aside the previous form of life, be it artistic, religious, dishonest, capitalist, naturalist, intellectual, etc., and embracing a new one with a new structure of power relations. I am not saying that in ritual there cannot be an ontological conversion beyond symbolic behaviour; I am merely pointing out the difference between the two, and that one does not necessarily entail the other. Rituals rather mean a further integration of the subjects into their existing form of life and communitas.

6. Conclusion

Having established the premise of the form of life as an ontological unit, in this chapter I have explored the onto-phenomenological structure of conversion in terms of the passage from one form of life to another. In this sense, I have argued that all conversion is first and foremost ontological, beyond the religious, cultural or moral aspects with which it is often associated. I have argued that such an ontological structure consists of three phenomenological moments or stages, namely, the apprehension of a demand for change in a situation of crisis, the rejection of the previous form of life and the affirmation of a new possible form. From this conception of conversion, I have drawn the consequence that the ontological affirmation of the convert can only be authentic insofar as it arises from the demand for change experienced, whereas inauthenticity entails ignoring this demand and continuing to live in a way that has been apprehended as unnecessary, undesirable and unworthy. Moreover, if the latter stage of conversion involves an affirmation of and commitment to a form of life, and this is the expression of an image of being human, I have argued that in conversion the subject becomes universal mediated by that anthropical image, which determines a *potential* community whose way of being and acting is shared. The subject who has thus given himself a new form of life, has in this way also given himself a new identity that makes him a universal singular; that is, someone who without ceasing to be an individual is an incarnation of a universal. This incarnation makes him a subject, whose consciousness is essentially intersubjective, for his way of being and acting is that which is posited as the way of being and acting of every individual and which, in fact,

he shares with his *potential/actual* community, constituted by those co-subjects who incarnate the same form of life. Ontological conversion has been revealed as the origin of subjectivity and the constant source of the authenticity, universality and intersubjectivity of the subject.

3. Habits, Identification and Forms of Life[1]

1. Introduction

From the phenomenological ontology that I have outlined in the preceding pages, it has been possible to distinguish between the praxical image and the anthropical image in the experience of our action and its meaning as a unity. And it has been shown how that unity is a form of life as a transcendent-immanent totality. So, every action has meaning, and every meaning refers to an action in the form of life. It is the latter that confers identity and subjectivity, for the subject is an incarnation of a form of life. This means that every subject is an incarnation of a 'We' or a particular image of human being. And therefore, in it the individual and the community are expressed in a unitary and inseparable way, as well as the set of possible actions with meaning. The following chapters are concerned with examining what exactly is the relationship between actions and the form of life as a unit of meaning; or how the latter is expressed in its habits. I do this in dialogue with various authors of contemporary philosophy as well as cognitive and social psychology. The result of this discussion aims to establish the concepts that will be key to the analysis of particular forms of life and the relationships between them.

This chapter aims to show that every habit is an action but not every action is a habit. The distinction between the two is important, because only habits are actions that imply identification and therefore

1 Some of the contents of this chapter have been expressed earlier in Daniel Rueda Garrido, 'Actions, Habits and Forms of Life', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 50:3 (2020), 321–34, https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12236.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0259.03

endow identity, although every action can become a habit. Moreover, this distinction is intended to undo the prejudice held throughout much of the history of Western philosophy that habits are automatic acts as opposed to actions. Thus, it is a matter of showing that habits are behaviours governed by a unitary principle and that this principle implies a way of being and acting, that is, the ontological principle of a form of life. This requires arguing about the relationship between habits and that form of life; and to argue that such habits are so because they would cease to be carried out if identification with another form of life were obtained. If the habits did not exist, there would be no personal identity either, nor could one speak of a communal identity. And these arguments contribute to the conclusion that habits are not automatic, yet require an identification and a will to be or to incarnate a particular image of being human.

In the second section, I explore the concept of habit in its structural characteristics. The first structural characteristic of habit that I underline is that of being an act born of a pre-reflective consciousness, that is, a consciousness that serves as the background to any consciousness of a particular object or action. That pre-reflective consciousness implies an identification with a particular form of life. I argue that habits require a free will to be obtained and that this can only be directed by a prior identification of the subject with a form of life as a whole. This leads me to discern the responsibility of the free agent with respect to his pre-reflective identification over and above his particular actions. Moreover, if habits are the product of a free will and a form of life with which the subject identifies, one cannot conclude but that habits are not an automatic behaviour, since they imply a certain analogical reasoning by which, wanting to maintain a particular course of action, I give myself a whole form of life.

And finally, once the concept of habit and its structural characteristics have been shown, I devote the last section to its comparison with and distinction from other phenomena that are often confused with habits, such as physiological reflexes, routines or skills. But, in fact, these last ones are automatic or repetitive behaviours, which moves them away from habits as actions carried out freely and under an identification with the form of life they constitute.

2. Actions and Habits

Following the body-mind dualism, the distinction between habits and actions assumed by a great many of the philosophers of the Western tradition have tended to identify, on the one hand, habits with automatic behaviours or mechanisms, endowed with a strong biological component and subjected to a necessary and unconscious realization associated with body functions. On the other hand, in the opposite direction, actions have been considered rational, free, related to the mind and the conscious states, the spirit or *Geist*, and ultimately, are the ones that has traditionally deserved the interest of philosophical studies.[2] This traditional distinction, as I say, can be traced throughout Western philosophy, both in the continental tradition and in the analytical one. This treatment of habits has not allowed us (among other things) to think properly about their relationship with forms of life and the responsibility that agents have regarding them.

In continental thought, René Descartes referred to habits as a sort of 'knowledge in the hands'.[3] So, although he attributed to it certain knowledge, this was purely bodily, a master movement but alien to the mind or consciousness, aided by his essential dualism. The same can be found centuries later in Maurice Merleau-Ponty,[4] for whom habits are strictly bodily habits, a sort of memory and knowledge that bodies exhibit without the aid of reflective thinking, as, for instance, the immediate knowledge we have about whether a doorway is high enough or wide enough to pass through it with our body, and by which we bend down so as not to hit our head with the frame of the door, without the need for reflection or calculation. Thus, as Dermot Moran puts it, 'Merleau-Ponty is keen to argue against habit as involving an initial mental act of recognition or the performance of an intellectual synthesis.'[5] So it is with Henri Bergson, who, in conceiving consciousness

2 See Bill Pollard, 'Identification, Psychology and Habits', in *New Ways in Philosophy of Action*, ed. by Jesús H. Aguilar, Andrei A. Buckareff and Keith Frankish (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 81–97.

3 René Descartes, *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. III: *The Correspondence*, ed. by John Cotingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 146.

4 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1945]).

5 Dermot Moran, 'Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology of Habituality and Habitus', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 42:1 (2011), 53–77 (p. 58).

as the product of the principle of life, or *élan vital*, and in identifying this with constant creativity, cannot but treat human habits in terms of mechanical repetition, as condensation of that creativity, and, ultimately, as a restriction of freedom. In his own words: 'Our freedom, in the very movements by which it is affirmed, creates the growing habits that will stifle it if it fails to renew itself by a constant effort: it is dogged by *automatism*.'[6]

In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, William James referred to habits in the sense of second nature; because for him, in his *Principles of Psychology*, habits are strictly related to animal or biological instincts. In fact, habits are those repetitive actions that (controlled by an external force, such as the environment or the education received) select and stabilize some instincts and, conversely, let others fade away. The habits thus understood are a second nature derived from instincts by means of repetitions imposed and carried out mechanically or automatically as well as unconsciously: 'A habit, once grafted on an instinctive tendency, restricts the range of the tendency itself, and keeps us from reacting on any but the habitual object, although other objects might just as well have been chosen had they been the first-comers.'[7] It is precisely this condition of automatic response that is relevant in James' account, for habits economize the expense of nervous and muscular energy and render easier and more accurate human actions.[8] Again, in his view, the distinction between habits and rational actions is obvious, the former being a response to sensation (body), while the latter is a movement guided by an idea or some high-level cognitive function.[9]

In the analytical tradition, very little has been written about habits, and probably partly because of its inherent conception of habit as a mechanical behaviour that is far from expressing any meaningful aspect for intellectual analysis in relation to consciousness. In Pollard's words:

> Habits have had some bad press in analytic philosophy. This is not only due to a prevailing intellectualism about what can count as an action in

6 Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. by Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan & Co., 1922), p. 134. Italics are mine.
7 William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890), II, p. 395.
8 *Ibid*., I, p. 113.
9 *Ibid*., I, pp. 115–16.

> the first place, but also due to misunderstandings of what habits are. Among other things, acceptance of the position on offer will depend on our being free from such prejudicial preconceptions.[10]

A champion of this conception was Gilbert Ryle, who in his book *The Concept of Mind* (1949), wrote a section that carries the significant title of 'Intelligent Capacities versus Habits', or, what is the same, distinction between 'skills' and 'competences'. For him, neither intelligent capacities nor habits involve propositional content (statements that can be viewed as true or false and trigger a reasoning for action), and only the former can be treated as a type of 'knowing how', that is, a behaviour that implies vigilance, judgment, training, and so on. So, 'when we describe someone as doing something by pure or blind habit, we mean that he does it *automatically* and without having to mind what he is doing',[11] while, when we describe skills, on the contrary, we describe someone doing something with care, judgment and learning from previous occasions. That entails another difference between habits and intelligent capacities, according to Ryle: 'It is of the essence of merely habitual practices that one performance is a replica of its predecessors. It is of the essence of intelligent practices that one performance is modified by its predecessors. The agent is still learning.'[12] Thus, habits are from then onwards in the analytical tradition seen as automatic responses caught in repetitions from which no learning and no variation is possible.

In order to find a different approach to habits and actions, we must go back to the origins of Western philosophy, to Aristotle. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle considers the *hexis* as a disposition that changes the nature of the action.[13] Making (craftsmanship or *poiêton*) and acting (*praktikon*) are different because of the disposition that is associated with each of them. In the first one, the end is beyond the action (a product or *ergon*), while in the second, the end is the action

10 Pollard, 'Identification, Psychology and Habits', pp. 85–86. See also, Bill Pollard, 'Habitual Actions', in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, ed. by Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 74–81 (pp. 74–75).

11 Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London and New York: Routledge, 1949), p. 30. Italics are mine.

12 *Ibid*., p. 30.

13 Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), II, 1140a 1–20, pp. 3863–64.

itself. In the mentioned sense, virtue is related to action (*praktikon*), not to making or creation. Then, in the opening lines of Book II, Aristotle intimately connects habits to virtue, in remarking that 'moral excellence [i.e., virtue] comes about as a result of habit'.[14] The precise nature of this relationship between virtue and habit is principally explicated through a partial analogy between virtue and the arts. Aristotle first wonders 'what we mean by saying we must become just by doing just acts, and temperate by doing temperate acts' given that 'if men do just and temperate acts, they are [or seem to be] already just and temperate'.[15] Aristotle's solution to this dilemma lies in a distinction (one not shared with the arts) between the internal and external conditions of virtue. The goodness of virtue, in contrast with the goodness of art, requires some addition: the moral agent must also be in a 'certain condition' when he acts.[16] In short, unlike the arts, virtue requires harmony between the external action and the internal states of an agent (*hexis*). Thus we might say that while the person learning virtue will do virtuous acts, he or she will only learn to do those virtuous acts virtuously with the practice that comes with real-life experience.[17] In exploring the dis-analogy of virtue to the arts, Aristotle also enumerates three other necessary 'conditions' of the moral agent: knowledge,[18] choice,[19] and character.[20] In sum, according to these three conditions imposed upon the moral agent, virtue cannot be either accidental, or involuntary, or erratic. It must then be a habit. And here the difference with respect to modern philosophical analysis becomes clear. For Aristotle, habit is not a mere repetition, but an action linked indissolubly to an internal disposition or internal state, which implies at least the consciousness of its realization; an action, thus, whose intrinsic value guarantees that it is done by itself

14 *Ibid*., 1103a 16–17, p. 3746.
15 *Ibid*., 1105a 17–20, p. 3752.
16 *Ibid*., 1105a 28–30, p. 3753.
17 *Ibid*., 1104a 33–b3, p. 3751. Blaise Pascal refers to a similar strategy in *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. by Honor Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), the so-called argument of the 'necessity of wager' (Fragment 680, pp. 152–58). He wrote that, in order to believe, the subject needs to act as if he already believed, for the acts or habits in themselves would make him believe (it will change his internal state, which, in turn, will make him attain the desired practice).
18 Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105a 31, p. 3753.
19 *Ibid*., 1105a 31–32, p. 3753.
20 *Ibid*., 1105a 31–b1, p. 3753.

(and not for an end beyond it). The habit from the Aristotelian ethics puts us out of the modern mechanistic biological pattern, which sees in habits an imitation of the automaton.

Following Aristotle, then, in this joint treatment of habits and actions, and therefore from a vision that exceeds the mechanistic account, is the starting point of this chapter and its positioning with respect to the subject matter. But still, in both classics and moderns, habits are seen as atomistic or isolated behaviour, with no connection to other habits. So, let us take a step further by reviewing a relevant account in this respect. Recently, a more holistic and comprehensive view of habits has been launched from cognitive science. This view is called enactivism. It was defended for the first time in *The Embodied Mind* (1991) by Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, and it has since then opened a new field of research. In general, they propose an interpretation of cognition that is based on the body: 'The overall concern is not to determine how some perceiver independent world is to be recovered; it is, rather, to determine the common principles or lawful linkages between sensory and motor systems that explain how action can be perceptually guided in a perceiver-dependent world.'[21] Cognition occurs when an organism acts on its environment and that action modifies the point of view from which it is perceived. Enactivism promotes a concept of cognition that is the result of understanding the importance of the activity of the living being (the organism with its particular characteristics, especially its mode of perception) and the environment in which it occurs. Cognition does not presuppose a given world that only later is represented (they refute the concept of representation in cognition), but a type of constructivism, by which cognition is simultaneous to the action on the environment.[22]

The authors aligned with enactivism see the individual in terms of an organic system made of internal components and functions, which are respectively taken as the whole and its operational parts. There are a few central themes important to underscore in this approach: 1)

21 Richard Menary, 'What is Radical Enactivism?', in *Radical Enactivism*, ed. by Richard Menary (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2006), pp. 1–12 (p. 2).

22 Lawrence Shapiro, *Embodied Cognition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 54.

Autonomy: The organic system is autonomous, for it only depends on its internal processes to generate and sustain its identity:[23] 'Autonomous systems are those that are inherently purposeful, in that they generate ends or purposes within themselves in order to maintain themselves.'[24] 2) Autopoiesis: The organic system produces its own living organization in a metabolic process for which 'the material components that are constantly being produced sustain that same network that produces them', that is, its materials are modified constantly but the organization remains.[25] The capacity to become a closed system like that is related to what they call operational closure, which, according to Varela, 'arises through the circular concatenation of processes to constitute an interdependent network'.[26] 3) Precariousness: This feature of the system makes clear that the individual processes cannot exist without the organizational whole and that, consequently, the metabolic identity of the organic system depends on the internal equilibrium. 4) Adaptivity: This capacity enables an organism to regulate itself in order to couple with its environment, seeking preferable encounters with it and avoiding potential risks: 'in that way, those situations that contribute to the conservation of its metabolic identity are viewed by the system as "intrinsically good", while those that challenge its subsistence as "intrinsically bad"'.[27] According to this approach, repeated behaviour or habits, understood as regulatory actions performed in order to adapt to an environment (safeguarding their internal balance), form habitual identities or forms of life that organisms strive to sustain. What I am interested in highlighting from this proposal is the understanding that each action is required by the internal balance of the individual's form of life; that is, the form of life is the organization in which the actions of the individual are accommodated, becoming habitual, that is, habits, to maintain this balance.

Enactivism, however, in spite of its important step towards a more comprehensive and accurate description of habits, remains within the

23 Susana Ramírez-Vizcaya and Tom Froese, 'The Enactive Approach to Habits: New Concepts for the Cognitive Science of Bad Habits and Addiction', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10 (2019), p. 4, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00301.

24 Rebekka Hufendiek, *Embodied Emotions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 15.

25 Ramírez-Vizcaya and Froese, 'The Enactive Approach to Habits', p. 5.

26 Quoted in ibid., p. 5.

27 *Ibid*., p. 5.

organic level, referring habits to the living being as isolated from the rest of its species, which, in human beings seems to be essential. That is to say, enactivism remains within the individual sphere. It is not able to go further into the social and cultural level, where habits intertwine with each other in a particular form of life promoted and filtered by what is seen as good or bad, profitable or not for such a community. This same lack in the proposals of enactivism has recently been pointed out by Rebekka Hufendiek, who, although also from an externalist and biological approach, defends the need to think of the individual (organism) embedded in a structured social environment, in which actions and habits in some way do not depend only on the individual and his or her well-being but on what the group establishes as socially regulated behaviour: 'an ontology that takes organisms to be embedded in a structured environment in which certain things are of value for us and should be approached, while others should be avoided'.[28]

Thus, by rejecting the presumed automaticity, the habit can be seen again with Aristotle as an action that implies a particular state or condition in the agents, of whom it can be said that they are in a certain way modified by that action and that, therefore, just as enactivism acknowledges, habits define the agents' identity. However, it happens that agent's identity, in the cognitive theory, depends exclusively on the individual in relationship with his environment, which can be favourable or dangerous and, therefore, habits would be reinforced or eliminated according to its adaptivity. This way (after all, caught into biology) of understanding the formation of habits and their preservation, does not fail to denounce a serious deficiency, because individuals do not seem to have, to such a degree, either the autonomy or the adaptability that are attributed to them from enactivism. The influence of the social environment, the actions and habits of other individuals as well as a degree of persuasion or constriction from positions of power, are some of the elements that seem to be left aside, because if a subject follows a form of life, being as he is in a social environment, that form of life will be shared and reinforced by the contact and perception of other subjects in that community.[29] And what is even more important, this

28 Hufendiek, *Embodied Emotions*, p. 19.

29 See an account of this necessary relationship of identity between individual and social groups in a recent paper by Daniel Moulin-Stożek, 'The Social Construction

form of life is not necessarily the best for the subject in isolation, but for the group or community to which he belongs or from which such a form of life emerges. For example, the neoliberal capitalist form of life could be positive for one subject (e.g., a citizen and entrepreneur of a large Western city) and negative or less positive for another (e.g., an under-waged worker in a factory for a Western firm in Indonesia), but such a form of life requires to be implemented by both if the community that is identified with it wants to maintain itself and still integrate even more into it.[30]

In this sense, we must emphasize that the form of life goes beyond the subject, in the way that, as the subject performs the actions of that form of life, transforming them into habits, he integrates himself more into that life and is more identified with it. This explains why one ends up thinking in the way one lives (thus reducing the possibilities that one would think in a different way). Therefore, the first thing that seems important to point out in this section is the relationship between action and habit. That is, although habits are actions, not all actions are or become habits. Habits are actions that constitute a form of life, that is, a whole. It is, in a first approach, the repetition of certain actions that constitutes a form of life. So, does an isolated action make up a form of life? Only potentially but not integrated yet in it, for an isolated action does not stand for an identification between the agent and the form of life, although it could be the start of building towards that identification.

At this point, and having already examined how actions and habits share the same source from which they are generated, and how habits respond to a greater integration in the form of life with respect to actions, it is necessary to emphasize the direct implications that this change of philosophical perception entails in the social and political level, which makes clear the importance of its meaning, especially in the present times. This view implies that habits are interrelated and co-dependent within a network of social behaviour (as stated above by enactivism). So, they cannot be discarded without at the same time

of Character', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 49:1 (2019), 24–39.

30 For an insight on neoliberal capitalist form of life, see Matthew McDonald, 'Social Psychology, Consumer Culture and Neoliberal Political Economy', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 47:3 (2017), 363–79. See also my analysis of capitalist subjectivity in Chapters 6 and 7 of this book.

discarding the entirety of the form of life to which they belong. That is, a change of habit requires a change in the totality of which it is a part. But that change can only occur if the subjects become aware (in the Sartrean notion of reflective consciousness) that their habits are a product of their free acceptance and not of necessity. That is the *sine qua non condition* and what I want to draw attention to. A change is possible precisely because habits are not instinctive or mechanical reactions. But neither are they mere isolated actions, without any connection between them and without a guiding principle. The recognition of such freedom and responsibility with respect to the form of life in which the agent is integrated is the inescapable ground without which no change can be expected. And, on the contrary, taking up Sartre's moral thought, any insistence on the impossibility of an alternative form of life, especially when the demand for change has been experienced, leads to a life lived in bad faith (*mauvaise fois*).[31]

3. Habits and Form of Life

Harry Frankfurt established in a well-known article the agent as a cause of his actions with regards to a second-order volition.[32] That is to say, actions that are carried out because the agent has motives that go back to an identification with what the action represents, so they go beyond a decision about carrying out that specific action. The incompatibilist libertarians defend, on the contrary, that only in decisions taken without any kind of constriction or conditioning motivation, can free will be obtained. Some have followed the criticism made by Gary Watson (1975) to Frankfurt's notion of second-order volition, alleging an unnecessary reduplication of levels, for a second level cannot explain what it leaves without explaining the first-order volition.[33] And in this regard, the

31 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956 [1943]): 'the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of falsehood. Only what changes everything is the fact that in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth. Thus the duality of the deceiver and the deceived does not exist here.' p. 49. In *L`être et le néant*, 'c'est que dans la mauvaise foi, c'est à moi-même que je masque la vérité. Ainsi, la dualité du trompeur et du trompé n'existe pas ici.' p. 83.

32 This is one of the versions of the so-called 'source argument or principle'.

33 Gary Watson, 'Free Agency', *Journal of Philosophy*, 72:8 (1975), 205–20.

notion of habit defended in this book has something to add. For if habits express a certain need with respect to the form of life and the principle that constitutes it, they nevertheless do not cease to exhibit a certain freedom in the adoption of the form of life that these precise habits demand. That is, the chosen form of life and the constitutive principle with which the agent identifies can be interpreted as Frankfurt's notion of second-order volition, while the first-order volition is the habitual actions that constitute the particular form of life. If the former is freely chosen (at least insofar as it involves free identification with it, or 'want to want'), the latter is necessary (it is determined by the first), and more so the more the agent is integrated into the form of life with which he identifies. Against Watson's critique, then, it can be added that, on the one hand, it is necessary to resort to the form of life to understand how habits are an expression of a free identification of the agent, even if the habits themselves are not free in the incompatibilist sense of being able to do otherwise (the one who identifies with a particular form of life cannot but behave according to it). On the other hand, we must emphasize that in the agent, these two levels (methodologically distinguished) are phenomenologically only one, that is, the agent maintains his habits precisely because they constitute his form of life.

The latter clearly expresses that the perspective taken in this section concerning habits, as a conscious, rational and free behaviour, is situated within the compatibilist position. That is to say, habits present us with a behaviour that is both free and necessary: the form of life with which the agent freely identifies requires a series of habits, which if they are necessary as constitutive of a form of life, are, nevertheless, the expression of a freely accepted commitment. My habits define me, and I define my habits by identifying myself with a particular form of life. The latter leads us to a somewhat more detailed analysis of the characteristics that habits share with actions, as it has been analyzed traditionally and, in particular, in the philosophy of action: consciousness, free will or intentions and rationality. As Pollard writes:

> Habitual actions do not fit comfortably into contemporary philosophical conceptions of action, or not at least in analytic philosophy. Under the influence of Anscombe (1957) and Davidson (1980), debate has focused on the nature of intentional actions; on issues such as the role of the

> reasons 'for which' we act; and on the nature of psychological antecedents of actions such as beliefs, desires, and intentions.[34]

In the first place, to be conscious does not necessarily mean to reason, that is, calculation of means for ends. Consciousness has two dimensions: a reflective consciousness and a pre-reflective or non-positional consciousness, where the former is impossible without the latter, as Sartre insisted.[35] This distinction between consciousness of different orders is also confirmed by the cognitive science, which uses respectively the terms high-powered sense of self-conscious or self-reflective agency and rationality, and, on the other hand, lower-powered sense of conscious pre-reflective intentional agency and desire-based volition:

> The crucial point here is that self-consciousness or self-reflection requires pre-reflectively conscious sensorimotor subjectivity, but pre-reflectively conscious sensorimotor subjectivity does not require self-consciousness or self-reflection.[36]

Being aware of something presupposes as a background a passive consciousness on which one focuses. When we act, we focus only on those moments that are required, but deep down the non-positional consciousness continues to guide our behaviour. For example, when we dress or wash ourselves, a repetitive action gives us a certain capacity, so we do not need to constantly look at what our hands do, which does not mean that we are not aware of what we are doing; we only focus when we do not find the sleeve of the sweater or we do not succeed in buttoning our shirt. This consciousness is precisely the one that assures the identification between the agent and his behaviour. If it were automatic, the agent would not conceive certain habits as belonging to his idiosyncrasy. This conception of human action as conscious, even in relation to habits, surpasses the dualism between action and habit, as well as between mind and body, because the agent is a consciousness that acts in the world, and that consciousness is indissoluble from its action.

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34 Pollard, 'Habitual Actions', pp. 74–75.

35 See Chapter 1 of this book.

36 Robert Hanna and Michelle Maiese, *Embodied Minds in Action* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 32.

The second characteristic of habits is a consequence of being acts with varying degrees of consciousness. It has been argued that habits are the product of free will and not merely mechanical behaviour, and this requires some qualification. Precisely because our habits are carried out pre-reflectively conscious of their identification with a form of life, those habits are carried out freely, because the identification with them is presupposed. That they are carried out freely does not mean that they are carried out with a plan or that they are acts that we choose regarding an alternative, such as smoking or not smoking, since the habits require each other[37] and all of them constitute a form of life which, in turn, is the essence of each of these habits. As in fact happens, for example, in the case of the subject who goes out to have fun on Saturday nights as a habit; he does not do it automatically, for, on the contrary, he is aware (in a pre-reflective consciousness that can become reflective) that that is what is stipulated for young people in their form of life, and that form of life requires that habit. The freedom with which the agent arranges the date with his friends on Saturday is always pervaded by a certain obligation, without ceasing to be freely accepted ('that is what they are supposed to do'). Thus, habits express the freedom to do what requires or demands a certain form of life with which one identifies to the point of being our own identity: the habit shows more than any other action the freedom of what is necessary, that is to say, to be free to do what must be done within a given existential totality (in this sense habits are essentially a quest for subjective meaning within social life).

The argument of manipulation put forward by Derk Pereboom, in his so-called 'four-case argument' (according to which what the agent wants or what the agent identifies with could be manipulated, for which he provides four different cases or thought experiments), does not deprive the habit of its freedom, because it is born from the imitation of an action directed by (the principle of) the form of life and the image of human being with which the agent identifies.[38] On the other hand,

37 Something also claimed recently by cognitive scientists related to enactivism; see Ramírez-Vizcaya and Froese, 'The Enactive Approach to Habits'; and, for the general theory of enactivism, see Francisco J. Varela, Eleanor Rosch and Evan Thompson, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

38 Derk Pereboom, *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

there are aspects that favour certain determinism, i.e., the necessity of habitual behaviour: the identification could be manipulated and the form of life with which this identification is carried out implies a series of actions and habits that are necessary. All of these are determining factors. However, as I have shown above, the identification with this form of life must be considered free as long as the agent is aware of it (even though in pre-reflective consciousness), which he confirms by acting according to its principle. By acting in this fashion, the agent paradoxically expresses the need imposed on himself through that identification. Thus, the agent is conscious of such identification at a pre-reflective level (where manipulation may have occurred) and is responsible for taking it to a reflective level. The agent is therefore responsible for such identification, for as Patrick Todd puts it, 'having free will is [thus] a necessary condition on being responsible, which is in turn a necessary condition on the appropriateness of being held responsible'.[39]

Finally, if the agent acts consciously and freely in pursuit of an action with which he identifies, this action cannot be considered in any way irrational (or non-rational), because in that case rationality would simply be associated with the predominant pattern of instrumental reason, leaving out other uses of reason such as the dialectical described in this chapter (and that will be explored in more details in Chapter 5): in habits, the action performed is not taken as a means or instrument but as an end, which is identified with the integration in a posited totality; and the habit expresses that totality in a dialectical relation that, in turn, constitutes the identity of the agents themselves—as has already been shown previously. We might not rationalize in terms of means to ends, but while carrying on the habit, we are conscious of our objective and pre-reflectively conscious of our consciousness, or as Sartre put it: 'There can be no *exis*, no habit without practical vigilance [*pas d'exis, pas d'habitude sans vigilance pratique*], that is to say, without a concrete objective to determine them in their essential indetermination, and without a project to actualise them by specifying them.'[40]

39 Patrick Todd, 'Manipulation and Moral Standing: An Argument for Incompatibilism', *Philosophers' Imprint*, 12:7 (2012), 1–18 (p. 3).

40 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Vol. I (London: Verso, 2004 [1960]), pp. 455–56. In *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Vol. I (Paris: Galimard, 1960), p. 468.

Consequently, the actual habits that the agents hold are expressions of their free will because they identify themselves with them (the capacity to act otherwise is not needed). But the form of life that habits constitute can be considered an expression of the agents' free will only if the agents can, at least potentially, identify with another form of life (and the principle that drives it); that is, if the agents are responsible for that identification because they can reject it instead (given a situation in which they understand they must reject it, as shown in Chapter 2 on conversion). The agents are morally responsible for the good or bad within their form of life and they are also rationally responsible, for they can become reflectively aware of their identification. That is to say, it is their responsibility to make reflective the spontaneous identification made at a pre-reflective level,[41] which is nothing more than becoming aware of whom they want to be (a decision already made by their original identification and will). In that way, if by their actions the subjects might be legally and ethically accountable, for their identification they should be morally accountable.[42] This last argument satisfies the principle for moral responsibility adduced by John Martin Fischer[43] and, in a sense, also meets the definition of freedom by Galen Strawson in terms of 'quasi' *causa sui*,[44] for the agents by identifying themselves with a different form of life, give themselves a different identity, with different habits. If *habits* belong to the category of 'couldn't do otherwise', on the contrary, *identification* with a form of life can become reflective and thus can be refused or affirmed, which carries with it a responsibility.

41 This does not mean that some forms of life are intrinsically better or worse than others (at least no universal criteria can be drawn from this approach). That is an assumption that the reader will not find in this book, and that will become clearer in the following chapters. The responsibility mentioned indicates that the subjects are responsible for their habits in terms of their form of life. Therefore, they can be held responsible for its consequences and be questioned not only about the content that their form of life does encompass, but about all that is left out in the shadows.

42 For this claim in relation to racist habits, see Helen Ngo, *The Habits of Racism: A Phenomenology of Racism and Racialized Embodiment* (London: Lexington Books, 2017), p. 24. I take here the realm of the moral in relation to identification, while I associate the legal and the ethical with the code of behaviour and doctrines that derive from the form of life. That is to say, the difference between what they want to want (moral) and what they should want (ethical).

43 John Martin Fischer, 'Responsibility and Autonomy', in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Action*, ed. by Timothy O'Connor and Constantine Sandis (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 309–16.

44 Galen Strawson, 'Free Agents', in *Real Materialism and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 359–86.

Are freedom, consciousness and rationality (in the dialectical and not in the analytical sense) necessary to explain why agents follow particular habits and forms of life? The biopolitics elaborated by Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben would argue that in societies of control, such as that of industrial and post-industrial capitalism, agents are persuaded and driven to follow various patterns of behaviour through what have been called 'dispositives', defined as 'the force of a decision and the enacting, defining aspects of a law or a legal decision'.[45] These dispositives would serve as behavioural triggers and would not require any of the characteristics defended in this chapter. If those who argue so are correct, the agents would think themselves free when otherwise they would only be performing the actions that have been imposed on them by various channels and dispositives. In the extreme case, and accepting that this is the most plausible account of the way social agents act, it could be argued that in this belief of freedom there is certain consciousness and identification with what is done, to the point that, as Foucault himself wrote, 'power is exercised only over free subjects'.[46] Regardless of whether there are devices that control parcels of social and individual life (or even the totality of it, as in the state of indistinctness between law and life, *bios* in opposition to *zoe*, that Agamben has studied),[47] if we accept that there are habits and forms of life, then there needs to be a constitutive principle with which agents identify freely and consciously. The ultimate importance of underlining such defining characteristics of habits is that they make it inevitable that agents assume responsibility not only for the actions they perform, but also for the form of life with which they ultimately identify and with which they become 'accomplices', in the sense of sharing responsibility.

According to the above, and if the arguments have been accepted, it should be concluded that we are responsible for our habits because it is our identification with the form of life—that they constitute—from which they originate. And in this sense, our incarnation is not free of

45 Jeffrey Bussolini, 'What is a Dispositive?', *Foucault Studies*, 10 (2010), 85–107 (p. 105).

46 See quoted and discussed in Samuel Bagg, 'Beyond the Search for the Subject: An Anti-Essentialist Ontology for Liberal Democracy', *European Journal of Political Theory* (2018), 1–37 (p. 27) of advance online publication, https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885118763881.

47 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

moral burden, because the agent is responsible for making reflective that identification made at the pre-reflective level. The latter means that the freedom that can be shown in the examination of social habits combines the two traditional types: on the one hand, the identification of the agent with the form of life in which he integrates is supposed to be an act of freedom because it is within his reach to make this identification reflective, which implies the principle of the capacity for doing otherwise, or more appropriately, the capacity for *making a different identification*, and hence his moral responsibility. This does not mean that it is a pure act of the will, but a process mediated by an identity crisis, since the form of life, as has been said, constitutes the identity of the agent. And, on the other hand, the principle of freedom applied to a particular action carried out by an agent who identifies himself with the form of life in which that action was required (driving to work every day or spending more than he actually has, as examples of the hegemonic form of life). That is to say, a version of Frankfurt's second-order volition. The agents cannot change or avoid their habits (driven by a pre-reflective identification), but they can identify themselves with a different form of life and an alternative image of being human (I have suggested in previous sections how this conversion is attained).

4. Conclusion: Habits vs. Routines, Skills and Motor Responses

If, as I have argued, habits are those actions that are guaranteed by a certain identification with a form of life, and if it is accepted also that identification ensures its continuity, it seems that many types of behaviour, frequently considered habits, are not such. It seems irremediable then, at this point, to examine the different phenomena that are usually taken as habits and to establish their differences.

First, routines are usually included within habits or at least as a similar phenomenon.[48] And the truth is that the difference between routines and habits is not completely obvious because both refer to a repetitive action performed with a certain degree of consciousness, for

48 Claude Romano, 'The Equivocity of Habit', *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal of the New School for Social Research*, 38:1 (2017), 3–24 (pp. 9–10).

example, drinking tea at five every evening could well be denominated *routine*, but following the arguments given so far, as it is an action in which the agent can express an identification with a certain form of life, we could also denominate it a *habit*. And yet, it seems that there are two key aspects to distinguishing routine from habit. The first aspect is that while the routine is in itself a repeated action over time, the habit arises in relation to a routine, or, in other words, while the routine is reduced to the action performed, the habit is what the routine brings about. The second aspect to take into account to differentiate routine from habit is that precisely what the habit brings about is an identification of the agent with that action and with the form of life of which it is a part. A routine, then, can easily be abandoned, but a habit cannot cease without provoking an identity crisis. You can stop running in the morning if it was done as a routine, but you cannot stop training physically if training is a habit that constitutes a part of the form of life that has been assumed as an identity. And the same can be said about smoking, when one identifies oneself with that action and becomes part of a form of life, quitting implies a vacuum that has to be replaced by another habit in the same form of life or the change of the latter. The ultimate test of this difference between habits and routines is that a routine can be imposed, the habit, on the contrary, cannot. Besides, the latter is acquired from the routine, when the agent establishes an identification with the action performed as part of his form of life.[49]

Second, it is necessary to discriminate between habit and skill. For example, having the skill to build a house, to care for the sick, to make a sculpture or to make a painting are actions that, for Plato,[50] are related to *Technê*, or knowledge about how to do something (*Epistasthai*, or know-how). Aristotle opposes skills to actions,[51] because in both the disposition is different: the first, skills, produce something, and therefore, are the means to an end, while the action (or habit as an action) is the end itself. This distinction of the Stagirite can be reinforced with the approach

49 For a different account in relation to social learning, see Nathalie Lazaric, 'The Role of Routines, Rules and Habits in Collective Learning: Some Epistemological and Ontological Considerations', *European Journal of Economic and Social Systems*, 14:2 (2000), 157–71.

50 Plato, *Republic*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by John Cooper (Indianapolis and Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997), 342d, 346a, pp. 987, 989–90.

51 Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140a 1–20, pp. 3863–64.

proposed in this section; that is, in the case of habit, the end is the habit itself, which is identified with a certain form of life, while in the case of the ability to make a sculpture or to paint with oil paint, the end is not the action itself but the product of the action, respectively, a statue or an oil painting. Habit does not produce a form of life, yet it is itself a form of life. However, in a final clarification, it could be said that a certain skill can be considered a habit at a social level, if, for example, oil painting becomes part of a form of life, and therefore, practising that skill can be considered a habit with which a certain community is identified, for example, those that incarnate the artistic form of life.

Third, automatic body movements are usually taken as habits, but, based on previous arguments, they might be better understood as motor responses, reflex movements or impulses. William James, who understood that habits operate on instincts by selecting some of them in particular and developing or fixing them, also distinguished habits from those other phenomena that we call motor responses.[52] The latter are not fixed by human work but have a merely physical substrate, such as sneezing when looking directly at the sun, or scratching our elbows because of the dryness of the skin. These are not made voluntarily and they neither express a complete consciousness nor can they be understood as a free and voluntary satisfaction of a requirement with respect to a form of life. In this sense can be understood the results of the experimental work done by Tanya Chartrand and John Bargh (1999) with regard to the so-called *chameleon effect*,[53] which prove that the movements perceived in another subject, with *which there is some empathy*, are mechanically imitated (*perception-behaviour link*); the movements with which Chartrand and Bargh have worked are fundamentally reflex movements, such as the movement of the leg or arm, scratching when the other subject scratches, or could even include the fact of yawning when the other yawns. The interesting thing about the experiments carried out by these social psychologists, for the purposes of this section, is that they show the innate power of the behaviour we perceive (perceptual stimulus), which could be at the grounds of the imitation of others to which already Gabriel Tarde referred a century ago to explain

52 James, *The Principles of Psychology*, II, p. 384.

53 Tanya Chartrand and John Bargh, 'The Chameleon Effect: The Perception-Behavior Link and Social Interaction', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76:6 (1999), 893–910.

social facts; but to take that step would be an unjustified leap, for the imitation of actions requires not only the apprehension of meaning but a sort of pre-reflective identification on the part of the agent. This makes imitation not merely a biological process of stimulus-response, which is somehow implied (although contradictory to their goals) in the very conclusions of the experiment where it is suggested that imitation or mimicry is performed under the condition of a certain *empathy* between the candidate and the confederate. I will take up this issue in the next chapter.

4. Forms of Life, Imitation and Conscious Will[1]

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I propose an account on human free will that is compatible with conditioning in social contexts. The argument that summarizes my claim is that the perception of other people's behaviour conditions the agent in imitating that behaviour, as evidence from social psychology holds,[2] and thus, what the agent perceives and experiences becomes the motive for his actions. However, in opposition to other interpretations, I endorse that although the actions of the agents have their potential motives in the perceived actions, these only become motives through the consciousness of the agents. For the agents, by willing to act in the way that they do, reveal an identification with those actions that they imitate. I consider it common sense that the agents do not identify with all modes of being but only with those with which they have something in common, and that equally they do not identify with all modes of acting but only with that mode in which they act and which they share with others. That is, with their form of life. If we think, for example, of the act of opening the door for a woman to pass through (a sort of courtesy), it seems that it is an act (like that of all customs and habits)

1 This chapter is an adapted version of an article published in *Mind and Society* (Springer Nature). See Daniel Rueda Garrido, 'Imitation, Conscious Will and Social Conditioning', *Mind and* Society, 20 (2020), pp. 85–102.

2 Tanya Chartrand and John Bargh, 'The Chameleon Effect: The Perception-Behavior Link and Social Interaction', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76:6 (1999), 893–910; John Bargh and Melissa Ferguson, 'Beyond Behaviorism: On the Automaticity of Higher Mental Processes', *Psychological Bulletin*, 126:6 (2000), 925–45; Melissa Ferguson and John Bargh, 'How Social Perception Can Automatically Influence Behavior', *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 8:1 (2004), 33–39.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0259.04

that has been perceived previously and with which the male agent has identified (carrying out that action is part of his self-image, because he identifies with it).[3] If the agent did not identify with this way of acting and being, even if he perceived this behaviour on a daily basis, he would not necessarily imitate it. He would not imitate it because pre-reflectively he does not identify with it. Let us say, that in such action this agent does not see himself reflected.

Once the general line of thought has been set out and the fundamental concepts defined, I then move on to break down and carefully examine my arguments against the current literature on the topic. The thesis defended in this chapter is twofold: first, it is argued that imitation is not possible without the pre-reflective consciousness of the agents, whereby the latter identify themselves with a certain way of being and acting, that is, a form of life. Second, as a consequence of the first, imitation requires perceptual stimuli and freedom. Thus, within the social context, perceptual conditioning requires equally the freedom and consciousness of the agents. That is, conscious will. In other words, the synthetic union of the Sartrean dichotomy of facticity and freedom. This freedom to imitate the perceived behaviour with which the agent identifies, in turn makes us reflect about the lesser degree of freedom involved in not having a model to imitate in particular social situations. That is, freedom understood as arbitrariness and randomness.

In the following sections, I aim to explore this argument from several aspects related to the free will debate. In section 2, I examine the role of consciousness in imitation within the agentive process as described above. In section 3, I submit that the alternative possibility is unnecessary for claiming free will from the standpoint of a conscious recognition of a motive. In doing so, I emphasize the need to study perceptual stimuli and conscious will in connection with each other. I thus suggest a version of the compatibilist approach, by which, although agents are the cause of their action, their motives are linked to a necessary external conditioning. In section 4, I develop my thesis at the level of

3 See William McDougall's analysis of imitation as the process that secures organized social life, in his *An Introduction to Social Psychology* (Kitchener, ONT: Batoche Books, 2001 [1919]). Gabriel Tarde (the source of McDougall) in *The Laws of Imitation*, trans. by Elsie Worthington Clews Parsons (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1962), attributes the same important role to imitation in the process of social group formation and cohesion.

social conditioning. In order to act freely, thus, social agents require both perceptual stimuli (in terms of social actions and situations) and their conscious will. In the final section, the chapter concludes exploring some consequences of the view conveyed throughout the chapter.

2. Perception-Behaviour Link: The Starting Point

I begin my argumentation by acknowledging the above-mentioned findings of Tanya Chartrand's and John Bargh's 1999 article, 'The Chameleon Effect'. In the article, they describe three experiments conducted by the authors to throw light on the 'perception-behavior link'. According to their results, the perception of a recurrent behaviour produces in the observer the unconscious repetition of that behaviour. In other words, the perception-behaviour link shows that we imitate other people's behaviour as we perceive it. And this mimicry, as they conveyed in their article, was said to be based on shared perspectives and empathy between the people.[4] That is, the participants tend to imitate the movements of more empathic confederates and those who share the same perspective. At the same time, they postulated that the imitation facilitates the interrelationship between people. For my case, I would like to quote the important findings of this article, which was updated by others in the same line of research.[5] First, the notion of perception-behaviour link as endorsed by Chartrand and Bargh: 'We have argued that the perception-behavior link, through which merely perceiving an action performed by another can lead one to perform that action, is the mechanism behind the often observed behavior mimicry and consequent empathic understanding within social interactions.'[6] Their goal was to prove that 'the existence of an automatic, unintended, and passive effect of perception on behavior

4 Chartrand and Bargh, 'The Chameleon Effect', p. 906.

5 See the defence of determinism (natural and cultural) in Paul-Henri Holbach, 'The Illusion of the Free Will', in *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*, ed. by Joel Feinberg (Encino, CA: Dickenson Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 418–22. And more recently within social psychology, see Roy Baumeister and John Bargh, 'Conscious and Unconscious: Toward an Integrative Understanding of Human Mental Life and Action', in *Dual-Process Theories of the Social Mind*, ed. by J. W. Sherman, Bertrand Gawronski and Y. Trope (New York: Guilford Press, 2014), pp. 35–49.

6 Chartrand and Bargh, 'The Chameleon Effect', p. 905.

has important ramifications for whether social behavior can occur nonconsciously and without intention'.[7] The findings of Chartrand, Bargh and his fellow researchers are important as a starting point because they shed light on the connections between perception and behaviour in simple movements such as touching the face when the confederate touches his face, or swinging the feet when the confederate swings his. But their conclusions are insufficient because they assume between perception and imitation a mechanical process or automatic response. That is to say, even if we accept that at a nonconscious level we react imitating what we perceive in a stimulus-response pattern, that does not prove exactly that the same happens in more complex actions, when the agent's awareness is necessary for the action to be performed, sustained or completed. Furthermore, empathy, which supposedly facilitates the imitation of the behaviour observed according to the mentioned authors, implies more than a perceptual content. That is, such empathy indicates a certain awareness of the action and the agent that performs it at a level that goes beyond the mechanical response. It seems to indicate certain identification between the observer and the agent (and the actions of the latter). And that is where my arguments take root.

However, Jeremy Gray, John Bargh and Ezequiel Morsella (2013)[8] and Bargh together with other researchers already mentioned such as Melissa Ferguson (2000, 2004) and Chartrand (1999), have suggested in their publications that the automaticity of the unconscious mind can also be extended to the conscious behaviour: 'On the assumption that behavioral responses are mentally represented and associated with perceptual representations, behavioral responses might be among the forms of knowledge that are automatically activated in response to

7 *Ibid.*, p. 894. The orientation of the above experiments should be contrasted and complemented with the finding of 'mirror neurons' and the analysis carried out by one of their discoverers, Vittorio Gallese, regarding the imitation of social behaviour on the basis of this neurological component. For a critical approach from a phenomenological perspective with regards to this kind of biological grounding of imitation, see Dan Zahavi, 'Empathy and Mirroring: Husserl and Gallese', in *Life, Subjectivity & Art: Essays in Honor of Rudolf Bernet*, ed. by Roland Breeur and Ullrich Melle (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), pp. 217–54.

8 Jeremy Gray, John Bargh and Ezequiel Morsella, 'Neural Correlates of the Essence of Conscious Conflict: fMRI of Sustaining Incompatible Intentions', *Experimental Brain Research*, 229:3 (2013), 453–65.

perceiving a social stimulus.'[9] In my view, although very important support can be derived from the experiments carried out by these authors to affirm that agents are primed by their perceptions, automatic behaviour cannot be obtained as long as the agents are conscious of their actions.

That for two reasons: First, to be aware is to know that such action is taking place. This would be what we do when we have reflective consciousness. Automaticity would be equivalent to not having this knowledge. For example, it would be cutting tomatoes and onions without knowing that you are cutting tomatoes and onions. This is very unlikely to be the case when it is a complex action that requires selecting the products and having the ability to cut them without harming yourself. Second, reflective consciousness involves a pre-reflective consciousness, such as the consciousness of being who you are and that you are preparing a salad when you cut tomatoes and onions. Automaticity implies responding to a stimulus, so when the stimulus is over, the response is also over. In contrast, the pre-reflective consciousness that guarantees positional consciousness (or awareness of a particular object) is the one that allows complex actions to be carried out continuously and, therefore, it is the one that allows us to decide to make a salad or to change our activity. It is also that consciousness that allows us to recognize our interlocutor as a person with whom we identify. The pre-reflective consciousness of that identification (which might amount to empathy)[10] is the condition for us to smile at him or continue talking to him and even to touch our faces when our interlocutor does so. As a counterexample, we would not do any of the above voluntarily and spontaneously if we were not conscious (pre-reflectively) of that identification (being pre-reflectively conscious

9 Ferguson and Bargh, 'How Social Perception Can Automatically Influence Behavior', p. 34.

10 This empathy that I associate here with the concept of identification is not so much the capacity to apprehend the incarnated entity of the other, that is to say, to understand the intentions of the other and to be able to explain them; the latter would be the traditional meaning in phenomenology (*Einfühlung*), see James Jardine, 'Husserl and Stein on the Phenomenology of Empathy: Perception and Explication', *Synthesis Philosophica*, 29:2 (2014), 273–88. The empathy to which I refer, on the contrary, is that of coincidence in the same *want* to want the action or actions carried out. It is, in short, an identification with the image of the human being that the other enacts and which is therefore verified in the way he or she behaves. My empathy is my identification with these co-subjects.

does not mean that the agent has direct knowledge of it). As a result, agents who have been exposed to perceptual stimuli do not necessarily end up imitating them, for imitation cannot be automatic but mediated by consciousness. Therefore, the conscious will of an action reveals its identification with a certain way of being and acting, or what we have been exploring so far as a 'form of life'.

The referred to experiments in social psychology place us before what is considered determinism in the free will debate.[11] Without taking into account the different versions that can be found, determinism understands that the action of the agent can be explained sufficiently by a cause (in this case, the perceived action) that is beyond the agent's will. Its realization is dependent on the cause, which is a sufficient cause. Without it, the action could not have been obtained.[12] In the perception-behaviour link theory, determinism gives rise to an automatism of biological basis by which the primed action is considered a response to the physical stimulus. This determinism, in some of its versions, continues to be defended by a large number of authors. However, starting from Chartrand and Bargh's paradigmatic case, it does not seem that it is possible to understand human action in these terms. So I would like to argue that the ability to identify with actions is what makes imitation possible. That is implicit even in the results of the experiments mentioned, because empathy requires the understanding of something beyond the mere perceptual content. That is to say, it requires of the consciousness—the consciousness that both the phenomenological tradition with Edmund Husserl[13] and Sartre[14] and the current cognitive psychology[15] denominate pre-reflective consciousness (Sartre also calls it non-positional consciousness), which is the possibility of having the

11 For a complete and accurate account on determinism, see Timothy O'Connor and Christopher Franklin, 'Free Will', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward Zalta (Spring 2021 edition), https://plato. stanford.edu/archives/aspr20212018/entries/freewill/.

12 Patrick Todd, 'Manipulation and Moral Standing: An Argument for Incompatibilism', *Philosophers' Imprint*, 12:7 (2012), 1–18.

13 Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 142.

14 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948 [1940]), p. 162; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel. E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956 [1943]), p. 53.

15 Robert Hanna and Michelle Maiese, *Embodied Minds in Action* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 32.

particular (or reflective) consciousness of the perceived objects. This pre-reflective consciousness would be that by which we understand or establish some empathy or identification with the person or action we perceive. Only when this identification is given, is spontaneous imitation possible, insofar as no one imitates those actions or people with whom they do not identify. Think about how unlikely it is that someone will imitate the actions of another with whom they do not identify, or whom they dislike, while it seems a common experience to imitate those with whom one identifies and whom one admires, or, with whom, at least, one thinks to have something in common. Thus, according to the above, I argue against mechanic imitation or automatism.

3. Conscious Will and Perception: A Compatibilist Approach

In this section, I aim to discuss how it is consciousness that introduces the required freedom so that an action is not a mere response to a perceptual stimulus as in physical determinism.[16] First, I review the general claims in favour of consciousness as a factor that makes freedom possible. Second, I defend the first part of my thesis based on these claims. That is, imitation requires the agent's pre-reflective consciousness of identification with an anthropical image (as shown in Chapter 1), which filters the series of actions that can be performed. By filtering, I mean that this type of pre-reflective consciousness makes it possible to will certain actions and not others. Therefore, it makes the agents take those perceived actions as their motives. It does not mean that they reject the others. It means that they are motives just because consciousness presents them as such to the agents. The other perceptual stimuli are not motives at all. The agents will only imitate those acts with which they identify, so these acts and no others will be their motives. Among several possible stimuli, the motive of the action will be that perceived action with which the agent identifies. To identify here is to experience it as part of oneself, as that which one wants to want (as in the notion of identification examined above in Chapter 3 with respect to Harry Frankfurt's second-order volition).

16 See Eddy Nahmias, Thomas Nadelhoffer and S. Morris, 'The Phenomenology of Free Will', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 11:7/8 (2004), 162–79.

In the debate on free will, the actions we perform either may be necessary according to a certain biological, historical or cultural determination (hard determinism), or may arise from a free and rational decision of the agent (libertarianism), or may be understood as necessary and at the same time freely adopted. The latter is what is considered compatibilism, and is the one that best suits the explanation of habits as the constitutive actions of a form of life, as shown already in the previous chapter. Conversely, the first two options are those that are considered to be versions of incompatibilism (either necessity over freedom or freedom over necessity). The classical arguments to support that agents act freely are based on the principle of sourcehood and alternative possibilities. Those are, thus, the arguments that I aim to explore in order to show their links to consciousness. I begin with the argument related to the principle of sourcehood, from which the thesis I have just outlined is based. I then analyze its particularities from a recent version proposed by Carolina Sartorio. Second, I defend my thesis against the argument that freedom is only possible if there is an alternative possibility. I conclude this section by suggesting that my thesis contains aspects that make it more relevant to social explanation than other arguments on sourcehood.

3.1. Sourcehood Principle

The sourcehood principle gives rise to the argument that makes the agent, as the cause of his own action, prevail over intentions, reasons, other alternatives and so on. That is, the condition for there to be free will (and free acts) is that the action is caused by the agent and that the agent is the source of the action.[17] This view has traditionally been taken by libertarians, although Robert Kane refuted it as an explanation that implies a mysterious self or substance, what he called 'extra factor'. In what follows, I assume this agent-causation view. The agent is not a substance but a subject who acts based on his will (what he wants or desires to do), and he does it consciously (although why he wills a particular action is related to his pre-reflective consciousness, that

17 Robert Kane, 'Libertarianism', in John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom and Manuel Vargas, *Four Views on Free Will* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 5–43 (pp. 24–25).

which tells about his identifications). Hence, bearing that in mind, I turn to explore a recent version in this sense to contrast and outline my view.

Recently, Sartorio has endorsed a version of sourcehood which she calls 'actual causes' (AC) for compatibilist free will and has refuted the principle of alternative possibilities (AP). The AC model goes back to Harry Frankfurt,[18] who took 'freedom to be only a function of the actual sources or the actual causes of action'.[19] The AC model is grounded in the idea that the agent is free or responsible only due to the facts that directly cause his actions and not other facts. That is, with regard to Frankfurt's case, even in the scenario in which the scientist who is ready to intervene if the agent intends to perform the option not favoured by the former (that implies a sort of determinism), the actual causal sources of the agent's behaviour are the same.[20] The actual causal sources of the agent's behaviour are facts that according to Sartorio are sufficient conditions for freedom. Thus, those conditions rule out any other possible condition as in the alternative possibilities account.

3.2. Analysis of Sartorio's Compatibilist Account

Certainly, the view I am endorsing in this chapter has concomitance with Sartorio's compatibilist account for free will, but several relevant aspects differ from this author's.

Following A. J. Ayer's counterfactual approach, against Sartorio,[21] the agent's motive is the necessary cause for an action because the action would not have happened if the motive had not emerged. That does not mean that if the motive emerges, the action happens, for that would make it a sufficient cause. Hence, the perceptual stimuli are motives because they are necessary conditions for the particular action, but they are not sufficient by themselves to make that action happen. Those very same perceptual stimuli might not be the cause of the action (i.e., they might not have been considered motives) if the agent did not identify with

18 See Harry Frankfurt, 'Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility', *Journal of Philosophy*, 66:23 (1969), 829–39; Harry Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

19 Carolina Sartorio, 'Actual Causes and Free Will', *Disputatio*, 9:45 (2017), 147–65 (p. 147).

20 *Ibid*., p. 148.

21 *Ibid*., p. 150.

them. That is, they are motives precisely because they are presented as such by the consciousness of the agent who thus reveals his anthropical image, that is, the type of actions with which he identifies. In the case of Chartrand's and Bargh's experiments, the candidate would not have touched her face or moved her leg if she had not turned those actions into motives by identifying with them and with the confederate. That identification is the pre-reflective consciousness of having something in common. A candidate from another culture (as a more representative case) might well not turn certain actions such as crossing the arms or crossing the legs into motives for her behaviour, because there would be no cultural identification. Therefore, the concept of identification might be more complex, for personal identification can also be understood through cultural and social identification, when the form of life is associated with a particular culture or a social group.

Other differences between Sartorio's account and the view here presented, are first, that the motives come from outside (perceptions), and second, that the agent makes the perceived behaviour the motive of his actions with respect to his anthropical image. That is, he imitates it. Thus, focusing on the second difference, what counts is that the agent has undertaken the only compelling action, given his identification with a particular way of being and acting. The action has been willed and done by the agent, not only in relation to the actual causes (motives and free will) but in relation to what consciousness presents to him and how it presents it,[22] which actually is the possibility of his having motives at all. The agent takes what is the only compelling course of action regarding his anthropical image. The latter is thus revealed as a certain determining element, not of the will to act but of the motives.

The agent's anthropical image can also be understood for the present purpose as the agent's self-image, for it is the image of what it is to be human. This self-image is not a direct cause of the action and yet without it there would be no motive (self-image is close to what Sartorio names *dispositions*, which unfortunately have no significant role in her account).[23] It is not a direct cause, meaning that it is not a sufficient cause

22 Albert Bandura, 'A Social Cognitive Theory of Personality', in *Handbook of Personality*, ed. by Lawrence Pervin and Oliver John (New York: Guilford Publications, 1999), pp. 154–96.

23 Sartorio, 'Actual Causes and Free Will', pp. 160–61.

either. That is, in itself it does not produce action.[24] But the motive, which the self-image enables, is not a sufficient cause either, insofar as both require the will of the agent to act. Thus, the only sufficient cause would be the will of the agent. Hence, it is possible to agree that the agent, in his will to act, produces an action based on a motive and in accordance with his self-image. To simplify, the motives could be taken as the actual causes of such action in relation to the agent as a source, and this is as far as Sartorio's model goes, for 'whereas the AP model claims that alternative possibilities are necessary for freedom, the AC model claims that facts about actual causes are sufficient'.[25] However, these actual causes for freedom cannot really be so in a model that places the action in a social context (outside the philosophical laboratory), insofar as both the motives and the self-image of the agent refer to perceptual stimuli of the environment in which he and others interact. Therefore, the actual causes cannot but be necessary (not sufficient causes) together with the perceptual stimuli, which would also be revealed as necessary. This is extremely important with respect to Sartorio's version, for motives would not be necessary causes without this pre-reflective identification, just as stimuli would not be necessary causes without perception.

With regard to the first difference mentioned, namely that it is the perceived behaviour that becomes the motive, it should be noted that it is precisely the one that connects the consciousness of the agent (his self-image) with his social environment or world. Therefore, this difference is what provides us with the bridge between agents and their social life, between their freedom and their social conditioning. But, the source is always the agents and no external stimulus is sufficient to cause their action. That is, it is the agents who, conditioned by the perception, act voluntarily in identification with that particular course of action. The freedom and responsibility of the agents have to do with their self-image and the motives for their actions, but not with the stimuli they receive from the outside. It has to do with their self-image and their motives because their actions depend on them; and the agents, as the ultimate cause of their behaviour, are responsible for their identification with a certain way of being and acting as well as for the motives that this identification

24 For the creation of causes, see Matthew Smith, 'One Dogma of Philosophy of Action', *Philosophical Studies*, 173:8 (2016), 2249–66.

25 Sartorio, 'Actual Causes and Free Will', p. 152.

enables. But, without the stimuli, there would be no motive or motivated action. Perceptual stimuli, however, condition actions by presenting what the agents freely take as their motive. For this reason, neither the freedom of the agent nor the resulting action can be understood without them.

If we think of a typical example in the free will debate such as the one on addiction, my thesis can be better illustrated. Consider a person who takes drugs regularly, who is called the *addict*, and another person who takes drugs only on one occasion, who is called the *non-addict*. According to Sartorio, the most plausible explanation for the difference between the two is not that the latter is freer because he can act otherwise while the former cannot.[26] She proposes that the difference would be in the causes that lead the *non-addict* to act in comparison to the *addict*. The *non-addict* would have more reasons than the *addict*, who would only have his desire to take drugs: 'This means that whenever an act is done freely, it has many causes, and more causes than one might have initially realized. In particular, it means that it has *more* causes than if it had not been done freely!'[27] The *non-addict* would take the drugs if there was no reason to stop him, while the *addict* would try to take them in spite of those reasons. The *non-addict* would be freer and, according to Sartorio, 'a free agent is someone who, in acting, is causally responding to a number of reasons and absences of reasons that rationalize her behaviour'.[28] In the version that derives from the ontology of forms of life, the explanation would have to do not with *ad hoc* reasons, for it could be said that these reasons are shaped, in fact, by the situation in which the action takes place. The difference would be in the type of identification the agent makes. While the *addict* identifies himself with the type of person who takes drugs as a habit (which is usually a habit related to other habits, that is, a way of being and acting), the *non-addict* has not made such an identification. But this would not be enough. We would still be within the explanation that takes the agent in isolation. Only the factor of the perceptual stimuli of the environment (in terms of actions of other agents) can give a comprehensive explanation. Then, both agents can be considered free, for both of them act freely according to their identification with the perceived actions and the stimuli received from their exterior. However, the *non-addict* would have

26 *Ibid*., pp. 156–59.
27 *Ibid*., p. 159.
28 *Ibid*., p. 159.

acted out of mere desire or occasional willingness (without identification with that type of action), while the *addict* would have turned into habit the motives that his identification made possible according to a given situation and certain external stimuli. Both of them are free, but the *addict* is the only one who identifies with his action.

In fact, one could say that those who identify with their actions are freer than those who do not. For the latter, the action performed (i.e., taking drugs on a particular occasion) is random and meaningless. His action does not respond to any motive, because only those with which the agent identifies himself (in relation to his self-image) are motives. If we think of a situation in which the *non-addict* meets other agents who are taking drugs, those perceptual stimuli would not become motives for his action, because he does not identify with that way of being and acting. In fact, if in the same situation, the *non-addict* takes drugs, he would do so without any motive, that is, without identifying himself with that action and, therefore, without the act having any meaning for him and his self-image. Such an action would not be carried out by exercising his freedom over a motive. The *non-addict* would be performing an unmotivated action. His freedom would be random (in the next section, I deal with this issue in more detail). He could have taken drugs or not. He is the ultimate source of his action. Taking drugs on that occasion would be an impulse of the will. But, for that very reason, it would be an act less free than the one in which the agent wills a motive with which he identifies. Paradoxically, the *addict*, contrary to Sartorio's model, would be exercising his freedom more fully. In his habit of taking drugs, he would be free precisely because by taking them he would be affirming his identity, that is, his identification with that particular way of being and acting (note: according to this, drug addiction would be a problem at the level of the agent's identification with that way of acting and not a problem of lack of freedom). If the *addict* cannot find drugs or is not allowed to acquire them, he will experience the situation as a threat and constriction to his freedom and identity. The *non-addict*, however, not having made such an identification, would not experience the situation described as a threat to his freedom and identity. It would not be meaningful to him. But this again highlights the importance of the situation. For it is in a particular situation that such perceptual conditioning or stimuli appear as motives for the agent to

perform the action. Only by considering this example in relation to the agent's self-image and the situation in which the stimuli occur, can the motives (or lack of motives) for the action be understood. And only by understanding the latter can we consider the agent's freedom.

3.3. Sourcehood Principle vs. Alternative Possibilities

However, with the above arguments, I do not claim that agents could not do otherwise, I just endorse that even if they could, it is not relevant for freedom.[29] The *non-addict* could act differently because his action is not motivated, but either way, his action makes no sense, and, therefore, neither does his freedom. This goes against the arguments of authors such as Carlos Moya, who has recently supported an alternative possibilities account with the following reasons:

> My main aim in this paper is to defend an alternative-possibilities (AP) approach to freedom and moral responsibility, in an incompatibilist (in fact, libertarian) spirit. A reasonable AP account, as I hope mine is, holds that open alternative possibilities are a requirement of free will, a necessary condition of it, but not a sufficient, let alone a necessary and sufficient condition.[30]

Freedom in Moya's view, then, requires AP, but it seems counterintuitive to feel freer due to the fact that we have two different options in front of us (or maybe just whether to do or not do something). When what the agent wants is only one of them, as long as he can obtain the course of action he wishes to undertake, we can agree that he is exercising his freedom. On the other hand, having more options does not make the agent freer, if none of them responds to his will (i.e., in a library full of volumes, the agent would not feel any freer, if, in fact, he wanted the forbidden option of going for a walk instead of reading). Freedom, therefore, does not seem based on AP, but on the fact that the agent has no constraints to will and obtain what he considers the only compelling course of action in a given situation and according to his anthropical image.

29 See Pablo Rychter, 'Does Free Will Require Alternative Possibilities?', *Disputatio*, 9:45 (2017), 131–46.

30 Carlos Moya, 'Free Will and Open Alternatives', *Disputatio*, 9:45 (2017), 167–91 (p. 169).

3.4. Sourcehood Principle: Anthropical Image and Perceptual Stimuli

To conclude this section, a few consequences must be borne in mind. This essay is endorsing that the principle of alternative possibility is not relevant to obtain free will, for the alternative does not count when the agent has willed the only compelling option, which becomes his motive. Then, the principle of sourcehood is enough to entail free will, that is to say, agents are free in their will when their action is caused by them with respect to their motives. Agents are the real cause of their action because they turn their external conditioning into their motives. The agent, as the ultimate source, identifies with his action, and also with the motives as behaviour to be imitated. The principle of sourcehood is then complemented with this version of identification between agent and action, which brings about the argument defended above. That is, agents in doing X endow themselves with the identity of the person who does X. So, if the agent is free to imitate a previous perceived action in a given situation with regard to his anthropical image, then he freely endows or affirms himself with that identity, for, in doing or imitating the action X, he contributes to his anthropical image, understanding the latter in terms of an identification (in pre-reflective consciousness) with a certain way of being and acting.

In this way, if the principle of sourcehood is the compatibilist approach with which my thesis is related, both Sartorio's version and that of other authors are reduced to explaining the action with respect to the agents and their motives in certain isolation from the social environment in which the agents act. In this chapter, from a phenomenological ontology of forms of life, I suggest that the way to connect with the environment is through the consciousness that the agent has of the actions he perceives. Thus, it is possible to understand how the motives that the agents present to themselves for acting are conditioned by their social life. The 'actual causes of action' in Sartorio have to do with the agent's own motives (she calls them reasons) for acting. But it does not take into account the relevancy of either the agent's consciousness or external conditioning (both of which make such motives possible). The bridge with the external is cut, and so is the possibility of understanding that the agent's motives do not arise only from the agent. This creates the impression that freedom is only a matter related to the agent and not

to the social environment that, in fact, makes it possible in its full sense. For, once again, the form of life is an ontological unity, and its freedom expressed in its constitutive principle is inseparable from its facticity. In the next section, I discuss this issue.

4. Form of Life, Conscious Will and Social Conditioning

In the previous section, I have endorsed that agents are the source of their action, so that their action is not caused by perception. The agent's behaviour is, however, filtered by his identification with a particular way of being and acting, which constitutes his anthropical image (pre-reflective consciousness of themselves and their behaviour). Now, I am prepared to defend the second part of my thesis. That is, free actions require not only a pre-reflective consciousness on the part of the agent but also some social conditioning. For, the actions that we imitate give us the possibility of exercising our freedom. That is, the social conditioning in which limited situations are the framework of stipulated actions only makes sense if the agent acts freely in relation to his anthropical image. Thus, that image as consciousness of the identification of the agent with a particular way of being and acting converges with social conditioning. Perceptual stimuli are taken as necessary but not sufficient causes of social action. This goes against libertarianism, at least against the libertarian vision that holds that freedom is at odds with causes of action other than the agents themselves. But it also goes again determinism, which I now briefly argue against.

4.1. Conscious Will vs. Determinism

In the eighteenth century, Paul-Henri Holbach already envisaged an approach that entailed a sort of social determinism, for, according to him, 'the same necessity which regulates the physical, also regulates the moral world, in which everything is in consequence submitted to fatality'.[31] He used indifferently (or synonymously) the expressions 'motives cause actions' and 'motives cause (determine) the agent's will'. The death of Socrates is taken as an example of a man who is determined by his motives, which, for Holbach, makes him not a free agent:

31 Holbach, 'The Illusion of the Free Will', p. 422.

> The virtuous Socrates submitted to the laws of his country, although they were unjust; and though the doors of his jail were left open to him, he would not save himself; but in this he did not act as a free agent: the invisible chains of opinion, the secret love of decorum, the inward respect for the laws, even when they were iniquitous, the fear of tarnishing his glory, kept him in his prison; they were motives sufficiently powerful with this enthusiast for virtue, to induce him to wait death with tranquility; it was not in his power to save himself, because he could find no potential motive to bring him to depart, even for an instant, from those principles to which his mind was accustomed.[32]

However, contrary to his conclusion, and from the approach above, it can be argued that the motives of his action do not constitute sufficient cause. The motives limited him but also gave him the possibility of acting in a particular direction. Thus, although it limited his scope, it did not account for a negation of the agent's will, for the agent willed that motive on the grounds of some relevant disposition. Holbach takes determinism in terms of a 'could not have done otherwise' view. Socrates could not have done otherwise, and surely he acted upon his motives, but while they were necessary for the action of remaining in prison, they were not sufficient condition. Socrates did not need to do otherwise to be the cause of his action and act voluntarily upon his motives. So, this serves to reject determinism. Certainly, to reject this kind of determinism makes the agents slaves to their motives.

4.2. Social Conditioning and Agents' Freedom

Holbach's determinism must be contrasted with the conditioning provided by social situations (according to which the agent's motives would be conditioned by certain expectations, legal requirements, behaviour patterns, and so on). The previous arguments have served to endorse that there is not a relation of sufficient causality between the motives and the action of the agent. In this section, I argue that neither does such a relationship exist between the social situation and the motives. However, it cannot be ruled out that social situations are a necessary condition or cause for social action. Social situations are those that reinforce the social conditioning, without this being at all sufficient to produce the action. I take this conditioning as perceptual stimuli.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 421.

For the action performed voluntarily by the agents is conditioned by those actions previously perceived in similar social situations. But the agents are conditioned only by those actions with which they identify themselves pre-reflectively according to their anthropical image (this particular point has been discussed previously). Situations are socially organized in order to limit options. Conditioning is thus reinforced by 'ready-made' social situations. That is, in social situations, the expected behaviour is encrypted in patterns and schema. Social situations impose patterns to follow. Those patterns prescribe and impose some sort of ready-to-imitate behaviour, which constitutes the facticity of a form of life, as shown throughout this book. But here it remains to be discussed to what extent this is a restriction of the agent's freedom.[33] In the free will debate, there is a commonplace, which is that free will or freedom is just occasional, while determinism and conditioning are the rule. In Roy Baumeister's words:

> If free will is only occasional, whereas behavior is constantly occurring, then it is necessary to posit two systems for guiding behavior: a default one that mostly runs the show and an occasional one that sometimes intervenes to make changes. Free will should be understood not as the starter or motor of action but rather as a passenger who occasionally grabs the steering wheel or even as just a navigator who says to turn left up ahead.[34]

For most of the authors in this debate (certainly for Baumeister and for Kant and other libertarians), the general rule is determinism and the exception is free will.[35] However, I aim to support (according to the previous arguments related to imitation) that freedom is the necessary element for this social conditioning. And vice versa, conditioning is necessary for meaningful freedom (non-random) since it is necessarily exercised over perceptual stimuli. It is the perceptual conditioning that guides our social behaviour by giving us the possibility of turning the stimuli into motives (mediated by our anthropical image or identification

33 For a discussion about restrictions on freedom, see John Lawless, 'Gruesome Freedom: The Moral Limits of Non-Constraint', *Philosophers' Imprint*, 18:3 (2018), 1–19.

34 Roy Baumeister, 'Free Will in Scientific Psychology', *Perspectives on Psychological Sciences*, 3:1 (2008), 14–19 (p. 14).

35 Benjamin Libet, 'Do We Have Free Will?', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 6:8/9 (1999), 47–57.

with a way of being and acting). The latter makes freedom to have an object. Without it, no compelling course of action can be found. If that is true, then, although the free will is a sufficient system to bring about an action, if it does not apply upon perceptual stimuli in the social context, it will not have motives, and then it will be random.

4.3. Social Conditioning: Motivated and Unmotivated Actions

Actions that have no motives to will are unmotivated and every action can be considered to be undetermined. Kane thinks that undetermined is not the same as uncaused: 'Indeterminism is consistent with nondeterministic or probabilistic causation, where the outcome is not inevitable. It is, therefore, a mistake (in fact, one of the most common in debates about free will) to assume that "undetermined" means "uncaused" or "*merely* a matter of chance".'[36] He is thinking about the probability of failure or success when acting. So, undetermined action does not mean an uncaused action but an action that has probabilities of failure and success: 'the presence of indeterminism does not mean the outcome happened *merely* by chance and *not* by the agent's effort'.[37] What he calls uncaused actions is what from my perspective can be treated as unmotivated actions (provided that it is understood to refer to the lack of necessary cause and not sufficient cause). Is the lack of motives what counts in these actions, for they are without an objective, random or 'merely a matter of chance'? That is, when we do not have a motive for our actions, inevitably we are in a deadlock, from which we can only get out by willing random actions. But this only happens if the agent experiences the situation as a demand to act.

If uncaused actions are unmotivated, both unmotivated and motivated actions are actually undetermined. For the outcome cannot be determined, although its probability it can be set by identifying the perceptual stimuli that will become the motive of the agent's action, taking into account his anthropical image and the urge of a particular situation, that is, facticity, rendered in Sartre's terms. Therefore, if what is undetermined is unknown in its results, indeterminacy for my purpose can be defined as the situation in which 'there is just no

36 See Kane, 'Libertarianism', p. 31.
37 *Ibid*., p. 33.

relevant fact there *to be known*'.[38] Free will has indeterminacy if 'p' is not the case unless I will. In a sense, even while conditioned by perception, only by wanting 'p', will 'p' be the case. Neither indeterminacy nor free will is, then, incompatible with conditioning. Manuel Vargas reflects on the notion of indeterminism.[39] It seems that there are several ways of understanding this feature and most of the time all of them seem mixed up. (a) Indeterminism means that the agent's choice and actions are not determined by any external or internal causes; (b) Indeterminism means that the agent's choice and action is also a product of indeterminacy. In the first one, the agent has control over his choice and actions, while in the second, there is no such control, for actions are also undetermined, as in Kane's libertarianism,[40] regarding guidance control but not regulative control. As argued above, the kind of indeterminism I refer to when I say that, in my view, even motivated actions are undetermined is the notion (a), where the agent still has control over his action, although the result cannot be fully known drawing from his motives.

The above reinforces my argument that imitation is not a mechanical or automatic process and that, therefore, its result is not a replica of the perceived action. Imitation takes the perceptual stimulus and turns it into its motive, but the resulting action is not identical to that stimulus, insofar as it depends on both the situation and the agent's anthropical image. That is, 'the outcome is not inevitable'.

4.4. Social Conditioning and Deadlock: Random Behaviour

A derived aspect to be underlined is that if freedom is the rule or the case whenever there are no motives (perceptual or social conditioning), and that freedom leads us to deadlock, the need for guidance in social situations compels agents to look for some perceptual stimuli to become the motives of their actions. That makes the fear of deadlock or paralysis a relevant factor in social imitation and, hence, in social conditioning.

38 David Taylor, 'A Minimal Characterization of Indeterminacy', *Philosophers' Imprint*, 18:5 (2018), 1–25 (p. 4).

39 Manuel Vargas, 'Revisionism', in John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom and Manuel Vargas, *Four Views on Free Will* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 126–65 (p. 148).

40 For Kane's libertarian position in the free will debate, see Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

In this sense, it is especially interesting to recall what Baumeister has suggested from the point of view of social psychology and neurology: we are free to enslave ourselves.[41] This paradoxical claim, which is more a suggestion than a firm position, is based on scientific experiments that have shown a relationship between blood glucose and the ability to make decisions and follow rules. So, those scientific experiments may suggest that free will (as self-control and making choices) is a kind of power that brains have and that gets reduced with the reduction of blood glucose. That means that glucose empowers our self-control and choice-making ability. This is a compelling and wishful idea:

> Self-control has multiple benefits, and people who are high on the trait end up more successful in work and school, are more popular and better liked, have healthier and more stable relationships, commit fewer crimes, and have less psychopathology [...] And as for following rules generally, there is some cross-cultural evidence that countries with higher rule of law report significantly higher subjective well-being.[42]

The following is the argument summarized. To make choices is biologically expensive, therefore, humans avoid making choices all the time or they cannot make choices all the time, which according to the background of the experiment, leads us to limit our ability to exercise free will. But curiously enough the ability to employ to free will is connected to the ability to follow rules and thus to self-control, or to controlling oneself according to a social rule of behaviour. According to Baumeister, these findings would support that free will is limited and only occurs occasionally.[43] But it could equally be argued that, precisely in order to reduce the need to make choices and thus the use of glucose, agents follow perceived patterns of behaviour, so that by freely *imitating* what they take as motives they limit the need to arrive on their own at a rule of behaviour or self-control. The supposed biological expense of freedom of action with respect to instinctive behaviour would be limited by the perceptual stimulus presented as the motive for action in a particular social situation. The conclusion could be stated as follows: agents are consciously free to cause their actions by eliciting the only compelling motive with respect to the situation and its anthropical image. In this

41 Baumeister, 'Free Will in Scientific Psychology'.
42 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
43 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

way, the agents reduce the use of glucose that it would cost to determine individually at each moment the course of action to be taken. Thus, the freedom to will their motives becomes the freedom to follow and imitate social behaviour—the behaviour of the community they identify with—while reaffirming the agents' identity and anthropical image. Conversely, the case in which the agent acts randomly to escape the deadlock or paralysis can hardly be described as freedom,[44] for it does not have a compelling motive to bring about. In other words, random actions are less free because they have no motives, and in that sense, arguably, they would require less glucose expenditure. The deadlock that lack of motives leads to could only be overcome by the urges of a particular situation: when the agent is urged to act through perceptual stimuli in terms of social behaviour with which to identify (the situation is not a motive but the frame in which motives appear).

From what has been examined, it can be concluded that social conditioning requires a compatibilist approach. There is no conditioning without freedom. In this last section, this has been analyzed in contrast to what would be a hard determinism, by which the social agents would be enslaved by situations and perceptual stimuli as well as by their motives. Conversely, it has been argued that free agents require these social stimuli and situations in order to exercise their freedom.[45] That is, conditioning offers potential motives without which the agent would be condemned to random behaviour and meaningless freedom.

5. Conclusion

The thesis that has been progressively defended in this chapter is that the motives that we are willing to bring about with our actions, in a sense, guide us in social settings and give content to our actions. That is, we turn social conditioning (perceived actions) into the motives for our actions in terms of the way of being and acting with which we pre-reflectively identify. This has also involved a commitment to bring the

44 About the issue of deadlocks, see Nadine Elzein and Tuomas Pernu, 'Supervenient Freedom and the Free Will Deadlock', *Disputatio*, 9:45 (2017), 219–43.

45 For an argument that makes freedom compatible with the constriction of laws, see Samuel Bagg, 'Beyond the Search for the Subject: An Anti-Essentialist Ontology for Liberal Democracy', *European Journal of Political Theory* (2018), https://doi.org/10.1177/14748 85118 763881.

onto-phenomenological perspective derived from Sartre, which I am defending in this book, into dialogue with contemporary, and mainly analytical, philosophy. Several consequences have been drawn from the main argument:

(1) The motives are not independent of the agent, for they are relevant to the agents with respect to the present situation and their anthropical image or their pre-reflective image of what it is to be human. Had they had a different anthropical image, another motive would have been relevant to them. The motives do not cause the agents' will. In any case, it would be rather the opposite (at the risk of forcing the language): the agents cause their motives out of their stimuli and in relation to their anthropical image. This means that, contrary to Sartorio's version of sourcehood, there is an inextricable connection between the consciousness, the motives and the perceptual experience of the agent. Therefore, to understand the actions performed by the agents is also to understand the social conditioning to which they are exposed, because the latter is what makes the agents have motives to act. Social action is based on imitation.

(2) Free actions upon motives are perceptually conditioned in social settings (social imitation), while random actions are unconditioned. I have been prompted to imagine a counterexample in which there are not compelling motives for the agents' action. That is, when agents do not find motives for their action in a given situation and with respect to their anthropical image, because none of the stimuli available is relevant. In that case, what is shown is that the motives are not independent of the agents and their situation. So, if the perceptual input is not relevant, therefore, the agents, urged to act within the situation, would act randomly, their will being the sufficient cause of their action as an unmotivated action. Thus, clearly the agents could have made a different choice completely (although limited to the situation). However, the *could have done otherwise* is not relevant at all for the entitlement of freedom, because the agents voluntarily would have done nothing, had they not been urged by the situation, as no relevant motive was there to bring it about. In this latter case, it is then the situation that leads the agent's will to act without a motive. Here freedom gives way to random behaviour. That is, without motives, there is no freedom proper. Therefore, a free action is that which possesses the qualities of being

socially conditioned, motivated (according to the anthropical image of the agent) and undetermined. A free action can only be obtained, then, in a social context.

(3) In not recognizing the external stimuli of daily social life, the study of the agentive process loses the possibility of understanding, on the one hand, the influence of those stimuli on our behaviour, and, on the other, the need we have of them to be able to exercise our freedom as free and conscious agents. That is, even if we pre-reflectively filter what actions we take as a motive for our behaviour, without these perceived actions, our behaviour would be impoverished and, paradoxically, so would the possibility of exercising our freedom.

If these conclusions can be sustained from the arguments presented, however, they leave many other aspects in the shadows. The first and most fundamental is that the perceptual stimuli that the agents do not take as motives for their actions because they do not identify with them, still submit the agents to a conditioning that has no direct effect but limits their possibilities of action. When agents find no stimuli in their environment to take as motives for their actions, does this not also have repercussions on their ability to exercise their own freedom by realizing through their behaviour the anthropical image with which they identify? That is, following the example of the *addict/non-addict*, if the *non-addict* would not take drugs while being in a community of addicts who are taking them, the perceptual stimulus certainly does not become the motive for his action (since he does not identify with it), but it does put pressure on the *non-addict*, who not only does not find an affirmation of his behaviour in others, but experiences it as impossible, since the ontological principle or way of being and acting of the addicts is imposed as the only valid one; the only possible way of being in that community. In the following chapters, I try to explore this problem by re-establishing a dialectic by which agents identified with their forms of life enter into situations of resistance-assimilation when contacting other forms.

5. Dialectics, Forms of Life and Subjectivity

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the dialectical structure that shapes the subjectivity of a form of life. Who we are is defined by our form of life, but also by contact with other forms with which we enter into a dialectical relationship. The negation of our form of life affects our subjectivity, our way of being and acting. It is therefore necessary to analyze this dialectical relationship that constitutes us. For it is through it that we can understand the change of subjectivity that goes hand in hand with social change. However, this dialectical exploration does not cease to remain in the realm of phenomenological ontology and is therefore examined as a condition of possibility of our own subjectivity, of its change and evolution.

I begin with Sartre's revision of the dialectical reason in his 1960 philosophical work, *Critique de la raison dialectique*. The French author opposes the external dialectic, understood in the Hegel-Marx sense as relations of opposition between independent totalities, to a dialectic of internal necessity. Taking up Johann Fichte's logic in his *Wissenschaftslehre*, I propose to rethink Sartre's revised dialectic, combining both versions of the dialectic, namely as a process that besides being governed by internal laws of opposition between the whole and the parts, also confronts and assimilates external totalities. In this way, the lack of internal necessity of the Hegelian-Marxist dialectic is solved and the idealistic isolation of the Sartrean dialectic is bridged. Both characteristics allow us to understand realistically the relationship between a plurality of forms of life that oppose, assimilate and resist one another, without resorting to a universal law of progress in history or divine will. This structure of

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progressive integration and assimilation of the outside (of any form of life other than itself) is, as in Sartre but for different reasons, a totalization and not a totality, since the former implies a process that is not closed a priori, but is in constant formation. Therefore, it is a necessary process according to its constitutive principle, but contingent because it depends on the free will of its subjects and, moreover, on the forms of life with which it comes into contact.

From the contact between forms of life and the assimilation of one by another arise two concepts that are also explored in this chapter, namely hegemony, when one enters into a gradual process of assimilation of a large part of the other forms of life in one's environment; and resistance, when one form of life, under the assimilation of another, persists in its being. Forms of life are neither social classes nor states; they are first of all ontological units that shape the subjectivity of a community of subjects identified with it. This difference makes me reject Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony and qualify Raymond Williams' concept of group culture.

2. Sartre's Dialectic

The dialectical method on which I rely to explore the different moments of the evolution of a form of life's totalization is the method rehabilitated by Sartre in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), of Hegelian-Marxist lineage. The importance of this method lies, on the one hand, in trying to infer the moments of the totalization from historical events and, in particular, from human praxis; and on the other, in considering those evolutionary moments as denials or oppositions not between distant elements or totalities external to each other but between the totalization and its parts. Sartre claims to use totalization instead of totality (which, incidentally, was preferred by György Lukács and the Marxist tradition),[1] because while the latter implies an inert whole that has reached its final stage, totalization implies a whole that is evolving through praxis over time and by particular determinations or oppositional relationships.[2]

1 See Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 350–51.

2 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Vol. I (London and New York: Verso, 2004 [1960]), p. 45.

That is, the totalizing movement requires the denial of its posited parts to be able to integrate them definitively as actualized parts of the totalization. And this is precisely one of the features of the dialectic that Sartre rehabilitated: the dialectic process arises from the praxis itself, each action entails (or presupposes) a totalization; and, furthermore, it is not an external relationship between, for example, the actions of one human group against another for an interest beyond themselves, but an opposition between the totalization and the actions of the group; that is, to continue advancing in its actualization so that all its posited parts or (constitutive) elements are manifested before the reflective consciousness, the totalization must integrate them.[3]

The dialectical reason is a method that seeks to critically establish the knowledge of the historical reality in which the subject lives while submitting to judgment the same subject who carries out that knowledge as a product of that reality: 'It should be recalled that the crucial discovery of dialectical investigation is that man is "mediated" by things to the same extent as things are "mediated" by man.'[4] In this way, Sartre criticized the external dialectic because it provides to historical reality a blind evolutionary law through transcendental opposites that gives rise to a capricious process. 'Transcendental materialism',[5] he writes, 'leads to the irrational, either by ignoring the thought of empirical man, or by creating a noumenal consciousness [*conscience nouménale*] which imposes its laws as a whim, *or again*, by discovering in Nature "without alien addition" [*sans addition étrangère*] the laws of dialectical Reason in the form of contingent facts [*sous forme de faits contingents*]'.[6]

3 *Ibid*., I. 'action is itself the negating transcendence of contradiction, the determination of a present totalisation in the name of a future totality,' p. 80. In *Critique de la raison dialectique*, pp. 165–66.

4 *Ibid*., I, p. 79. In *Critique de la raison dialectique*, p. 165.

5 Sartre refers to transcendental materialism as synonymous with dialectical materialism, and he understands the latter as the following of natural laws that transcend human beings and their reason.

6 Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, I, p. 32. In *Critique de la raison dialectique*, p. 128. The 'alien addition' refers mainly to humanity (as self-conscious beings); he believes Engels' *Dialectic of Nature* turns the human being into a thing: 'In other words, is humankind merely an "alien addition" to nature, as Engels would have us believe, and, if so, is not Being, as Sartre argues, then reduced to knowledge, with humans just objects in a vast array of undifferentiated objects, the study of which is no different than the study of rocks?': in William L. Remley, 'Sartre and Engels: The *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and the Confrontation on the Dialectics of Nature', *Sartre Studies International*, 18:2 (2012), 19–48 (p. 21).

Instead, Sartre's dialectic sought to establish the existential conditions by which the dialectical movement of history gained intelligibility: 'The dialectic, however, if it is to be a reason rather than a blind law, must appear as untranscendable intelligibility.'[7] It was, in short, to explore the dialectical relations internal to the object of study itself, to understand how this object is formed and opposed in turn to another or others. The internal dialectic, a dialectic that tries to correct the dialectic idealism of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Engels, is a realistic materialism. And with it, the object of study is made to show its own internal contradictions that explain its formation and progress. This means that the first step for a dialectical study is to understand the object as a whole, at least as a future whole in its dialectical evolution of oppositions.

The first aspect worth highlighting for our purposes is, in effect, that the whole determines its particulars. The importance of this notion is that the particular realities, first, to be able to oppose each other, must both be under the same unit; and second, neither opposite can be understood abstractly outside of that confrontation nor outside the totality or totalization movement in which they have arisen: 'On this basis, a dialectical logic of negation conceived as the relation of internal structures both to each other and to the whole within a complete totality or within a developing totalization, could be constructed.'[8] The particulars confronted are determinations of the totality, and as determinations are negations of the totality (following Baruch Spinoza, who considered that all determinations are negations: 'determinatio negatio est').[9] The totality in this sense is prior to the parts; although the

7 Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, I, p. 37.

8 *Ibid*., I, p. 86.

9 With this indication, I am only echoing what Sartre himself wrote, namely, his attribution to Spinoza of this formula in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (I, p. 85). But, in fact, Sartre maintains the meaning given to this formula by Hegel, the difference between the two being that 'for Hegel the negation that comes with determination is necessary for being in any genuine sense, whereas for Spinoza the negation that comes with determination is a privation of being, a way of not being': in Robert Stern, '"Determination is Negation": The Adventures of a Doctrine from Spinoza to Hegel to the British Idealist', *Hegel Bulletin*, 37:1 (2016), 29–52 (p. 30), https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2016.2. For this interesting debate, see also, Yitzhak Y. Melamed, '"Omnis determinatio est negatio": Determination, Negation, and Self-Negation in Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel', in *Spinoza and German Idealism*, ed. by Eckart Forster and Yitzhak Y. Melamed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 175–96.

parts give rise to the totality in its evolution, the parts are parts because they belong to a totality, and are therefore determined in their own structure and identity by the totality of which they are part.[10]

In the development of the object as a whole, its internal determinations are based on one of the principles that Engels identified as laws of historical development: the negation of a negation.[11] The first negation is that of the part by which the totality denies itself, therefore all determination is a negation of the totality. Through this dialectical principle, the first negation is in turn denied by the determined totality itself as opposed to the first negation. Double denial leads to an affirmation. And this is, in turn, in a later movement, placed as a negation to be denied: 'And it is within the totality, as the abstract unity of a field of forces and tension, that the negation of a negation becomes an affirmation.'[12] That negation of a negation expresses a process of integration of the parts within the totality and the movement of totalization. Thus, we must understand the affirmation as an integrating moment by which the whole is self-completing and pointing to the consummation of all its determinations: 'negation is defined on the basis of a primary force, as an opposing force of integration, and in relation to a future totality as the destiny or end of the totalizing movement'.[13] It is then that we understand Sartre's negation of *man* as an abstract entity; *man* exists only as posited by a totality (what I have insisted in calling subjects of a form of life), that is, within a particular existential condition given by the whole totalizing movement of which it is a part.

Furthermore, according to Sartre, it must be understood that there is no such thing as *man*; there are people, wholly defined by their society and by the historical movement which carries them along. If we do not wish the dialectic to become a divine law again, a metaphysical fate, it must proceed from individuals (although constituted by the totality)

10 Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, I, p. 86.

11 Friedrich Engels, *Dialectic of Nature*, in Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *Collected Works*, Vol. XXV: *Engels, 1873–1883* (New York: International Publishers, 1987), pp. 313–588 (p. 356). Engels stated that dialectics has four laws: transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa, transformation of the extremes into each other, development through contradiction or negation of negation, and spiral form of development (p. 313). See also the discussion in Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, I, p. 31. For an analysis of this debate, see Remley, 'Sartre and Engels', pp. 19–48.

12 Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, I, p. 86.

13 *Ibid*., I, p. 85.

and not from some kind of supra-individual ensemble.[14] The subject, and his subjectivity, which is the core of our research, from Sartre's dialectical reason, is a being that exists within a totality, which has to be posited as the one that gives to it a certain identity.[15] The Sartrean dialectic is thus presented as an advance on the materialist dialectic of Marxist origin in which the progressive movement is produced through the negation between external totalities governed by a law that for the French thinker can only be either arbitrary or imposed by the divinity, but not internally necessary. In this sense, Sartre bases the contingent on the necessary structure of the totality. Thus, that contingency has to do with the freedom of the individual within the totality and not with facticity or the world (what is necessary is the structure of a boxing match, what is contingent is the movement the boxer chooses to strike). This is a point that I hold to be of great importance for any re-examination of that process. For the rejection of the external dialectic seems to bring Sartre's internal dialectic into a certain isolation.[16] And, indeed, if the totality is determined in the concrete reality—in the world—it seems contradictory that such determinations, which are after all affirmations of the totality in each part, do not establish contact with other—external—totalities. For, as has been mentioned, for Sartre, all denials are between internal parts of a totalization that follows a necessary law. As a result, this closed and totalizing process seems powerless to explain how the universalization of certain modes of being and acting occurs, or how these are imposed on other totalities: that is to say, how the exchange, imposition and assimilation between cultures, and also between forms of life in the ontological sense set out in this book, takes place.

So far we can affirm that a form of life would progress through the integration of its subjects. The constitutive principle of such a form would gradually encompass more aspects of the subjects' lives. This would mean the progressive affirmation of the way of being and acting held in such a form of life. The Sartrean dialectic helps us to understand this internal necessity, but since the form of life (or culture, in Sartre's terms) occurs

14 *Ibid*., I, p. 36.

15 See the section regarding 'existentialist totalization' in Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, pp. 331–60.

16 Note that the distinction between *internal* and *external* dialectics is used by Sartre himself in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, I.

in a context where there are other adjacent forms of life with which one comes into contact, how can this interrelationship be explained from the internal dialectical process? It seems rather that the negation that makes the totalization progress is not only the one established between the whole and the parts but also between totalizations. This consequence derives from the fact that the totalization is particularized in the concrete and material reality where other external totalizations exist. This calls into question the Sartrean idea that there is a single all-encompassing and homogenizing totalization of which the others are merely internal determinations. It is not surprising that this is the case if we remember that Sartre's totalization is a self-determined freedom that governs over the facticity and surpasses it, as well as the consciousness over existence: 'you can make something out of what you have been made into'.[17] This leads to losing sight of the fact that totalizations can be affected and freedom limited by other totalizations.

3. Rethinking Sartre's Dialectic

The surpassing of the Sartrean dialectic must have as its foundation the form of life as an ontological unit. That is to say, as an inseparable union of freedom and facticity, as well as of the subject and the group or community. Thus, if the part is an action that affirms the totality, at the same time it denies the denial of that totality (double denial), or what that totality is not. By affirming it in its particularity, it affirms it in opposition to its negation. This step between the external dialectic of Marxist origin and the internal dialectic defended by Sartre is supported by Fichte's dialectical thought.[18]

For Fichte, all knowledge is based on the intuition of the self or Ego.[19] The first dialectical movement towards the progress and foundation of

17 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations*, Vol. IX: *Mélanges* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 101: 'Je crois qu'un homme peut toujours faire quelque chose de ce qu'on a fait de lui.' See also, Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*, 2 vols. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), II, p. 178.

18 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, trans. by A. E. Kroeger (London: Trübner & Co., Ludgate Hill, 1889).

19 For Fichte's dialectic and the monism it presupposes, see Evald Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic: Essays on its History and Theory*, trans. by H. Campbell Creighton (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977 [1974]), pp. 73–85. Also, Nectarios Limnatis, 'Fichte and the Problem of Logic: Positioning the *Wissenschaftslehre* in the Development of

knowledge or science (*Wissenschaft*) is that of the negation of the not-self (non-Ego), that is, of the external world. With the affirmation of the self, that which is not-self is denied, and in successive stages that which is not-self is assimilated into the self or Ego. That, according to the German philosopher, is the vocation of 'man' (which stands for humanity):

> in every moment of his existence he tears something from the outward into his own circle; and he will continue thus to tear unto himself until he has devoured everything; until all matter shall bear the impress of his influence, and all spirits shall form one spirit with his [...] Such is man: such is everyone who can say to himself: I am man.[20]

Thus, the same could be said with regard to forms of life, the affirmation of the form of life as a whole through one of its actions is simultaneously the negation of its negation, or the negation of what is presented as the opposite by affirming itself in a particular situation. The action with which the subject affirms his form of life, at the same time denies the opposite form of life, or that which is not his form of life. This is the denial of the principle that governs the actions of those who identify with another form of life. As in Fichte, the denial of this principle is the imposition of the principle (spirit) of the subject's form of life. This imposition is verified as an assimilation of the actions of the other form of life by the new imposed principle. This is based, I argue, on the fact that every action is meaningful or principled by its form of life. Hence, the dialectical process, by affirming the form of life in its action and principle, denies the forms of life with which it comes into contact, such denial being an assimilation. This implies that the form of life and the dialectical process that structures it is not merely internal and necessary but also external and contingent. Its process is both of integration and assimilation. In this way, the assimilation of other communities' behaviours contributes to the universalization discussed in the chapter regarding conversion (Chapter 3), by which in ethical terms the convert becomes beyond the good and evil of his previous form of life: 'In other words, it constitutes the decision to "play the

German Idealism', in *Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 21–40.

20 Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, pp. 334–35.

game" in which the categories of moral good and evil operate.'[21] Such universalization implies that every form of life aspires to establish itself as the exclusive way of being human. Thus, the universalization of its principle is realized through the imposition of its actions, the facticity of which forces other communities to adopt the form of life that principles it. This imposition is a type of proselytism by which every subject tends to impose his form of life on those who do not follow it. That is to say, the subjects *posit* their ontological principle or way of being and acting on every human being, which triggers resistance by the communities shaped by other forms of life.

That resistance entails the assimilation as a contrary force. That is, the subjects posit their ontological principle or way of being and acting in each human being and do so in a pre-reflective manner; if you will, the subjects project their image of being human. This is experienced by the subjects of other forms of life as a denial of their intimate being and produces in them a resistance. This resistance unleashes the conscious process of assimilation by the subjects of the other form of life, who now become reflectively aware of the other as 'not-me', for as Fichte says, without the resistance there is no object for the subject: 'The object is posited only in so far as an activity of the Ego meets resistance; no such activity of the Ego, no resistance [...] no resistance, no object.'[22] That reflective awareness leads to a struggle, the synthesis of which can only be the assimilation of one by the other, and therefore the surrender of one of them. Such a synthesis is not necessary, that is, it may not occur (can lead to an endless struggle), but the tendency to it is necessary on the part of every form of life in relation to others. Assimilation is the imposition of a behaviour as well as of the principle that governs it, which the subjects of the form of life that receives such imposition experience as a constraint on their own actions and as a questioning of their ontological principle. The latter, when understood by the subject as the impossibility of his being in this situation of struggle, leads to conversion, that is, the assimilation of the subject by the opposite form of life. This process, analyzed here exclusively from the experience of the subject, can also be described from the point of view of power, to which

21 Thomas R. Flynn, *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 33.

22 Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, pp. 268–69.

I will return in Chapter 7 on the artistic form of life and its resistance with respect to the capitalist life and the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century.

4. Subjectivity and the Struggle between Forms of Life

So, as we said above, just as for Sartre, from the standpoint of this phenomenological ontology, for the subjects to be able to freely be the incarnation of their form of life, they need everyone else to freely incarnate it as well. The imposition of facticity requires that it be freely adopted, so that the non-subject identifies with it and becomes the subject of that form of life.[23] Just what we have analyzed under the heading of ontological conversion and in Sartre, is put in terms of a change of project, that 'which cause[s] me totally to metamorphose my original project'.[24] However, it is only when the subject of the other form of life understands the imposition of the action, even if it is also the imposition of the principle that governs it, as the opening of a new possibility (and the impossibility of the previous form of life), that he will freely and spontaneously adopt it, abandoning, in turn, his previous principle of life. This is what Sartre examined under the creation of new possibilities in relation to facticity, an aspect that he mentions on several occasions but did not fully develop.[25] In his unfinished *Notebooks for an Ethics*, he called generosity this attitude of creating new possibilities through facticity, as Juliette Simont puts it: 'It [generosity] reveals "being-in-the-midst-of-the-world"; it "creates" contingent facticity. This is to say that it reveals and creates what did not wait for it to be.'[26] However, Sartre finally abandoned this idea, for he understood that all values

23 Regarding this condition for freedom, see Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. by David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 9. As I argued in Chapter 2 of this book, the condition of freedom is also the potential condition of my subjectivity. I consider myself a subject if I share with others a universal way of being a subject, and thus of being human.

24 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956 [1943]), p. 475.

25 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. by Philip Mairet (London: Methuen, 1960 [1946]), pp. 41–42; Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, pp. 309, 317, 333; Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 41, 288, 469.

26 Juliette Simont, 'Sartrean Ethics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. by Christina Howells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 178–210 (p. 193).

become alienating as obligations, which was at odds with his attempt at elaborating an ethics of freedom.[27]

For example, on the question of anti-Semitism, Sartre suggests that society is responsible for the situation of the Jews, and that a change in that situation would have meant a change in their behaviour and even in the way they understand themselves:

> The fact remains, you may answer, that the Jew is free: he can choose to be authentic. That is true, but we must understand first of all that that does not concern us. The prisoner is always free to try to run away, if it is clearly understood that he risks death in crawling under the barbed wire. Is his jailer any less guilty on that account?[28]

The text shows that Sartre considered it possible for the behaviour of some to influence a community of subjects, even though this influence never suppressed their freedom. What is curious is that the analogy of the prison and the prisoner with respect to the Jews conveys a certain deprivation of freedom, at least a limitation of movement, although one can always decide to escape. The prisoner's behaviour is obviously different from what it would be if he were not in prison. Therefore, being locked up in prison has conditioned his decisions and even possibly, elaborating on the text (which is confirmed below), his way of understanding himself, as he now sees himself as a prisoner of a form of life that is not that which he would lead if he were outside of prison. Thus, in writings like this, Sartre seems to bear in mind the possibility that facticity, when it comes to human actions and deeds, not only constrains the movement, that is, the way of acting, but also affects the subject's way of being. This leads him to make society (at least the French society of his time) responsible for the attitude and intrinsic qualities of the contemporary Jew:

> We have created this variety of men who have no meaning except as artificial products of a capitalist (or feudal) society, whose only reason for existing is to serve as scapegoat for a still prelogical community [...] In this situation there is not one of us who is not totally guilty and even criminal; the Jewish blood that the Nazis shed falls on all our heads.[29]

27 *Ibid*., pp. 189, 193.
28 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. by George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1976 [1944]), p. 98.
29 *Ibid*., p. 98.

Here we see that while the Jews remain free in their decisions, Sartre makes them dependent on the behaviour of others. And he holds others responsible for the possibilities given to the Jewish minority. The Jews would be living off the possibilities opened up by the social community in which they are inserted. A change in those possibilities would mean a change in the Jews. This interdependence between the two therefore affects the conditions of possibility of that freedom more than of freedom itself. These conditions would be the facticity. And it is so much so that it affirms that the Jew is the one that the community recognizes as a Jew: 'If they have a common bond, if all of them deserve the name of Jew, it is because they have in common the situation of a Jew, that is, they live in a community which takes them for Jews.'[30] If this recognition is accompanied by rejection and anti-Semitic feelings, being a Jew will be confronted with that reality. That is their condition as Jews, and therefore, being authentic means not denying that condition: 'Jewish authenticity consists in choosing oneself as Jew—that is, in realizing one's Jewish condition.'[31] This seems to bring Sartre close to the other extreme with respect to the defence of freedom prevalent in previous writings. For, if being a Jew is what society recognizes as Jewish, it seems that the very subjectivity of the subject is strongly conditioned by what groups other than Jews themselves think and do. And if this can be shared from the presuppositions of this book, it cannot be that the authenticity lies precisely in accommodating the image that other groups have of the Jews. In any case, it would be accommodating to the image that the Jewish people have of themselves. The Jews who accommodate to their external conditioning are Jews already alienated from themselves and their form of life. They are Jews who never cease to be strangers to society and to their own Jewish community. They would be negatively assimilated (living like the others in their society without ever becoming like the others).

And, in fact, the latter seems to be the Jew Sartre has in mind. And yet he believes that the former has not been assimilated by society because of anti-Semitism: 'so long as there is anti-Semitism, assimilation cannot be realized'.[32] However, as I would like to argue, it is through anti-

30 *Ibid*., p. 48.
31 *Ibid*., p. 98.
32 *Ibid*., p. 103.

Semitism that the Jew has been assimilated into Western societies. That is, the Jew would have been assimilated into society precisely through anti-Semitism. This would be a Jew who has been denied in his being and assimilated in his opposite under the ontological principle of the hegemonic form. For all assimilation, as we have seen above, implies the denial of the ontological principle of the form of life to be assimilated, and such denial is equivalent to the affirmation of its opposite under the principle of the form of life it assimilates. There is no assimilation without negation. The form denied is assimilated through its opposite. The one who has been assimilated does not recognize himself in what he was; and, more specifically, a Jew who is the opposite of being a Jew. In the same way, those who have not been assimilated remain on the margins, almost invisible, but affirmed in their own being. Assimilation in this way would be the negation of the ontological principle of the Jews, which is a mode of the principle of maximizing the benefits for the glory of their god. Such a denial would imply the affirmation of its opposite (not maximization for the glory of god), namely the pursuit of self-interest without regard to the glory of a god; in a word: secularism.[33] This affirmation of Jewish secularism is the Jewish version that would have been assimilated under the principle of economic maximization of first state and then liberal capitalism.[34] So, if being Jewish is something distinctive, then that means incarnating a particular form of life, with its values, feelings, habits, etc. This shared form of life is what defines a Jew. If one of its members ceases to identify with that form, he or she would be authentic only by abandoning it and embracing another. The conditioning of one's own form must therefore be distinguished from the conditioning of the forms of life with which that form comes into contact. In the first case, conditioning is positive, because it confirms the image that one has of oneself; in the second case, it is negative, because it denies that image and either imposes a new image of being human

33 In the next chapter, I give more examples about this structure of assimilation through the affirmation of the opposite under the ontological principle of the form of life that performs the assimilation.

34 The state capitalism I am referring to is what can also be called state mercantilism, which incarnates a form of life of maximizing the state as an individual entity, typical of the European absolute monarchies. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011 [1974]), p. 193.

or denies and deforms the image that one has (giving rise to a state of constant doubt and insecurity). Both of these conditions are part of the facticity, 'as an ensemble of limits and restrictions',[35] but also possibilities, I would say, together with Eric Nelson and François Raffoul:

> If it is the case that facticity is the horizon of philosophizing, and that philosophy is itself rooted in facticity, then facticity cannot be 'reduced' through some idealistic or transcendental intellectual operation. Nor can facticity be overcome by a transcendent freedom, as Sartre at times implied, if facticity is a condition of that freedom.[36]

Thus, when facticity is understood as the habitual behaviour that constitutes a form of life, this conception of facticity takes a turn with respect to Sartre. For, a human action as that which we perceive is not pure facticity, it emerges from a form of life; therefore, it is an action endowed with meaning. When subjects of another form of life are exposed to these actions or forced to carry them out, they are denied, in the first case, in the principle of their form of life, and in the second case, both in the principle and the actions. It is not a question of surpassing facticity, but of being assimilated by it or resisting it, since facticity tends to impose its ontological principle, its meaning. Facticity thus understood is never neutral but is born from a consciousness or an anthropical image and is impregnated with its meaning. That is why, elaborating on Sartre, it can be said that it is possible to create new possibilities by imposing the facticity that shapes a particular way of being and acting. The subjects of another form of life, being denied in their constitutive principle, can freely adopt the new form of life or reject it and fight it. To adopt it freely means to have understood the impossibility of their previous form of life in their new situation. This seems to be the understanding of those Jews who flee from their Jewish form of life and convert to the hegemonic one, with which they begin to identify. For Sartre these would be inauthentic Jews:

> In a word, the inauthentic Jews are men whom other men take for Jews and who have decided to run away from this insupportable situation. The result is that they display various types of behavior not all of which

35 Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 42.

36 François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson, 'Introduction', in *Rethinking Facticity*, ed. by François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008), pp. 1–23 (p. 1).

> are present at the same time in the same person but each of which may be characterized as an avenue of flight.[37]

The French author takes as his point of departure here an identity that can be considered as alienated, that of giving oneself a being with which one does not identify. For, he says, these are men that other men 'take for Jews'; they reify them. It is not the identity they give themselves. This is contradictory to the premise held in this book that one is who one is because one has spontaneously given oneself a way of being and acting with which one identifies, and if that latter is that of the Jewish community, then the subject will consider himself a Jew, but if he does not identify with it, despite his conditioning, he will not be a Jew.

The latter means, I insist, that in the struggle between forms of life,[38] it is not freedom that is denied but the ontological principle that the subjects have given themselves freely: in a word, their subjectivity. The latter, as in Sartre and Fichte, remain free even when they understand the impossibility of their form of life and therefore their abandonment and conversion to another form. This brings us back to the theme of ontological conversion in relation to the assimilation of one form of life by another. This is the case, for example, as I elaborate in the following chapter, with the imposition on agricultural life of the principle of maximizing economic profits by a new way of working and living in eighteenth-century England. The peasants saw their previous life assimilated by the incipient agricultural capitalism.

5. The Dialectical Structure of a Form of Life

The logical element of this dialectic that I have briefly expounded refers precisely to this need to impose the principle of the form of life: that is, to the logic of negativity that I have just conveyed. By this logic, we deduce that between A (as form of life) and A' (as regular action or habit) there is a relationship of necessity. And that, therefore, to deny A is to deny A' and that to deny that an action of the type A' is a necessary

37 Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, pp. 66–67.

38 The struggle between forms of life is a struggle of resistance-assimilation, but this has to be distinguished from the struggle between the subjects of a form of life, which is then a struggle for identification. The latter will be dealt with in a separate book examining the power structure of the form of life.

possibility is to deny its principle of being. But we must remember that A′ is a determination of A because A′ is the negation of its negation. That is, A′ is necessary for A because the denial of A′ as a necessary possibility is not possible. A necessary possibility implies a series of possible actions of which at least one needs to be taken. Thus, in a form of life whose principle is that of survival, not wearing fur to protect oneself from the severity of the weather is possible, but not wearing anything or not covering the body at all is impossible (for this goes against one's survival). This is the logic that the form of life exhibits with respect to its determinations. The pre-logical element, on the other hand, refers to that same logic but as a lived experience of the subject. That is, not only as logical deductions but also as action or praxis that constitutes a form of life. I call this element pre-logical because it is formed in the pre-reflective consciousness, which has priority over the reflective one. Thus, the pre-logical element refers to the dialectic of our daily behaviour in a particular form of life. Both the logical and the pre-logical elements shape a dialectic of life or, if you will, a living dialectic.

This dialectic of life has its concern for concrete existence in common with the existentialist dialectic. Sartre established the rehabilitation of the dialectic as a process of totalization in which the dialectic movement is not only conceptual but also real, albeit all-encompassing and therefore infinite. In both dialectics, it is fundamental to consider being-in-itself in its inextricable relationship with the being-for-itself. But, as discussed above, Sartre understands it as a constant surpassing of the for-itself with respect to the in-itself, whereas I hold that the two are mutually necessary and mutually enabling. If the dialectic of forms of life is intended to be an advance with respect to Sartre, the dialectic of the French author is nevertheless paramount.

Now, if the dialectic of forms of life is an advance, how is it so? The main reason is that, as stated above, it is not a dialectic whose process consists exclusively of internal determination. Rather, such a determination or affirmation of the form of life is always 'in the midst of the world', for 'to be in-the-midst-of-the world is to be one with the world as in the case of objects'.[39] That is to say, to be in contact with other realities. In this way, the form of life must also admit the external dialectical process between different, independent totalizations. This has the advantage of

39 Hazel E. Barnes, 'Introduction' to Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. xiii.

showing how forms of life develop precisely by assimilating those with which they come into contact; an assimilation that is brought about by the structural need to universalize the principle or image of the human being that constitutes them. The dialectical process of the form of life, I claim, has greater explanatory power when the need for the internal process is understood precisely from the contingency of the forms of life with which it comes into contact and which it assimilates. If the internal process leads the subject to affirm the whole itself through action (A), the external process leads the subject to affirm the whole through the denial of what is not the whole (not-not-A). This implies the assimilation of the non-whole into the whole (not-not-A= A).

However, if we follow the models of dialectics mentioned above, we could be accused of a dialectic without totalization because, as Sartre argues, if no totalization, no dialectics: 'If dialectical Reason exists, then, from the ontological point of view, it can only be a developing totalisation [*la totalisation en cours*], occurring where the totalisation occurs [*là où cette totalisation a lieu*]'.[40] The external dialectic would need to enter into a totalization in order for the relationship of opposition to occur. And Fichte says the same:

> Since we discovered, in the development of our third principle, that the act of uniting opposites in a third is not possible without the act of oppositing [sic], and vice versa, it also follows that *in logic antithesis and synthesis are inseparable*. *No antithesis*—no positing of equals as opposites—*without synthesis*—without the previous positing of the equals as equals. *No synthesis*—no positing of opposites as equals—*without antithesis*—without the previous positing of the opposites as opposites.[41]

This allows us to explore in a little more detail the dialectical conception that I propose and with which I will analyze concrete historical examples in the following chapters. The solution to this predicament is that the dialectic that I have called external is only dialectic insofar as a form of life becomes the object of assimilation. This means that if the very tendency of the form of life to assert itself in its actions (which deny or determine the totalization) puts it in the position of facing another form of life, it does so only under the situation of *assimilation-resistance*. That situation is included in the form of life as totalization or, better,

40 Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, I, p. 47. In *Critique de la raison dialectique*, I, p. 139.
41 Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, p. 87. The italics are mine.

it is the totalization in that situation. Thus, if in a pre-reflective way, the subjects of a form of life posit their ontological principle in subjects of another form of life, such positing presupposes a totality that only becomes reflective when the subjects of the other form of life resist. Such resistance presupposes the totalization that seeks to assimilate the other. Otherwise, both totalizations are independent and do not become an antithesis. For, although every form of life denies a priori that which is not itself, it does not enter into an antithetical relationship with another form of life except when they come into contact. Only when the situation arises in which one tries to assimilate the other and this one resists, then the latter enters into the totalization of the former in the mode of resistance, that is, as an antithetical relationship. Again, in themselves they would not be antithetical in an actual way but only potentially, as a form of life versus everything that is not it.

Thus, what I call external dialectics, when it is dialectic, is no longer external. The external dialectic is then the way in which the internal dialectic would advance in its universalization, for after all, dialectic is the process by which the form of life tends towards its universality. It could not be otherwise, for its ontological principle is an image of what it is to be human for the community that adopts a particular form of life. This principle seeks to become universal in every situation in which presumed human beings come into contact. Otherwise, it would be denied at its very core. For, it must be remembered that this image is not simply that which I have of myself, but that which I have of myself as the epitome of the universal human being. And therefore, the one that I posit as the only properly human way of being and acting, which prefigures my community, the 'We'.

The above dialectic is relevant also because the actions and the ontological principle are taken as constituents of the form of life, making it a specific object of study. Unlike Sartre, this dialectic allows a subject to be studied and understood from his own habits as a subject of a form of life, and not as an isolated individual. Isolated characteristics refer not to subjectivity but to variations within it. It is no longer a question of studying a whole society, culture and historical time in order to understand a subject, or vice versa, to understand a whole worldview from the work of the individual. Rather, this dialectic allows us to understand that within the same 'historical time' and

within the same 'civilization' there are diverse forms of life, and that these respond to specific actions or habits galvanized in each of them by different principles. The consequence of the latter is that a totalization of totalizations is considered redundant, unlike in Sartre. For this reason, there can only be posited separate and independent totalizations of which, on a certain occasion, one rises above the others by assimilating them or establishing an assimilation-resistance relationship with them, or some of them. For there have always been forms of life that have lived their own totalization until they have been assimilated by a new form established as hegemonic. This might be the case, for instance, of the so-called pre-Columbian forms of life. This implies that there is not one History but many histories. This complex topic would need a separate study, centred on the philosophy of history, so the above will suffice for our purpose for the time being.

The term hegemonic form of life mentioned above in relation to its constitutive anthropical image has resonances with the concept of cultural hegemony, or hegemonic culture, of which Gramsci wrote. But I would like to warn that it would be a mistake to take his definition to convey what I mean by a hegemonic form of life, for the latter depends specifically on the ontological and dialectical structure that this book is dealing with. That is, for the Italian author hegemony has to do mainly with a social class which, in struggle with another, tries to substitute one ideology for another through praxis:

> Ideologies are anything but arbitrary; they are real historical facts which must be combated and their nature as instruments of domination revealed, not for reasons of morality, etc., but for reasons of political struggle: in order to make the governed intellectually independent of the governing, in order to destroy one hegemony and create another one, as a necessary moment in the revolutionizing praxis.[42]

This substitution of one ideology for another would be at the level of the superstructure, so that its change would have repercussions on the structure, that is, on the means of production and the economic system (but he never manages to clarify the specific relationship between the two). Hegemony means substitution in the superstructure but through

42 Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935*, ed. by D. Forgacs and E. J. Hobsbawm (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 196.

the consent of the subjects and not through mere authority. In Gramsci's opinion, the Marxist philosophy of praxis has precisely the objective of revealing and opposing the strategies of creating consent by the ruling class:

> It is not an instrument of government of dominant groups in order to gain the consent of and exercise hegemony over subaltern classes; it is the expression of these subaltern classes who want to educate themselves in the art of government and who have an interest in knowing all truths, even unpleasant ones, and in avoiding deceptions (impossible) by the ruling class and even more by themselves.[43]

In the above sense, Gramsci's concept has interesting aspects for the understanding of a hegemonic form of life. For the latter is a form of life that has been freely and spontaneously adopted by most of the subjects in a given population or society. This is equivalent to Gramsci's notion of consent. Likewise, the hegemonic form of life has more to do with the superstructure than with the structure, in Marxist terms. What separates, however, the hegemony of the form of life from the concept used by Gramsci is that, in the first place, the one I hold is ontological, and therefore refers to a way of being and acting shared by a community that cannot necessarily be identified with a social class. Therefore, it cannot be equivalent to the state either, whose power relationships seem to underpin Gramsci's concept of hegemony, according to Boothman:

> This concept, stemming from ancient Greece, of hegemony as the system of power relations between competing—or between dominant and vassal—states is found in the Notebooks in sections, for example, on how U.S. power was created [...] and on the history of subaltern states explained by that of hegemonic ones.[44]

Secondly, although the hegemonic form of life establishes certain behaviours, feelings and values, it does not seek to preserve and strengthen an economic structure, but to preserve and strengthen itself. This means that the hegemonic form of life has an end in itself, persisting

43 *Ibid*., p. 197. In Gramsci, the forging of consent is moreover inextricably linked to domination, as Derek Boothman explains: 'the two aspects—dominance and leadership, involving force and consent, respectively—that for Gramsci were to characterize hegemony are thus present'; in 'The Sources of Gramsci's Concept of Hegemony', *Rethinking Marxism*, 20:2 (2008), 201–15 (p. 205).

44 Boothman, 'The Sources of Gramsci's Concept of Hegemony', p. 203.

in its being; or what is the same, it seeks to preserve and universalize its anthropical image. And in any case, the economic structure and the control of the means of production emerge from that image or ontological principle with which its subjects identify. In a word, the hegemony of a form of life responds to its assimilation of other forms with which it comes into contact in a given space and time, and that implies power but not necessarily a government nor the control of the means of production. The latter is rather a consequence. If we were to apply the hegemony of forms of life to one social class and its political leaders, it would still differ from Gramsci's conception that the struggle is not against a subordinate or an opposing form of life but against all forms of life that are different, and there are more forms of life than social classes.

So the process illuminated by Gramsci's philosophy of praxis in terms of replacing the ruling class, would only be part of the tendency of every form of life to universalize. For all forms of life deny and resist each other, and the one that is hegemonic at a given moment may not be so later on, with another one rising equally in pursuit of preserving its hegemony and progressing in the assimilation of those that resist: a mere Manichean dualism between the dominated class and the ruling class cannot be applied. The latter is rather a reduction of the complexity of ways of being and acting that exist in a given population, even under the hegemony of one of them (there are always subjects that resist assimilation, let us call them 'the dissidents'). One might believe that there are different forms of life coexisting peacefully and harmoniously, but this is based on the fact that they have all been assimilated and, as a consequence, transformed and homogenized, or simply because they are under the pressure of the hegemonic one. In the latter case, there would also be a relationship of resistance between them.

This distinction I have just made between hegemony in Gramsci and the relation of assimilation-resistance between forms of life, as a plurality of ontological units that tend towards the persistence of their being through resistance and universalization, must necessarily be distinguished from the concept of cultural hegemony or culture as hegemony defended by Raymond Williams, and which gave rise in the 1980s to the shift towards cultural studies. Williams combines the

American conception of culture, as real totalities that give identity to a population or social group, and the Marxist concept of ideology as values and praxis,[45] so that for him the strongest culture is the hegemonic one, which leaves on the margins the cultures shared by minority groups or dominated social classes:

> Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of 'ideology', nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as 'manipulation' or 'indoctrination'. It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a 'culture', but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes.[46]

In Williams, therefore, the concept of class struggle is understood as resistance to the hegemonic culture. This is not a mere mechanism of imposition and indoctrination, but culture shapes the lived experience and world of those who share it. And, in a way, social groups and classes on the margins proudly resist the hegemonic culture.[47] This brings the position advocated in this book and Williams' conception of cultural hegemony very close. Both coincide in pointing to a process by which the Marxist class struggle is reinterpreted from the subjectivity of individuals, and their lived experience. Hegemony moves from the realm of economics and politics to culture as a lived reality with which domination is not external but internal, which is also close to the Foucauldian distinction between disciplinary society (external mechanisms of power) and society of control (internalization of the mechanisms of power):[48]

45 Sherry Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 113, 120.

46 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 110.

47 Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory*, p. 114.

48 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1978]).

> All these active experiences and practices, which make up so much of the reality of a culture and its cultural production can be seen as they are, without reduction to other categories of content, and without the characteristic straining to fit them (directly as reflection, indirectly as mediation or typification or analogy) to other and determining manifest economic and political relationships.[49]

However, the resemblance is rather superficial. And here is why. In the first place, because of the problematic nature of his concept of culture as ideology, which still refers to a class structure. As I have insisted from the outset, a form of life is an onto-phenomenological concept, and is therefore neither identical nor reducible to the concept of culture, which implies a social and political-institutional level. In any case, the latter level requires the presence of the former. That is to say, it requires the identification of the subject with an ontological principle from which a particular way of being and acting derives. Even if culture is understood with Williams as a 'system of lived meanings and values', it still does not explain its homogeneity or the way in which it is constituted. Culture as what shapes the everyday lives of most individuals is sufficiently ambiguous to make any explanatory sense with respect to hegemony. On the other hand, this concept of culture has a derivative meaning—which further deviates it from its ontological sense—related to the distinction between high and low culture, for, in later publications, it is referred to as the set of creative activities and intellectual work of a society. These activities would reflect a common spirit, something that brings it closer to a certain cultural phenomenology, such as that of Steven Connor, discussed in the Introduction to this book:

> We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life—the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning—the special processes of discovery and creative effort. Some writers reserve the word for one or other of these senses; I insist on both, and on the significance of their conjunction.[50]

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49 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 111.

50 Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, ed. by Robin Gable (London and New York: Verso, 1989), p. 4. This is confirmed by the entry on culture in his *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015 [1976]), pp. 49–54. These senses of culture he claims to refer to what might be considered the division between civilization and material culture. Williams' concept of culture would have the sense of the material

Secondly, culture and society are not the same thing; however, this identification is explicitly stated in *Resources of Hope*, in which culture is understood as the shape, purpose and meaning of a society: 'Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings.'[51] Society, in any case, should be treated as a concept that encompasses a number of 'cultures', in the sense of forms of life, and one of which is considered the hegemonic one. However, in Williams' approach, hegemonic culture is attributed to a social group in relation to which there is a 'subordination of particular classes' (retrieving the first quotation). However, a form of life is not reducible to a class or social group. If by culture we mean the form of life of a class or social group that is also imposed in order to dominate other classes or social groups, then, although progress has been made with respect to Gramsci's duality between the dominant and the dominated class, the paradigm of the domination of classes and social groups is definitely maintained. For culture is understood as the instrument of domination over marginal groups that resist. But this loses sight of the fact that the form of life, beyond being an instrument, is the way of being and acting of those subjects who identify with it, and therefore do not have as their goal an objective outside of it, but to persist in their own being. Nor does it explain the nature of the resistance, which is not mere pride or satisfaction in being different,[52] but the need to be what one has imposed on oneself, that is, to want to be what one should be.

Thirdly, and as a consequence of the previous two, Williams' concept of hegemony is not explanatory, but is limited to pointing to a cultural homogeneity, supposedly used as an instrument of domination over other classes or social groups. The cultural hegemony thus expressed is inconsistent from the point of view of a social ontology since it does not show an explanation of the necessity of such hegemony or of its resistance, but rather seems to come to justify a hypothesis or premise already accepted in advance, inherited from the Marxist tradition. Moreover, its condition, independent of internal and external processes

development and way of life of peoples together with the sense of the development of artistic and intellectual activities, related to the German *Kultur*.

51 Williams, *Resources of Hope*, p. 4.

52 Satisfaction or even joy and pleasure I consider as emotions that come with the affirmation of one's own way of being and acting, but not as the goal or end. I am devoting a separate book to emotions with regard to our form of life.

such as the dialectical ones discussed in this chapter, makes such hegemony a kind of *deus ex machina*; a level not only independent of the economic and political but of any ontological structure. Its appearance seems to be the justification of a power that is somehow considered obvious.

Moreover, this hegemony is not only not understood, from Williams' standpoint, as a necessary process from culture itself—as, on the other hand, we have shown to be the case from the conceptualization of the form of life—but neither is its necessity explained from the very being and existence of the subjects. That is, the missing answer to the question: What makes the subjects impose their form of life on each other? And it seems even less necessary if culture is understood as artistic and intellectual productions and activities, for then it seems rather to be mixing under the label of culture different forms of life, namely the intellectual and the artistic; consequently, art and intellectual activities do not necessarily have to reflect that common spirit of society Williams refers to (this statement will make more sense after reading my exploration of particular forms of life in the following chapters).

With Sartre, one could therefore make the same critique that he made of dialectical materialism, namely, the lack of internal necessity. This approach of Williams gives rise to what has been called 'popular cultures' in opposition to hegemonic culture. But precisely because of the lack of internal necessity that characterizes these groups studied, what unites them are externalities such as race, gender, age and the place where they live: 'These are studies of the local worlds of subjects and groups who, however much they are dominated or marginalized, seek to make meaningful lives for themselves: race and ethnic cultures, working-class cultures, and youth cultures.'[53] This has the danger of taking as essential what is accidental, and above all of losing sight of the fact that it is the subjects who spontaneously and freely identify with their community and self-impose their ontological principle (the principle that guides their lives). Thus, their ethnicity or skin colour is not equivalent to a culture, let alone a form of life, as individuals of the same race can and do lead very different forms of life, even at the same time and in the same geographical area. Moreover, this explains that a Latino in the United States, for example, will not, because of his race and

53 Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory*, p. 114.

geographical origin, cease to be a subject identified with the community that incarnates the capitalist form of life. What it indicates, perhaps, is that, integrated into that form, he or she will have to compete to incarnate it more perfectly, and will therefore be exposed to the constant attraction-repulsion that characterizes the relationship with those we take as models of our way of being and acting. This relationship of dependence thus also extends to the model, i.e., to those who are seen as models of that form of life, let us say, its elite (who are dependent on the followers). Therefore, it would not be a matter of differentiating the form of life of the Latino with respect to his model, but of both at different levels of integration in the same form of life, in which they find themselves in a situation of attraction-repulsion.

This review of Williams' concepts of culture and hegemony, together with his sociology of culture, by no means intends to deny any value to his contribution, for it certainly does have value, and its development has been of great importance in recent decades for research in cultural studies. What I mean is that for this kind of sociological approach to reveal culture as a process driven by an internal necessity, it needs an ontological approach that grounds its condition of possibility. These remarks suffice for now to distinguish and highlight the conception of hegemony that derives from the struggle between forms of life as ontological units and the constitution of their subjectivities.

To sum up, hegemony is not only imposition but assimilation in the sense that the subjects of the other forms of life convert to the hegemonic one; a conversion that is ontological, as we have seen in Chapter 2. And such assimilation is governed by the dialectical process expressed above. Thus, the dialectic of the form of life, as elaborated in dialogue with Sartre and Fichte, will allow me to examine the capitalist form of life in its intrinsic subjectivity and in the stages through which it has been integrated by assimilating in its path the forms of life of other communities. This dialectic will also allow me to distinguish the capitalist form of life from others that have been assimilated and from others that have not been assimilated in the process of its history, the latter being rather excluded until a certain moment from the universalization of the capitalist form of life and its subjectivity. This subjectivity is the hegemonic one, today at a global scale (that is, it shapes and constitutes the experiences of most people), and that is why it is so important to

deal with it. With the analysis of its dialectical process, I intend, among other things, to show how its principle of economic maximization is in permanent structural contradiction with its process of reification.

6. Conclusion

Based on Fichte's philosophy, this chapter has involved a rethinking of Sartre's dialectic in order to reveal the structure of a form of life and the configuration of its subjectivity. I have argued that while Sartre's dialectic provides necessity to the dialectical process by making it dependent on the relationship between a totalization and its constituent parts—being the totalization, the universal history and, being the parts, the social groups and nations—it turns all groups in their infinite heterogeneity into a homogeneous whole from the outset as the historical totalization of humanity. Thus, all are homogenized within that unitary History and its driving principle. The dialectic I have suggested seeks to reconcile Sartre's internal dialectical process with the process of the external dialectic of Hegelian-Marxist lineage. In this way, homogenization occurs a posteriori, through the assimilation of the different forms of life (constituent of groups and nations) under the same principle, that of the hegemonic form of life in its process of universalization.

The latter allows the distinction between forms of life to be preserved, as a true distinction of identity and subjectivity, while explaining that homogenization is not a priori but precisely the product of this process of assimilation. Moreover, it ratifies that there is no History but the histories of each form of life and its assimilations. This also respects the limits between forms of life, even when they have been assimilated under the hegemonic principle. The assimilated form of life remains, however, always possible, within its own totalization. The forms of life are thus independent, and therefore are not within a totalization that we could call universal history, but can become part of the process of integration and universalization of a hegemonic form. The consequence of this for our purposes is that the assimilations of other forms of life partially modify subjectivity, incorporating new characteristics under the same principle. Different moments bring different features. And these moments are not part of a triadic progression as in Hegel, but part of the necessary process of universalization of forms of life by the assimilations of others.

6. The Capitalist Form of Life and its Subjectivity

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I would like to characterize in a more specific way the ontological unity that I have defined as a 'form of life'. To do so, I will examine the capitalist form of life. The reason for this choice is that it is the hegemonic form of life in our present, and therefore the one closest to the reader's phenomenological experience and thus possibly the one of greatest interest. In this analysis, I apply the ontological notions and structures already described in the previous chapters, but I explore closely the process of integration into a form of life. Having established the dialectical process inherent in this ontological structure, I examine how the capitalist form of life has universalized its constitutive principle by assimilating other forms with which it has come into contact. I argue that the principle of *economic maximization* has formed capitalist subjectivity, and I show this by taking the example of English society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such economic maximization, while integrating the subjects into their own form of life, drives an opposite process of reification, whereby the greater the reification the greater the economic maximization. Therefore, I try to show how capitalist subjectivity is constituted by the intimate contradiction of a subject who, in order to be such, must progressively become an object. In such a way that the individuals, insofar as they are mediated by a form of life, become subjects and recognize themselves as subjects of that form, so in the same way the latter, in order to persevere in its being, has to be mediated by the subject, who becomes the object of that form of life.

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2. The Ontological Principle of the Capitalist Form of Life

If by subjectivity we understand the subject's form of life, which represents the individual in its bidirectional relationship with its situation and with other individuals, then what the individual is will necessarily be conditioned by its environment,[1] and the latter by social and political organization. The subjects are defined by their way of being in society, in the *polis*. Therefore, the politics and the economic policy implemented in the *polis* allow the appearance of one and not of another type of citizen, with certain subjectivity. In this sense, Michel Foucault also was right when he reversed the eighteenth-century notion of free men in a state of nature from which emerged civil society, stating that it was from civil society that emerged the free individual.[2] Foucault's idea can be linked to Aristotle, according to which, the regime of government produces a certain type of citizens, and therefore, for Aristotle, man could only be fully realized as a citizen of a good political regime, and it was not possible to be good entirely independently of the political organization into which he was born.[3] This is what Aristotle maintained in book III of his *Politics*[4] and what Jim McGuigan seems to want to express when, quoting Margaret Thatcher, he points out the emergence of a new way of being in relation to the neoliberal policies promoted in the 1970s: 'The following observations are inspired by Margaret Thatcher's notorious description of her own politics in 1981 when she remarked that the method is economic but the object is to change the soul.'[5] The change of regime implies a transformation in the citizens' form of life, or, in Thatcher's terms, in their souls. According to this, the subjectivity of citizens depends on the political-economic regime and can be understood as an expression of the way in which the

1 It is here suggested that the reader recall Chapter 4 of this book on imitation, conscious will and social conditioning.

2 James Heartfield, *The 'Death of the Subject' Explained* (Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University Press, 2006 [2002]), pp. 23–24.

3 The correct consequence to be drawn would be that one certainly cannot be good regardless of the notion of goodness one shares with one's community.

4 Aristotle, *Politics*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), II, 1275b, pp. 4344–45.

5 Jim McGuigan, 'The Neoliberal Self', *Culture Unbound*, 6:1 (2014), 223–40 (p. 224).

subject behaves and experiences his form of life, or by his way of being and acting.

In that very same sense, Foucault understood the new tendencies of neoliberal capitalism at the time he delivered his seminar on contemporary subjectivity at the Collège de France (1978–79), which has been published with the title of *The Birth of Biopolitics*.[6] Foucault at that early period had already conceived neoliberalism as a strategy to rule, that is, as a regime: 'Following Foucault to the letter, [Wendy] Brown sees neoliberalism as a governmental regime that sets the rules of conduct in all spheres of life and, moreover, she believes it needs little in the way of ideological support to sustain the operations of power.'[7] Although together with Foucault's view stated in the above quotation some authors maintain that neoliberalism has to do with the regulation and reorganization of praxis,[8] the prevailing framework, represented by authors such as David Harvey, has tended to identify neoliberalism in a wider fashion as an ideology that 'frames the meaning of everyday reality for people'.[9] That means that capital neoliberalism from the 1970s produced an idiosyncratic neoliberal individual. This does not simply mean that this subjectivity is a direct effect of these imposed practices, but it does mean that exposure to such practices allows individuals to identify with the ontological principle that drives them and to adopt them as their form of life. This is what has been shown in the chapter on imitation, conscious will and social conditioning in this book (Chapter 4). However, to establish what this subject is like, one must understand neoliberal capitalism as a totalizing process, already contained in its origins of classical capitalism, of expanding the borders of a free market and increasing the maximization and accumulation of capital. Understanding it in this way sheds light on its internal determinations

6 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008 [2004]).

7 McGuigan, 'The Neoliberal Self', p. 229.

8 It must be remarked that Mitchell Dean has claimed recently that it is a misconception to attribute to Foucault an outline of neoliberal subjectivity, as what the French philosopher insisted on was in envisaging neoliberalism as a mode of liberation from *governmentality*, that is, a way out of subjectification. In subsequent sections of this chapter I take up this argument to develop my proposal. See Dean, 'The Secret Life of Neoliberal Subjectivity', in *Rethinking Neoliberalism*, ed. by Sanford F. Schram and Marianna Pavlovskaya (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 23–40.

9 Quoted in McGuigan, 'The Neoliberal Self', p. 225.

and specifies the direction of the process as the integration of those affirmative moments within the totalization *represented* by the expansive market as pure exchange value for profit maximization. If it is so, we are ready now to extract some consequences from the dialectical reasoning for capitalist subjectivity from the origins until the so-called neoliberal capitalism, both being nothing more than different moments in the process of integration into the capitalist form of life as dialectical totalization.

Capitalism as a way of operating has been associated with the accumulation and maximization of economic profit since at least the work of Adam Smith. This was also the main attribute of what economists of a later period started to call *homo economicus*:

> This figure emerges first in late nineteenth-century political economy critiques of Mill's work, and the idea of homo oeconomicus then retroactively expands backwards, such that it comes to refer to Mill's predecessors in classical political economy, particularly Adam Smith and David Ricardo.[10]

This maximization of economic profit seems to be the principle that enacts the capitalist life and drives its subjectivity. Claus Dierksmeier considers *homo economicus* as a model of behaviour dictated by economists since the late eighteenth century.[11] A model of behaviour that actually changes the way in which we relate to reality. Nevertheless, the argument misses the point of the totalization into which most members of the society entered precisely at that time; a totalization in which the economic theory played an important role but only as justification and reinforcement of a practice that was already part of a preexisting order and not vice versa: the theory justified the practice. For instance, the discourse of free trade and free market of labour was used numerous times to justify child labour in mines and factories (lower salaries and small hands and bodies to perform tasks otherwise difficult, though

10 Samuel A. Chambers, 'Undoing Neoliberalism: *Homo Oeconomicus*, *Homo Politicus*, and the *Zoon Politikon*', *Critical Inquiry*, 44:4 (2018), 706–32 (p. 719).

11 Claus Dierksmeier, 'Reorienting Management Education: From the Homo Oeconomicus to Human Dignity', in *Business Schools Under Fire: Humanistic Management Education as the Way Forward*, ed. by W. Amann, M. Pirson, C. Dierksmeier, E. von Kimakowitz and H. Spitzeck (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 19–40 (pp. 20–21).

always dangerous), an extended practice guided by the principle of maximizing profit.[12]

In fact, this principle can actually give rise to two different forms of life: capitalism and collectivism (or communism). In the first case, we have the maximization of individual profit (whether or not they contribute to the general good) and, in the second case, we have the maximization of collective profit (an ideal version of communism, implemented in small groups or communities, such as the case of the Mondragon Project in Spain).[13] By communism, I do not mean the state apparatus of so-called communist nations. The communism we are talking about here is rather the primitive collectivism or that of the anarcho-communist proposals of Peter Kropotkin by which 'the individual recovers his full liberty of initiative and action for satisfying, by means of free groups and federations—freely constituted—all the infinitely varied needs of the human being'.[14] All those models of community life can be entered under the principle of collective maximization of economic profits. The *raison d'être* of these subjects is to cooperate in the community to maximize their profits. These profits are economic because they pursue material wealth for their own use or for exchange or business with other communities. In some of these communities, the autarchic principle is very strong, and therefore, the cooperation does not lead to a mercantile relation with other communities (for instance, Charles Fourier's original phalansteries). However, even in these, the life of the individual is at the service of the community so that it grows in its material wealth (which may or may not be the object of business). These subjects integrate themselves into the community, seeking their habits to have an economic impact on everyone. By contrast, in the capitalist form of life, maximization is always individual, and therefore, its subjects always seek to maximize their own wealth. The famous 'invisible hand' that Adam

12 Laura Frader, *The Industrial Revolution: A History in Documents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 135–36.

13 This collectivism is also perceived in groups like the Commune of Paris (1871). However, their collective enterprise was not so much driven by maximization as by a certain spirit of austerity, that is, of cooperating to meet the needs of the community. For an overview of the possibility of this type of collective enterprise and concrete examples of anarchist societies, see David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004).

14 Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles* (London: Freedom Office, 1905), p. 3.

Smith mentions in *The Wealth of Nations* is not a principle of this form of life, but rather the hope that reinforces its very possibility. The 'invisible hand' that makes everyone rich through individual selfish stimulus is not a rule, a *quod erat demonstrandum* principle. The invisible hand is a case of wishful thinking transmitted by the Scottish author. It is the hope that it will be so, in order to continue to maximize individually. It is the reinforcement that the will needs in order to impose this form of life as a possibility. Adam Smith explicitly mentions individual initiatives that promote national markets without any intention of doing so. For they create a commercial monopoly which, however, is described as a kind of benefit to the nation, achieved indirectly through individual interests in securing their profits:

> By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by *an invisible hand* to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.[15]

Adam Smith's text can be read as propaganda for the capitalist form of life. Imagine the reader if, instead of the invisible hand (which has been propagated along with all the capitalist propaganda), Smith had asserted that such individual calculation of wealth accumulation inevitably leads to monopoly and the tyranny of the few over the many. In the words of Karl Marx:

> Competition among capitalists increases the accumulation of capital. Accumulation, where private property prevails, is the concentration of capital in the hands of a few, it is in general an inevitable consequence if capital is left to follow its natural course, and it is precisely through competition that the way is cleared for this natural disposition of capital.[16]

15 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by Edwin Cannan, 2 vols. (London: Methuen and Co.,, 1904 [1776]), I, p. 421. The italics are mine.

16 Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. III: *Karl Marx, March 1843–August 1844* (London: Lawrence Wishart, 2010), p. 251.

In that hypothetical case, it might not have been considered the book of hours of every capitalist, but, on the contrary, counter-propaganda—as were Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (and Engels' *Outline of a Critique of Political Economy*), for example. This principle constitutes subjects who want to maximize their economic profit. Their life makes sense only through actions driven by that principle. Human life is understood as universalized in this process of integration towards a greater and more intense maximization of economic profit. But, because every principle is the negation of an opposite, the principle of economic maximization is the negation of austerity, this understood, in turn, as the negation of maximization. Let us define maximization, therefore, as that search for multiplying what one already has. Maximizing is addressed to what is intended to be multiplied. It is calculus. Economic maximization is the constant search for greater economic assets: in short, capital growth. Its denial is not poverty. The negation of maximization is rather not to maximize, not to seek the multiplication of capital. It is a life whose economic wealth is reduced to meeting present needs: that is, frugality and austerity. So he who seeks to maximize his wealth seeks to flee austerity. He is afraid of austerity. But this, as has already been said, is maintained throughout the integration of the subject in his form of life, as its original possibility. In each maximizing action beats the austerity from which one flees. That is, maximization continues to show austerity.

Austerity, as a state bordering on precariousness, is the other side of the maximization principle. So, subjects only maximize for fear of austerity. The Irish Potato Famine of 1845–52 for example, was the major premise to support importation of crops within the international capitalist market through the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846.[17] And to this day it seems an established view that without individual economic maximization, society would return to times of austerity and poverty. As Graeme Snooks puts it:

> The conventional wisdom tells us that economic systems in the distant past experienced, over very long periods of time, either the steady state envisaged by the classical economists, or zero-sum fluctuations in GDP per capita. According to both interpretations, ancient and medieval

17 See Chris Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Britain in the Nineteenth Century, 1815–1914* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 198.

> societies were unable to escape from poverty because they were dominated by custom rather than individual self-interest.[18]

In this example, poverty is not crude survival, but scarcity and austerity as the words used show: 'steady state' and 'zero-sum'. To *escape* from austerity is then what constitutes its opposite; this is an eternal escape. So, maximization can be said to be the constant negation of the ever-present austerity. The subject never stops coming out of austerity, because if it ended, it would stop maximizing. For there to be maximization, it is necessary to experience austerity. This is why the maximizer always wants more. As much as the subject gets financial benefits, he will always experience them from austerity (or the risk of it). The profit will not make the subject, constituted by the stated principle, move away from austerity. Moreover, the more profits he obtains, the greater the assimilation of austerity. For the greater the integration of the form of life, the greater the assimilation of its opposite. To the point that only by being austere and experiencing austerity can maximization be obtained. Curiously enough, great capitalist entrepreneurs like J. Paul Getty are said to lead lives of great frugality.[19] He lived to maximize because it always seemed little to him. He always wanted more.

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18 Graeme Donald Snooks, 'Great Waves of Economic Change: Industrial Revolution in Historical Perspective, 1000 to 2000', in *Was the Industrial Revolution Necessary?*, ed. by Graeme Donald Snooks (London and New York: Routledge, 1994/2002), pp. 43–78 (p. 44).

19 J. Paul Getty (1892–1976) was a petrol-industrialist and art collector, owner of the Getty Oil Company and founder of J. Paul Getty Trust. In 1957, *Fortune* magazine named him the world's richest person. In one of his books, he wrote about what he called the 'millionaire mentality', which is purest capitalist mind (the most perfect form of profit maximization): 'The Millionaire Mentality is one which is always and above all cost-conscious and profit-minded'. And 'businessmen and business executives must be constantly alert for ways to reduce costs and increase efficiency, production, quality and sales so that the company he owns—or for which he works—can operate at a profit'. See J. Paul Getty, *How to Be Rich* (New York: Jove Books, 1983), pp. 41; 42. The latter is equivalent to reducing expenses to austere levels in order to increase profit, or, in other words, austerity inevitably as the core of the profitable attitude. For some biographers, such as John Pearson, this attitude was an imitation of J. Paul Getty's father's, whom he even wanted to surpass: 'any personal acquisition was decided henceforth strictly on a profit basis. As a good puritan, George F. Getty was a dedicated self-denier; so Paul set out to beat him here as well. He would permit himself no self-indulgence in the purchase of a place to live, a work of art, even a piece of furniture, unless he could convince himself that it would appreciate in value.' See John Pearson, *Painfully Rich* (New York: Bloomsbury Reader, 2011 [1995]), pp. 44–45.

The difference between maximizing and satisfying present needs can always be problematized. But the point that distinguishes them is that what is necessary in one is to maximize and in the other, on the contrary, is neither to maximize nor to accumulate. The one who maximizes feels the need to maximize and accumulate; therefore, his desire is not satisfied with an object, like thirst with water, but with accumulation, with the very action of multiplying his possibilities of having more. His need is not present, in the sense that it is not that which an object arouses, but that which arouses a lack of maximization, a fear of austerity, that is to say, that of experiencing that one never has enough. On the contrary, the austere form of life, which constitutes negatively the life of maximization, wishes not to maximize, which means satisfying a present need in the sense that it arises from the lack of an object or a situation to which one responds. Its satisfaction lies in the action of obtaining the object or making the situation happen; for example, in the payment of a debt or obligation. With what is obtained or realized, one has enough. In the first case, the lack is future, namely, to have more; in the second case, it is present, to obtain the object for a current need. Moreover (as I discuss below), in the first case, the lack is not of an object, so that when one tries to satisfy it with an object, one reifies that need, which is the need to maximize, i.e., to be a subject through maximization.

In the second case, on the other hand, the need is for an object, and is satisfied by its attainment. It is not reified because it is precisely the need for an object, so that a distance is maintained between the subject who experiences the need and the object. In the maximizer, however, since what is needed is not the object but the act of maximizing, that is, being a maximizing subject, the object with which the need is sought to be satisfied reifies both the need and the subject. And it does so precisely because it presents externally in the object as satisfied a desire that persists. In reality, then, two desires: the desire to maximize and the desire to be a subject that desires to maximize. The latter would be the one that responds to its ontological identification and therefore to its being. The difference with the one who lives an austere life would be that while the capitalist reifies his desire and his being (taken as a second-order desire), the former reifies his being but not his desire. For, by obtaining the object of his present desire, he satisfies it, but not the persistent desire to be a subject who wishes only to satisfy his present

needs. The austere person presents himself externally reified in this will to be austere: his austerity is presented as a finished way of being. The more he identifies himself with this reified subject (or image of being human), the more austere and, therefore, the more perfectly he directs his desires to objects at hand that merely satisfy present needs. Reification has the function in both processes of presenting as finished, complete and fixed what is not. But in presenting it that way the subject performs an act of self-recognition and affirms his identity, so that in the case of capitalism, as I say below, the subject successively mirrors himself in the objects he presents to himself in order to satisfy his desire to maximize (albeit always unsuccessfully). He is somewhat those objects in which his desire and his being are reified, although he is always more than those objects; he is also the desiring surplus that persists in maximizing.

So, if we take the current capitalist society, as incarnating a form of life driven by the maximization of individual economic profit, it can be explained why this society, no matter how much it produces and accumulates, always feels austere. Austerity is the negative principle on which it is constituted. What the anti-austerity movement around the world did in the second decade of the twenty-first century was not to point out a historical event, but to show that every capitalist form of life is founded on austerity. Maximization only makes sense as a hope against austerity. And the latter is the former's true opposite. The horror and nightmare of a subject of the capitalist form of life (as driven by that principle of maximization) is a frugal and austere life. That life is perceived with the emotions of sadness, contempt and absurdity. Living without maximizing is nonsense. And maximizing results in incessant production, acquisition, accumulation and even waste, because the opposite of having just enough to live is always having more than what is needed. However, it is always experienced as a scarcity because it is negatively principled by austerity. And likewise with regard to the preservation and care of what one possesses. The one who maximizes seeks to renew what he possesses by increasing its value in terms of capital (a newer, higher quality object, titles, status, and so on), while the one who directs himself through the principle of austerity seeks to preserve and care for that which he possesses.

The same can be said of the form of life led by the maximization of collective profit. In it, the opposite is equally the austerity. However,

rather than that of the individual it is that of the community. This community will always seek to maximize its wealth, and it will never be enough. The danger of this form of life is that the subject will experience it as an impossibility for himself because it is always insufficient for the community; the austerity of this is always haunting its subjects. One of their opposites can become their form of life, and the closest is that of capitalism. The difference between these two forms of life does not seem so great in principle, but what exactly differentiates communism (or collectivism) from capitalism?[20]Both, in principle, seek to escape from austerity, one does so individually and the other, collectively. Herein lies their similarity and what makes them correlative to each other. Both seek the same thing. At least that is the conclusion to which our onto-phenomenological analysis leads us. As strange as it may seem to the reader after decades of propaganda from both forms of life, both seek essentially the same thing: to escape from the precariousness on which austerity (as the absence of maximization) borders. And it may be strange to find this structural similarity in them precisely because such propaganda has emphasized their differences and their rejection of each other. For they have become two hegemonic forms in opposition. That they are hegemonic is not directly related to their ontological structure but to their power of universalization, therefore, indirectly to their will to power through imposition and assimilation. This hegemonic contest has presented them as being extremely different, almost diametrically opposed, while in their ontological structure they were to each other no more than one among other opposite forms of life.

What has just been argued does not imply that communism and capitalism are the same; it simply means that in their principle of being they are more similar than we have been led to believe. Now, both are different principles of life, as one is a possibility sealed by the other and vice versa. The individual maximization of economic profit is constituted negatively by individual austerity, while the collective maximization of economic profit is constituted negatively by collective austerity. And this respective ontological constitution is not a small

20 For a characterization of capitalism and its profit maximization, see Leonardo Figueroa Helland and Tim Lindgren, 'What Goes Around Comes Around: From the Coloniality of Power to the Crisis of Civilization', *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 22:2 (2016), 430–62, https://doi.org/10.5195/JWSR.2016.631.

difference. This difference marks the experience of maximization as an individual or as a collective task. That is, the escape from a shipwreck for which one alone is responsible or for which many are responsible. And, by the same token, the responsibility to prosper by one's own means after the shipwreck, or the shared responsibility to prosper through the contribution of all its members. It can be represented as the difference between Robinson Crusoe (Daniel Defoe) and the Swiss Family Robinson (David Wyss). That is, for the former, the survival and prosperity of his life was a private enterprise, while for the latter, it was a collective one. The question seems to fall, however, on the definition of collectivity and individuality. It is well known that capitalism has taken the family as one of its fundamental connotations, understood as maximizing profit through the family. Here, even more than before, we see similarities with collectivist communism: would the latter be no more than an expansion of individual profit to the family, and from the family to the communal? One of the keys to the communities that have lived and are living collectively seems to be the fact of establishing quasi-fraternal relations among its members. It is characteristic of religious communities to call each other brother and sister, and of societies that were originally collectivist like that of China, where even two strangers can call each other by family names like brother 哥哥 (*gē ge*) and sister 妹妹 (*mèi mèi*), uncle 叔叔 (*shū shū*) and aunt 阿姨 (*ā yí*).

If it were a question of expanding the number of members included in one form of life or another, then one would have to multiply the principles of life to other possible communities such as that of the couple, those that benefit for a large group such as a nation, or a form of life that maximizes for a group such as the entirety of humanity. It is not, therefore, a quantitative but a qualitative ontological question. The one that collectively maximizes what it does is to contribute to the maximization of the group's benefit. On the contrary, the one that maximizes individually what he does is to pursue a monopoly. He maximizes against others. In this way, the individualization of profit is placed against other people's losses.[21] When the principle is applied to

21 Michel de Montaigne shows this same intuition with regard to the principle of economic maximization: 'no profit whatever can be made but at the expense of another and by the same rule he should condemn all gain of what kind soever [sic]'. Further on, he identifies it as a universalizable principle: 'Let every one but dive into his own bosom and he will find his private wishes spring and his secret

a family, it seeks a monopoly over other families. That is individualistic maximization. The whole family seeks to individualize profit by pursuing a monopoly over others. The whole family acts as an individual with a single purpose. Collectivist maximization does not seek monopoly, but rather a particular contribution to common prosperity. Let us say that the latter is the sum of many contributions, whereas individual maximization (even when it is that of the family) acts as an individual: not a sum of contributions but a unique contribution. It is the individual, or the family or the group that acts individually over other individuals, families or groups. It seeks to maximize the individual's profits (or considered individual) over that of others.

From what has been said, it can be concluded that although both forms of life seek essentially the same, namely, to maximize, however, the motivation of both is significantly different. While the former seeks to flee from individual austerity understood as a loss in front of others, the latter seeks to flee from collective austerity understood as a common situation. The maximization of the former leads to monopoly by imposing its interest on others, while the maximization of the latter leads to the collective contribution seeking the prosperity of the group, a prosperity that is always experienced as elusive. However, the difference between what is considered an individual cause and what is considered a common cause is of paramount importance. While the collective maximization of economic profit is understood as remuneration of each member for his or her contribution, individual maximization takes the group as an individual entity whose profits do not mean the distributive profit for each of its members. Individual maximization is always of the individual or the entity considered individual. The example of the latter would be the corporative entities typical of capitalism. A corporation is an individual entity whose maximization is not the maximization of the profit of all its members, but only of the corporation as such (the stakeholders are the corporation as such, but not the employees and

hopes grow up at another's expense.' In Montaigne, *Essays*, Vol. I (London: Navarre Society Limited, 1923), pp. 121–22, chapter XXI, 'The profit of one man is the loss of another.' Indirectly, this quotation (which in turn is based on an anecdote from ancient Greece) proves that as a form of life, capitalist maximization is not of a particular historical time, but a possibility inherent to human beings, and that only as a hegemonic form can it be associated with a historical period, as in the following sections I intend to argue.

partners). In the case of collective maximization, the members maximize the collective profit, which also means maximizing the individual profit. This would not happen in a corporation, in a social group or state run as a corporation. Members sacrifice themselves (and are sacrificed) for the good of the individual entity. Here we refer to collective maximization of economic profit and not to communism, because it is misleading. A politically affiliated or self-appointed communist state can impose individual maximization of economic profit, if the state is taken as that individual entity to which members are sacrificed. So the boundaries in terms of language, of identifying labels, are very blurred. What distinguishes them is always the ontological structure, that is, the principle that drives them. Perhaps this is what the critics and scholars of capitalism have wanted to point out with the label of authoritarian capitalism, as if it were a new reality, when it is nothing but the internal structure of every community that is driven by individual maximization of economic profit.[22] By taking a nation as a corporation, maximization is not collective but fundamentally of the nation as an individual entity, which implies the obvious enrichment of the nation's elite, who incarnate the principle.

3. Dialectical Process towards Maximization of Economic Profit

The internal-external dialectical process of forms of life described in the previous sections can be seen in the origin and development of the capitalist form of life in England between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. In this, the internal process is directed by the principle of individual economic maximization, and its necessity consists in gradually covering as many aspects of the subject's life as possible, from labour to public life and, finally, private life in its smallest details. The external process consists in the necessity to assimilate those forms of life with which it comes into contact in such a way that the ontological

22 On the label authoritarian capitalism, see Christian Fuchs, 'Donald Trump: A Critical Theory-Perspective on Authoritarian Capitalism', *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 15:1 (2017), 1–72; Christian Fuchs, 'Racism, Nationalism and Right-Wing Extremism Online: The Austrian Presidential Election 2016 on Facebook', in *Critical Theory and Authoritarian Populism*, ed. by Jeremiah Morelock (London: University of Westminster Press, 2018), pp. 157–206.

principle constituting one of the forms of life directs the subjects and actions of the others. In this section, what I want to examine is the dialectic of the forms of life and the change of subjectivity that they operate.

The capitalist form of life emerges in social groups that have been overcome and that see their possibility of thriving in their society stifled. Around the sixteenth century,[23] the big landowners suffered the pressure and limitations of a state mercantilist form of life, where the ruling elite was the small nobility, who occupied bureaucratic positions in the government (it could be said that this form of life was one of maximizing the profit of the state and the monarchy). This is what Immanuel Wallerstein called the beginning of the modern world-system: 'there seems to be widespread consensus that in the earlier periods of the modern world-system, beginning at least in the sixteenth century and lasting at least until the eighteenth, the states were central economic actors in the European world-economy'.[24] In the midst of this state control system, the big landowners or gentry began to incarnate a new form of life in which they made their farmers wage labourers (tenants).[25] They work on the land for a wage, whereas before they worked the land for their own livelihood. The ultimate motivation is the maximization of individual profit through the exploitation of labour, time and workers. This form of life, born within the large landowners' land, will gradually expand and integrate. Among other authors, Ellen Meiksins Wood has shown that, in fact, capitalism originated in the agricultural work of the

23 For some historians this occurs in the sixteenth century, for others in the eighteenth century. That does not change the validity of the dialectic that is the purpose of this section. In fact, although there is no agreement on when exactly capitalism began, industrial capitalism is well established by the end of the eighteenth century. So, it is a matter of a longer or shorter span of time between the moment in which an incipient capitalist form of life started as economic maximization in the agrarian environment and the industrial revolution of the cities. At all times, what matters for our purpose is the dialectical process by which the forms of life and subjectivities changed.

24 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011 [1974]), p. 193.

25 I would not make any distinction between gentry and landowner, for as Wallerstein quoted, '"the mark of the gentry," says Julian Cornwall, "was the ownership of land"', in Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I*, p. 324. In this sense, I call it just 'landowner'. For a detailed discussion and debate on this category see the mentioned work.

peasant and tenants working for the landlord. The profit-maximization strategy of the landlord was motivated by the limitations set by the strong English state:

> It [aristocracy] was part of the increasingly centralized state, in alliance with a centralizing monarchy, without the parcellization [sic] of sovereignty characteristic of feudalism and its successor states. While the state served the ruling class as an instrument of order and protector of property, the aristocracy did not possess autonomous 'extra-economic' powers or 'politically constituted property' to the same degree as their continental counterparts [...] What they lacked in 'extra-economic' powers of surplus extraction they more than made up for with increasing 'economic' powers.[26]

The important thing to be highlighted in this example is the ontological structure that constitutes its being. Some subjects understood the integration in the mercantilist form of life blocked by the elites, and that the consequent search for a new possibility will be aimed at maximizing individual profit rather than the profit of the monarch by means of actions such as working the land and performing manual labour. It should be remembered that, according to the dialectical process analyzed in the previous section, the negation of one form of life by another means the assimilation (or attempted assimilation) of the former by the principle of the latter. But assimilation occurs through the opposite features of the denied form of life. For in denying it, its opposite is affirmed. This is a key issue to bear in mind. Thus, the denial of the austere form of life affirmed its opposite, which was precisely the economic maximization. This is an important point because this could be a significant factor for such assimilation to be so successful. The potential of the peasants would be found in being negatively constituted by the form of life of economic maximization. The practices to which they were subjected unleashed this latent possibility with redoubled force. They are assimilated as subjects who maximize, *confusing* them with machines to increase productivity. Moreover, their values, habits and feelings, while remaining the same, are now reoriented by the principle of maximization.

In other words, the form of life of these peasants was the possibility from which capitalism was born as its negation: from living in balance between needs and demands to an exorbitant increase in demand above

26 Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 99.

needs following the imperatives of the markets, and from living in austerity to maximizing profits. The life of these peasants is the opposite of capitalism, without which the latter would not exist. With the denial of the peasant's form of life (in the form of imposed behaviour, exploitation and *subhuman* treatment) the class of the English great landowners is affirmed as the first capitalist elite: 'We can watch the development of a new mentality by observing the landlord's surveyor as he computes the rental value of land on the basis of some more or less abstract principle of market value, and measures it explicitly against the actual rents being paid by customary tenants.'[27] And by affirming themselves as such, the landlords exerted pressure over the tenants to improve productivity, integrating them as labourers on the farms:

> The effect of this system of property relations was that many agricultural producers (including prosperous 'yeomen') became market-dependent in their access to land itself, to the means of production. Increasingly, as more land came under this economic regime, advantage in access to the land itself would go to those who could produce competitively and pay good rents by increasing their own productivity. This meant that success would breed success, and competitive farmers would have increasing access to even more land, while others lost access altogether.[28]

That affirmation of the landowners posited also their own followers, a thriving social class that imitates them and wishes to replace them: the capitalist tenant or smallholders, who will implement a wage system to increase productivity and further on will also negate and assimilate the urban workers in factories to become the incipient middle class:

> The famous triad of landlord, capitalist tenant, and wage labourer was the result, and with the growth of wage labour the pressures to improve labour productivity also increased. The same process created a highly productive agriculture capable of sustaining a large population not engaged in agricultural production, but also an increasing propertyless mass that would constitute both a large wage-labour force and a domestic market for cheap consumer goods—a type of market with no historical precedent. This is the background to the formation of English industrial capitalism.[29]

27 *Ibid*., p. 101.
28 *Ibid*., p. 100.
29 *Ibid*., p. 103.

This budding middle class, in turn, was denied by those in public office and state institutions (which now was constituted by landowners and small nobility) in its efforts to incarnate the new capitalist form of life. In this moment of the development of capitalism, the incipient middle class (which is already shaped as social and economic power) denies now the aristocracy or nobility, and assimilates certain characteristics of them by incarnating the new stage of the capitalist form of life.

Continuing with this preview of our subsequent analysis, the elites who incarnated the capitalist form of life in the second half of the nineteenth century, were a middle class now politically empowered. This will be progressively converted into a social mass combining the characteristics of the nobility with its morbidity, its luxuries and pastimes (a form of alienation) along with the characteristics of the proletarian with its appreciation of family, religion, consumption and wage labour (now under the principle of maximization). These are the masses that will end negating the middle class as the incarnation of capitalism and will predominate by its expansion to the rest of the society. The new elite will give rise to a mass culture that will shape the twentieth century and reach even the twenty-first century. The affirmation of the capitalist form of life would thus have achieved a global universalization. In this dialectical process, the necessity of affirming one's own principle is realized as a negation of any community that does not participate in it. These communities are originally external, but they are assimilated in the process of integration and universalization. Necessity and contingency are in this process inseparable. This dialectic thus rejects both the possibility of a necessary process regardless of the facticity, as well as the Marxist description of groups or classes clashing outside of a necessary totality.

What is important to remark is that the opposite from which the capitalist form is born persists as negativity throughout the process of integration as its original possibility and negative constitution. And that the affirmation of capitalism as a negation of its opposite meant the assimilation of characteristics of that opposite form of life such as family, religion and work, characteristics that will remain as connotations of the capitalist form of life under its principle. In this sense, the economic maximization is greater if we compare the first moments with the last ones, because the mass is more profitable in its

labour activity, of leisure and of consumerism than the workers in the field or in the factories. The mass is one more step in the foundation of the need to maximize. Let us see this dialectical process in more detail throughout its stages.

3.1. The Negation of the Agricultural Life or the Austere Form of Life

The life of austerity is the one that was mostly led by the peasants (but not exclusively). It was not a question of maximizing; quite the contrary, it was about satisfying present needs without accumulating or trying to get rich. Therefore, as summarized above, if they were running away from maximization and accumulation, they were also running away from work that would bring profits beyond their own consumption and from the tenure due to the landlord. I will call this austere form of life agricultural life interchangeably.[30] When I use expressions like 'end of agricultural life', I will also be referring to the end of the austere form of life, even if the change of life still takes place in the countryside, subjected to the oppression of the landlords and industrial mills. I would like to insist once again that it is not historical accuracy that moves me but rather exclusively the illustration and clarification of a philosophical intuition such as that of a form of life, its subjectivity and its structure of dialectical integration.

The first thing that needs to be remarked is that the passage from agricultural life to a maximizing life was experienced as a great break-off by those men and women of the eighteenth century, when its effect began to be more noticeable (Matthew Arnold saw it as a conflict between civilization and feudalism).[31] A new identity began to be forged at those moments when, for the first time, the practice of enclosure removed the common lands from the peasants along with their independent work, to throw them into mass work in farms and some time later in industrial mills for the remuneration of a skimpy salary (this system

30 Let us say for the purposes of this chapter that the agricultural life is the version of the austere form of life that interests us, for each form of life has various concrete realizations, in which, however, the principle and its derived meanings do not change.

31 According to Walter Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 2.

grew constantly stronger, especially from the mid-eighteenth century).[32] In fact, it had happened before, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as Wood and Élie Halévy remind us,[33] but at that time the small farmers were not forced to perform wage labour after the dispossession of their lands. In addition, although the nobles used to seize common lands, in the eighteenth century, this system of enclosure and the 'expropriation of peasant proprietor' were fundamentally caused by successful business families or 'nouveaux riches' through the acquisition of lands, as William Cobbet then remarked.[34] This is how Reverend David Davis, a witness of this fundamental change in labour relations and daily behaviour, recorded his experience:

> The practice of enlarging [...] farms, and especially that of depriving the peasantry of all landed property, has contributed greatly to increase the number of dependent poor [...] The land-owner, to render his income adequate to the increased expense of living, unites several small farms into one, raises the rent to the utmost, and avoids the expense of repairs. The rich farmer also [encloses] as many farms as he is able to stock—lives in more credit and comfort than he could otherwise do—and out of the profits of the *several farms,* makes an ample provision for. Thus thousands of families, which formerly gained an independent livelihood on those separate farms, have been gradually reduced to the class of day-labourers.[35]

In this historical moment, the life of the English peasants posited as a life of a balanced austerity,[36] based on the satisfaction of present needs by means of the direct result of their work, is denied by the great landowners, who will be granted the extension of their land and farms by fencing and subsuming common lands ('the commons') for

32 See Élie Halévy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century: England in 1815* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1961), pp. 219–20.

33 Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*, p. 101; Halévy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 218.

34 Halévy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 222. This serves to underline the fact that it was a form of life and not a particular social class or group that initiated the process. This, however, does not deny that there was some social homogeneity among the members of the community that shared such a form of life.

35 Quoted in Frader, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 35.

36 The agricultural life was immortalized not without some propagandistic idealization in paintings and other artistic creations by painters such as Jean-François Millet. See Hamish Graham, 'Rural Society and Agricultural Revolution', in *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Europe, 1789–1914*, ed. by Stefan Berger (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 31–43 (p. 32).

greater exploitation and increase in profit. In E. P. Thompson's words, 'in agriculture, the years between 1760 and 1820 are the years of wholesale enclosure'.[37] This moment is crucial because the peasants no longer have the freedom to self-organize and they lose the possibility of sustaining themselves with the collected products of their work (since they were entitled to a proportion of the cultivated and collected products for their own subsistence). It is then that a new relationship between peasants and owners is established, a relationship based on the exploitation of the labour force in order to increase profit.[38] The result of the work is no longer the subsistence but the dependence of a salary with which to acquire the products that previously were obtained directly from their work.[39] Thus, the owner earned twice. This new relationship initiates the totalization of capitalism, corresponding to the maximizing form of life. For as Wood remarks, 'only in capitalism is the dominant mode of appropriation based on the complete dispossession of direct producers, who (unlike chattel slaves) are legally free and whose surplus labour is appropriated by purely "economic" means'.[40]

The capitalist form of life, as anthropical image, is present as an ontological totalizing principle in all the actions corresponding to its series, all its possible actions and habits. But, in a paradigmatic way, it is manifested in that interpersonal relationship by which the owner will seek to maximize the profits through 'egotistical calculation' and 'brutal exploitation'.[41] For the relationship between both, the producer and the owner, is intrinsically mediated by the market. A market that is qualitatively different in the capitalist system according to the principle that governs it: 'This unique system of market dependence has specific systemic requirements and compulsions shared by no other mode of production: the imperatives of competition, accumulation, and

37 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 198.

38 *Ibid*., p. 192.

39 See Engels' description of the peasant's life, in Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, in Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *Collected Works*, Vol. IV: *Marx and Engels, 1844–1845* (New York: International Publishers, 1975 [1845]), pp. 308–09.

40 Wood, *The Origins of Capitalism*, p. 96.

41 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Pluto Press, 2008 [1848]), p. 37.

profit-maximization, and hence a constant systemic need to develop the productive forces.'[42]

Thus the capitalist form of life will be the totalization of all possible actions galvanized by that principle of maximization, not only of the material but of any aspect that can be perceived as an individual profit. That is the kind of new human being born from that first denial of agricultural life, in terms of austere form of life, where actions were not guided by maximization but by the satisfaction of the present needs (which implies not to work beyond the satisfaction of those needs). The capitalist form of life emerges then by means of the negation of the agricultural life, which in turn entails the affirmation of the industrial life, in terms of economic maximization (and secondarily in terms of urban industrialization); a life to which the essential naturalness of the denied agricultural life is now transferred. The capitalist form of life will go on to totalize the lives of men and women, making it feel like the only possible life, the only natural way of living, so that by the end of the nineteenth century the totalization has practically been completed in its first stages and only 20 per cent of the population is considered to be rural, for according to Sally Mitchell, 'by 1901, 80 per cent of England's people lived in urban areas'.[43]

Totalization began in the manner described above. As of that moment, not only the owners but also the peasants turned into workers of farms, industrial mills and factories (where the machinery made possible by the steam engine reigned) and began to be integrated into this totalization; and as put by Laura Frader, 'the interests of masters and servants are bound together'.[44] The owner pursues the best performance of his workers in order to obtain the highest possible profit, and the worker, already complicit by his own behaviour (forced by the existential situation of the enclosure), also pursues his highest performance except that his profit not only does not increase, but sometimes it could even be reduced, for instance, when the worker becomes older or acquires any illness or disability related to the work performed, or as Thompson put it: 'managerial or supervisory functions demand the repression of all

42 Wood, *The Origins of Capitalism*, p. 97.
43 Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2009), p. 13.
44 Frader, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 47.

attributes except those which further the expropriation of the maximum surplus value from labour'.[45] This will be precisely the logic that makes workers rebel against employers. It is the very logic of the capitalist form of life that leads workers to rebel against working conditions in the last decade of the eighteenth century: they were aware that they were losing (in favour of the owners) the maximization of the profits of their work (for they were already assimilated to the new way of being and acting). The tendency in which the totalization of this form of life has put them is to work not to subsist in an austere form of life but to maximize; although this process will require decades to become more perceptible, the seed was planted. This explains why in the previous era, in that of agricultural life, before they have become integrated into the capitalist form, no uprisings and recriminations of the peasants could be found against the owners (or that these were insignificant). Some authors, however, such as Thompson, have justified this precisely with the fact that it is in the industrial age that workers are employed en masse, so communication channels are established between them and they begin to become class conscious.[46] But this argument does not justify their revolt; all that it does is to explain that class consciousness started to emerge, which does not necessarily lead to the uprising. For workers to rise up against their employers, they had to conceive of their work as an injustice, that is, they had to consider precisely that in such a production system the possibility of increasing their profits (their wages) was being taken away from them although the intensity of their work increased, which incidentally, did not happen in the agricultural era, even though some or even much of their work was also for the profit of the owner and not theirs. My point is that a change in the conception of what is human was made at that time, and this was precisely what entailed a new consciousness of the way in which human beings have to behave: the maximization principle adopted made the industrial form of life possible, and in turn the latter expanded and actualized its totalization. And that is what Robert Owen probably meant in 1815, when he wrote that 'the general diffusion of manufactures throughout a country generates a new character in its inhabitants... an essential change in the

45 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 203.
46 *Ibid*., p. 198.

general character of the mass of the people'.[47] This leads us to conclude that while change began slowly in the sixteenth century through the market relationship between owner and tenant, the progressive method of *enclosure* in the eighteenth century is when the capitalist form of life expands in England and from the countryside goes to the city. It is then that this new way of being and acting becomes more tangible.

3.2. The Negation of the Workers: The Rule of the Owners

During the time of the wars with France, workers outraged by the working conditions and the exploitation of their work for the enrichment of the owner begin to organize (one of the first of these organizations being the London Corresponding Society)[48] in what can only be interpreted as an uprising against the owners of factories and industrial mills, a situation exacerbated by the subsequent enactments of Corn Laws and the corresponding approval of small owners.

Workers in this semi-associated state become an uncomfortable human mass that is difficult to control by those who have an interest in maximizing their performance. The rules in the factories harden and, faced with the fear of the revolution in imitation of the one that occurred in France a few years earlier, with the approval of the owners of factories and industrial mills, the government established the Combination Acts of 1799–1800, by which the meeting and association of workers was prohibited.[49] This is one of the most perceptible events by which we can judge the denial of workers by social elites. This denial is based on the possibility that the workers could stop the process of profit maximization in one of the key moments of industrialization, when the owners came to amass a large amount of capital that would serve in many cases to pass from farms and mills to urban factories or from national to international enterprises. Not only did owners view the Combination Acts favourably because they made workers more submissive, but also because it robbed them of the possibility of associating to request increases in salaries.[50] A few years later, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, as new

47 Quoted in *ibid*., p. 190.
48 *Ibid*., pp. 17–18.
49 *Ibid*., p. 503.
50 *Ibid*., p. 198.

technologies become available, many workers will be denied in their very condition of workers in which they were incorporated at the beginning of the totalization of the capitalist form of life. The replacement in factories and textile mills of workers by machines gave rise to the social crisis that is known as that of the Luddites (1811–13). In these first years of the century of industrialization, the owners' sector, not yet considered part of a social and political class different from the rest of the non-aristocratic population, will impose its criteria, thanks to the economic influence they will come to exercise on society. And in most cases, it will be more receptive to the demands of the aristocracy than to those of the people, especially after 1815, in the aftermath of the war against France, in which they begin to assert themselves as economic and social elites, denying any assimilation with the workers. At this time, the owners who have had a certain (or more than certain) success in the first decades of industrialization, seek to maximize their revenues and turn to political power.

The denial of the workers has affirmed the owners as a budding class; it has made them stand out from the other necessary part in the industrial labour relationship, the counterpart embodied by the workers. The principle of profit maximization has put the owner in the position of denying the workers to obtain greater profits, through the freezing of wages, the scrupulosity (even cruelty) with which the rules are observed in the workplace or the dismissals due to lack of performance, and finally, mass dismissals caused by the mechanization of the means of production through new technology acquisition. The situation is summarized by Hause and Maltby in the following lines:

> Most workers came from the countryside, where they were accustomed to agricultural work defined by the rhythms of nature—the seasons, daylight, weather—or to such self-disciplined labor as spinning or weaving at home. Factory work was a regime of rules enforced by an overseer, regimentation by the clock or the pace of a machine. Typical industrial work rules forbade talking or singing. Fines for misbehavior were deducted from wages. The first large spinning factory in England fired an average of twenty workers per week and averaged a 100-percent turnover within one year.[51]

51 Steven Hause and William Maltby, *Western Civilization: A History of European Society* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2004), p. 429.

The capitalist form of life integrates more and more the lives of the English population in this totalization by which, the actions and habits to which the population is exposed (both owners and workers) constantly invite them to integrate more and more into this current of maximization in all aspects of life, including hygiene and morality. The negation of the workers can be seen within the dialectical process as a progressive assimilation of the workers, while in large part they continue to come from rural areas and are therefore subjects of the austere form of life. This assimilation consists of the affirmation of their maximizing capacity. The latter means the denial of their form of life and their transformation into different subjects, now motivated by maximization and inserted within capitalist totalization. After this denial and assimilation, the workers will be the followers of the middle class (they will start to imitate them as models of behaviour and respectability) which begins to emerge as a natural elite and incarnation of the capitalist form of life. They, thus, reached social and economic power.

And yet owners, in the 1820s and 30s, are denied by the political elite in their particular movement in search of political rights with which to increase their possibility of influence and growth of profit and welfare. But with the Reform Act of 1832, this impediment of the aristocrats or small nobility will begin to be eliminated by the maximizing totalization through a new negation of the non-capitalist form of life. Just as in the first negation, the capitalist form of life gained the essential trait of agricultural life, namely, the characteristic of being the natural form of life, which reinforced its justification of being; likewise, in this denial, capitalism, which is gradually encompassing the whole of English society and being exported to the rest of Europe, appropriates one of the characteristics that until now was typical of workers (who, as peasants, used to do family work even in industrial mills, especially before the 1819 Factory Act), that is, the pattern of family life, care and union between the family members. This attitude gives them respectability in the eyes of society, and is among the features identified by Mitchell, Frader, Walter Houghton and others as proper to Victorian morality.[52] Respectability concerning the profit stands for the maximization of the social status of the owners. Thus, if the landowners deny the farmers, the middle class

52 See Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, pp. 264–65; Frader, *The Industrial Revolution*, pp. 275–76; Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, pp. 184–88; 341–47.

will deny the workers; with both negations, the form of life of economic maximization expands geographically and socially, while being successively incarnated by a different elite. With its universalization, it assimilates the forms of life of the various communities with which it comes into contact: the next to be assimilated will be the intellectual form of life of the aristocracy or small nobility.

A review of home-based work carried out by Peter Gaskell in 1836 shows us the characteristics which the capitalist form of life appropriated as its own determinations in the act of denying the austerity of workers and peasants, whose forms of life still showed the traits of its roots in agricultural life. Before the emergence of the capitalist life, it was considered that, as well as peasants, domestic manufacturers and craftsmen possessed some land and certain well-being, essential elements respectively of the aristocracy and the rising middle class:

> Before the year 1760 [...] the majority of artisans had laboured in their own houses, and in the bosoms of their families. It may be termed the period of Domestic Manufacture [...] These were, undoubtedly, the golden times of manufactures, considered in reference to the character of the labourers. By all the processes being carried on under a man's own roof, he retained his individual respectability, he was kept apart from associations that might injure his moral worth, and he generally earned wages which were not only sufficient to live comfortably upon, but which enabled him to rent a few acres of land thus joining in his own person two classes which are now daily becoming more and more distinct.[53]

This text allows us to clarify the beginnings of the totalization that we are dealing with here. If it is true that the enclosure of the land, forcing the worker to work for a daily or weekly salary at the mill or the factory of the owner, is the milestone that marks the beginning of the capitalist form of life (probably expanding the practice that had existed from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), it is no less true that next to that of the peasants was the employment situation of artisans. These, as the text explains, were integrated into capitalism by a different path. Before the massive integration into the capitalist form of life, and also, for a short time, during the great hatching of industrial mills, although this sector of artisans worked for merchants, they did not leave their home or receive a daily or weekly salary, but instead were paid per piece or finished

53 Quoted in Frader, *The Industrial Revolution*, p. 25.

work.[54] This mode of production had two important consequences for their form of life: on the one hand they preserved their labour and vital independence, being able to organize their own work and schedules; while on the other, it preserved their economic independence, because the money they earned, although scarce, served them to rent a land from which they fed. In general, the artisanal sector will be integrated into capitalism when the monopoly of the textile mills and the first urban manufactories makes it expendable, and when artisans therefore become subject to exploitation under the supervision of the owner, receiving a salary for their workforce, with the incipient denial of the posited austere form of life: the artisans thus stop selling their products and start selling themselves.[55] At this point, the principle of their austere life is denied and their habits are assimilated and directed towards maximization within the market.

3.3. The Negation of the Aristocrats and the Consolidation of the Middle Class

The attempts and pretensions of the owners (already named middle class with some consistency by part of society from 1820 onwards, especially after the massacre of Peterloo which reinforced their separation from low ranks, according to Dror Wahrman)[56] to become holders of political power by means of parliamentary reform, is opposed time and again by the aristocrats in the House of Lords.[57] Wahrman provides many instances of this opposition to reform mostly from the upper class or conservatives, who are clearly the antagonists of the middle class at this particular period.[58] Asa Briggs, meanwhile, shows how some aristocrats favoured the reform only as a strategy to lessen the danger of driving 'them to a union, founded on dissatisfaction, with the lower orders'.[59]

54 Hause and Maltby, *Western Civilization: A History of European Society*, p. 420; and, in the same sense, Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, p. 308.

55 For this attribution, see Noam Chomsky, *Chomsky on Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), p. 203.

56 Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c.1780–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 201.

57 See Angus Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture: 'Habits of Heart and Mind'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 66–67; Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, p. 305.

58 Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, pp. 323–27.

59 Asa Briggs, 'Middle-Class Consciousness in English Politics, 1780–1846', *Past & Present*, 9:1 (1956), 65–74 (p. 70).

This contempt for the group of owners, who had fundamentally driven the historical change from agricultural to industrial life (or from the austere form of life to the life of economic maximization), maximizing their profits in increasingly international business transactions, can be considered dialectically as the opposition presented to the owners by the aristocracy. This attitude of the aristocracy will nevertheless be denied in turn by the historical results of the 1832 Reform Act, when the class of the owners is officially constituted in the middle class, which now partly gets parliamentary representation. This denial, now with respect to the aristocracy as a group of power, will make the middle class the class that progressively takes the reins of national affairs, consolidating the industrial life made possible by economic maximization and its capitalist anthropical image, which, starting from these years, already in the Victorian era, the middle class will come to incarnate (while the rest of society tries to follow its rhythm, integrating equally in its totalization). This is made clear in another event of notable importance, namely, the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, which incidentally was also a strategic action to favour the maximization of the profit of the middle class, especially those involved in trade and the importation of goods (since then the ban on the importation of foreign corn was lifted), while denying the aristocracy as a superior rank, which was based on the inherited lands. Thus, more than a particular moment, in fact, from 1832 it opens a progressive period of negation of the aristocracy and appropriation of its essential features by the class that will dominate the Victorian scene. It will require the Reform Act of 1867 for its political representation to reach practically all its male members. But in these years, the process of appropriation of the negated upper rank will lead to a relaxation of morals and a certain social freedom. If the aristocracy or small nobility generally incarnated an intellectual form of life of knowledge and culture (for they were those who held positions in state offices, judges, lawyers, artists, writers and teachers), this social freedom and relaxation of the morality of the middle class is, in fact, part of their form of life in these years after the negation and assimilation of the aristocracy in its opposite principle (affirmation of its opposite), namely, that of alienation and ignorance (who in turn got integrated in the totalization of the capitalist form of life by favouring useful and

profitable activities, for many of them started to invest in business).[60] The official discourse,[61] however, will maintain the rigidity of the moral codes associated with respectability (no card games, adultery, alcohol abuse or violent behaviour; decent and prudent marriage, and so on).[62] Stephan Zweig, in his memoirs, relates how in terms of sexual behaviour, for example, prostitution was part of middle-class life: 'generally speaking, prostitution was still the foundation of the erotic life outside of marriage; in a certain sense it constituted a dark underground vault over which rose the gorgeous structure of middle-class society with its faultless, radiant façade'.[63] And this trait of behaviour, in fact, remained underneath the discourse of family values that concealed it, a discourse that, as commented above, was associated with the characteristics of the form of life that emerged after the denial of workers by the capitalist form of life through the landowners. The discourse that previously had justified the behaviour of a loving family union, while moving forward in the process of integration in the totalization, became a discourse that concealed the new characteristic acquired (of individualistic and amoral behaviour), as ashamed of it and as fearing that it would slow down the process of maximization.[64] During the second half of the nineteenth century, the middle class will be totally integrated into the capitalist form of life, making clear, in addition to the already mentioned moral relaxation, the characteristic of those who have reached by their own effort the peak of social and economic success: the self-help predicated by Samuel Smiles in 1859, associated with hard work and thrift.[65]

60 See Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, p. 21.

61 I claim that linguistic discourses are designed to justify or, on the contrary, to conceal a form of life (actions principled by an anthropical image) in which the ideology of the group really resides.

62 Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, p. 21.

63 Quoted in J. McKay, B. Hill, J. Buckler, C. H. Crowston and M. E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Western Society: A Brief History* (Boston and London: Bedford/St. Martins, 2010), p. 643.

64 Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, studies this strategy as hypocrisy, a trait of the Victorian mind (pp. 394–430); this gap between discourse and praxis could produce anxiety, as has been studied by Kristen Guest in 'The Right Stuff: Class Identity, Material Culture and the Victorian Police Detective', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 24:1 (2019), 53–71.

65 Frader, *The Industrial Revolution*, pp. 44–46; Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, p. 117.

In the moment of the denial that I have just described briefly, the capitalist form of life has become incarnated by the middle class and a stage of the totalization is about to be closed. But this stage of capitalism, in which the middle class emerges as its incarnation, only comes to an end with the denial of the middle class as class by the same totalization incarnated now in the masses of followers (internal necessity of the dialectical process for integration), those that had been previously denied as non-subjects of the capitalist form of life and assimilated by it (external contingency in the dialectical process of universalization, as shown in Chapter 5). Let us examine this in more detail.

Since the 1832 Reform Act, the expansion of the middle class progressed unstoppably, according to the standard account of this historical period. With it the capitalist form of life advances, denying all forms of life of different communities while assimilating them to the principle of economic maximization. Among these communities are, for example, those leading an artistic, religious or scientific life, a life of survival or austerity, etc.[66] The latter will begin their assimilation in England with the so-called New Poor Law (1834). With this law a distinction is made between the pauper and the labouring poor. Thus, the social benefits previously destined for the poor in general are restricted to the pauper, while the rest begin to be forced to work, sometimes privately, sometimes in workhouses.[67] The poor, as subjects of an austere or even a survival form of life, are now forced to lead a life destined to maximization, if not their own, then that of the owner and of society, in a word, rendering them useful and productive even at the cost of themselves. A number of individuals from different parties and workers' advocates took a stand against this law, expressing a rejection of the principle of calculation that inspired it, as Gertrude Himmelfarb rightly points out. These individuals could well be the subjects of non-capitalist forms of life, such as philosophers, artists and scientists, for example, the case of Thomas Malthus (who opposed it); all those were individuals who had not yet been assimilated and who defended the interests of the workers against the already advanced assimilation of the

66 I always refer to them as subjects sharing a form of life, not in terms of social and economical status.

67 Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Vintage Books, 1885), pp. 160–61.

latter. That assimilation condemned them to maximize or otherwise fall into the abysses of ineptitude, undesirability and dependence on others:

> The New Poor Law, which seemed the very epitome of the 'spirit of the age', the application to social problems of the laws of nature and political economy, of reason and utility, triggered a powerful movement of resistance, a movement which cannot be measured by the number of local authorities who covertly or openly sabotaged the law or by the number of laborers who rioted against it. Behind all the opposition was the assertion of something like a counter-spirit, a protest against the principles embodied in the law, and, more important, against the very idea of applying such rational, uniform, doctrinaire principles to social affairs.[68]

At that time, after an increasing number of forms of life have been assimilated in this expansive totalization, the middle class as its most pure incarnation is also denied for having reached a moment of self-absorption with the well-being achieved and fortune made, dispersed by the growing consumerism,[69] so that many of its members even rise up against the dictatorship of progress and the competitiveness of the capitalist system, positioning themselves against the advance of industry.[70] The capitalist form of life as a whole, which tends to universalization, ends up denying the middle class as a class, which now resists the indiscriminate principle of profit maximization. Its denial by the followers (those who throughout the last decades had been assimilated and now imitate the middle-class lifestyle and incarnate the capitalist totalization) will affirm a new social order that will lead to the so-called society of the masses, in which the strict limits of classes are blurred in terms of form of life. That is to say, now each class is already integrated within capitalism, which can respond to the evidence of the huge increase in white- and blue-collar jobs with respect to jobs in agriculture or factories.[71] However, some testimonies tell us how difficult it was for some people to integrate or to lead the life that was socially demanded of them, which required them to abandon their habits of the

68 *Ibid*., p. 176.
69 Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization: A Brief History* (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2011), p. 485; Phyllis Deane, *The First Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [1979]), p. 272.
70 Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 47.
71 Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, p. 20.

austere or survival form of life, typical of rural areas. This is the case with Joseph Livesey, a labouring poor who although he managed to open a small business and tried to lead a life in accordance with his new status, never ceased to identify himself with his previous form of life and with his co-subjects. This shows us that the process of acculturation or assimilation of one form of life by another was not always successful and found some resistance:

> Often have I caused a little unpleasantness at home by introducing persons—strangers, who were in distress … I have still all the feelings of a poor man; I prefer the company of poor people; and if misfortune should render it necessary, I think I could fall back into that humble sphere of living with which I commenced without feeling the shock as most people would do. I have tried two or three times to be a gentleman; that is, to leave off work and to enjoy myself, but it never answered.[72]

This testimony shows us that for the one who has not consummated the conversion, the form of life imposed as hegemonic, leaves him unsatisfied. Moreover, while the subjects of the hegemonic form of life reject the subjects of the form of life with which he seems to identify, he feels good about being among the latter. He feels he is one of them. He seems to want to continue being what he is, the poor man he feels he is, and which is evidenced in a humble and austere form of life. In this sense, Livesey constitutes a certain resistance to the capitalist form of life through his habits (getting together with the poor and bringing them home), feelings and identity. This speaks of a clear lack of assimilation.

The middle class now gives way to a progressively homogenized society in which most of its members (except a plutocratic elite that accounts for 5 per cent of the population)[73] work for a salary and consume in leisure time. In this way, this social reconfiguration synthesizes respectively characteristics of the working class and the upper class, for, in spite of the economic income, which is now the only criteria of social distinction, most of the people, at the beginning of twentieth century, have been homogenized in their form of life, reinforced by the increasing number of laws, moral regulations and codes of social

72 Joseph Livesey, *Autobiography* (1881), quoted in M. J. D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787–1886* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 174.

73 See Spielvogel, *Western Civilization*, p. 494.

standard behaviour.[74] This mass society is governed by a bureaucratic centralizing democracy (informed in part by the Reform Act of 1884 that granted the vote for most of the male population, and finally the universal suffrage at the beginning of the twentieth century) and the sort of mass consumerism and culture industry that Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) would refer to years later. This was a society oriented by the power of public opinion, as claimed earlier by John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty*: 'At present individuals are lost in the crowd. In politics, it is almost a triviality to say that public opinion now rules the world. The only power deserving the name is that of the masses';[75] a public opinion whose control, in Europe, will accompany the arrival of fascism and other authoritarian regimes in the next century. But this is a further integration into the same totalization.

3.4. The Mass Society and the Intellectuals

The mass society will thus be more productive and more maximizing than previous incarnations of the capitalist form of life. The most significant example of this is in the United States with the labour policies introduced by Henry Ford in his factories. Leisure is then institutionalized as part of the workers' lives, so that they not only work better hours but also have time to consume or acquire the same products they produce. In doing so, Ford was further integrating the lives of workers, and indeed, American society, into capitalist totalization. This mass society and culture industry will affirm capitalism with each of its habits and become hegemonic in England, the United States and Europe. It is the society that José Ortega y Gasset wrote about in the 1930s. He recognized this society as being ontologically constituted by a principle that makes them masses without respecting material conditions, noble titles or social status. This philosopher grasped a quality in his society that amounts to a particular human type, an ontological quality that he calls that of the 'mass-man', and contrasts with that of the 'minority', the latter also in onto-phenomenological terms. The first of these is, according to Ortega y Gasset, the type of individual who

74 See Pamela Gilbert, *Mapping the Victorian Social Body* (New York: SUNY Press, 2004); Roberts, *Making English Morals*.

75 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1880 [1859]), p. 38.

> finds himself already with a stock of ideas. He decides to content himself with them and to consider himself intellectually complete. As he feels the lack of nothing outside himself, he settles down definitely amid his mental furniture. Such is the mechanism of self-obliteration.[76]

It should be noted that the obliteration referred to by the Spanish philosopher and this denial of everything that is not himself (this being content with himself), is precisely what I have been analyzing as part of the dialectical process of integration into one's own form of life. The masses, according to this, would be the evolution of capitalist subjectivity in this disinterest in everything that is not his own constitutive principle, that of maximizing his economic value, for 'he feels the lack of nothing outside himself'. This obliteration, therefore, refers to a state of greater reification, by which the subjects of the capitalist form of life progressively understand themselves as objects in the market of social life. What counts is the exchange value. Their intrinsic value is not given by their intellectual formation or cultivation of character but by the external law of the market, supply and demand. They become obliterated because they are reifying themselves; that is, they make themselves opaque, and only recognize themselves for the value that comes from outside, from the market, where they posit themselves as objects in order to maximize (in the following section I take up the theme of reification, as it is important to understand the dialectic of forms of life). Besides this, Ortega y Gasset characterizes the mass-man in phenomenological terms as the one who is satisfied in his own mediocrity and lack of goals. In short, the one who has been homogenized in his vital motivation and feels proud of being like the others:

> The mass is all that which *sets no value on itself*—good or ill—based on specific grounds, but which feels itself *'just like everybody'*, and nevertheless is not concerned about it; is, in fact, quite happy to feel itself as one with everybody else.[77]

76 José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1957 [1930]), p. 69. The original in Spanish reads: 'se encuentra con un repertorio de ideas dentro de sí. Decide contentarse con ellas y considerarse intelectualmente completa (la persona). Al no echar de menos nada fuera de sí, se instala definitivamente en aquel repertorio. He ahí el mecanismo de la obliteración' (*La rebelión de las masas* [Ciudad de México: La Guillotina, 2010], p. 95).

77 Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, pp. 14–15. The italics are mine.

As I mentioned above in relation to the mass-man, the lack of value in itself to which Ortega y Gasset refers should be put in relation to capitalist totalization and its reification: value comes to him from outside, as it does to objects. This remark is nowhere in Ortega y Gasset's analysis, but it is latent and can be revealed through the perspective given by the dialectics of forms of life. On the contrary, the *man* (or human being) who qualitatively can be said to constitute the minorities is the one who has his own goal and motivation, makes demands on himself with regard to them and thus separates himself from the mass. He shares with other members of his group an ideal, desire or idea, but this sharing is secondary, since it has its source in the very subjectivity of the one who identifies with a different way of being and acting:

> In those groups which are characterized by not multitude and mass, the effective coincidence of its members is based on some desire, idea, or ideal, which of itself excludes the great number. To form a minority, of whatever kind, it is necessary beforehand that each member separate himself from the multitude for special, relatively personal, reasons.[78]

In Ortega y Gasset, this self-demand and discipline is fundamentally related to knowledge and the intellectual effort to become what one is in an ontological and moral sense, because 'all life is the struggle, the effort to be itself':[79]

> The select man is not the petulant person who thinks himself superior to the rest, but the man who demands more of himself than the rest, even though he might not fulfil in his person those higher exigencies [...] those who make great demands on themselves; piling up difficulties and duties.[80]

That differentiation of Ortega y Gasset is what can also be discovered in the conceptualization that I have been defending so far. The mass-man

78 *Ibid*., p. 14. The original in Spanish reads: 'En los grupos que se caracterizan por no ser muchedumbre y masa, la coincidencia efectiva de sus miembros consiste en algún deseo, idea o ideal, que por sí solo excluye el gran número. Para formar una minoría, sea la que fuere, es preciso que antes cada cual se separe de la muchedumbre por razones especiales, relativamente individuales' (Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelión de las masas*, p. 15).

79 Quoted in Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, p. 99.

80 *Ibid*., p. 15. The original in Spanish reads: 'El hombre selecto no es el petulante que se cree superior a los demás, sino el que se exige más que los demás, aunque no logre cumplir en su persona esas exigencias superiores' (Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelión de las masas*, p. 17).

is the epitome of the capitalist form of life in the advanced state of its social expansion; that is, in the second half of nineteenth century and onwards. He is opposed to any form of life other than his own and thus denies them and assimilates them. 'Minorities', on the other hand, are all forms of life that resist the expansion of a hegemonic form. However, from the intellectual point of view, which is from where Ortega y Gasset judges, the masses as a stage in the capitalist form of life can well be opposed to the 'minority' that I have called intellectual form of life. That is to say, that community of subjects which share a way of being and acting in terms of devoting themselves to self-knowledge and the revelation of being through science (reasoning and experimentation) or philosophy (intuition and reflection). For in any case, in the terms indicated by Ortega y Gasset, the fundamental opposition between the two would be one of intellectual attitude, that of knowing oneself or alienating oneself in the crowd. Other equally minority forms of life are also opposed, insofar as they resist assimilation. However, as has been shown, only the austere form of life is contradictory to the capitalist form, for they are negatively constituted in a reciprocal way.

Neither capitalist form of life nor the intellectual form of life are strictly speaking a social class, for the same reason provided by Ortega y Gasset concerning the two human types described: 'The division of society into masses and select minorities is, then, not a division into social classes, but into classes of men, and cannot coincide with the hierarchic separation of "upper" and "lower" classes.'[81] I maintain that, as in Ortega y Gasset, there is not a social group directly identifiable with the intellectual form of life. For social groups or classes are not the same as forms of life, which imply an onto-phenomenological quality. And yet, through the social conditioning that I have analyzed in previous chapters, the majority of the members of a class or group identify themselves with a particular form of life, from which they receive their identity. In this case, we can see that the intellectual form of life was led by the aristocrats in office and professions (or small nobility), which having been largely denied by the capitalist form of life, the latter has affirmed and assimilated the opposite features of the intellectual form of life, mainly incarnated by those aristocrats, namely *ignorance and alienation* under the principle of maximization. The latter could explain

81 Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, p. 15.

other features of the masses described by Ortega y Gasset as not being aware of their own ignorance and the commonplace established by right.[82] Both are features opposed to the intellectual form of life, that of knowledge and the formation of both talent and character.

In some cases, the activities of the aristocrats assimilated by the capitalist totalization did not change, but the principle that governed them did. So those habits were left in empty formalities without the prior motivation and *raison d'être*; only as ways to continue to maximize their social status. They were still interested in art, for instance, but, like the bourgeoisie and other subjects of the expansive capitalist form of life in which they gradually incorporated themselves, art was looked at from the distance of ignorance with which to maximize their status under the auspices of acquisition and consumerist power. They were far from the artistic appreciation proper to an aristocracy prior to the beginning of capitalist totalization and which survived in those intellectual aristocrats who resisted in their form of life. Consequently, not all the aristocrats retained their wealth, only those who were integrated into the capitalist form of life. This could also explain both the fact that the aristocracy was not simply replaced by the bourgeoisie, but rather homogenized with it through wealth (economic maximization),[83] and that those aristocrats devoted to intellectual activities led a very modest, in some cases almost poor, lifestyle, as they kept outside the margins of the hegemonic form, while integrating themselves into its own form of life of knowledge and wisdom, engaged mainly in academia and scholarship:

> The distinction between the intellectuals and the plutocrats was made all the more powerful by the comparative poverty of the former. For

82 *Ibid*., pp. 18, 112.

83 See Dominic Lieven, *Aristocracy in Europe, 1815–1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), where he attempts to establish precisely that it was through industrial transformation of their agrarian states and capitalist enterprises that the aristocracy was not replaced by the bourgeoisie as Marx thought. For the nineteenth-century aristocrats, 'in economic terms assimilating the values of the capitalist era meant having an entrepreneurial attitude to one's estates and maybe even taking a hard-headed approach to the relative advantages of land as against stocks and bonds. Socially, modern attitudes might entail an overriding respect for money and a willingness to marry outside one's class when opportunity offered. Politically, accommodation meant allowing new elites a share in government and pursuing policies which reflected more than mere agrarian interests. As the socialist threat grew in the nineteenth century the attractions of an alliance of the propertied became ever greater' (p. 7).

> although, as observers indignantly noted, the intellectual aristocrats appeared to claim a monopoly over all aspects of thought, they were nonetheless relatively poorly paid.[84]

This form of life corresponds to what has come to be called the life of intellectuals, as I have already mentioned above. The plutocrats referred to in the quotation would be those elites within the form of life of economic maximization (certain families of the high bourgeoisie and landowning aristocrats). The debate on whether these were a social class, a separate group or belonged to different social classes continues today:

> 'The problem of the professionals and intellectuals is one of the most difficult of all those facing the analyst of class structure,' W. D. Rubinstein has noted. 'It is the gammy leg of class theory.' 'Intellectuals are not an independent "class"—they may be members of any other class; they may be spokesmen for any and every interest,' he helpfully continues.[85]

The conception of the forms of life that I have been upholding, in this case, would support the idea that intellectuals are not a social class but a form of life, that is to say a separate community, on the fringe of hegemonic totalization, even if it was identified with the aristocracy in moments prior to that. However, this would have to face up to what specialists in the field have claimed. For Noel Annan, these intellectuals came from famous aristocratic families that hybridized. In T. W. Heyck's case, he said that certainly these nineteenth-century intellectuals were a new social group, but so new that no one referred to them as 'intellectuals': '"The term 'the intellectuals' came back into use in the late-nineteenth century", writes Heyck, "and from its first continuous usage it had to do with the perceived formation of a separate and learned class".'[86] If these accounts support the perspective discussed above, they do so by showing that it is a different form of life. That it was a form of life that dates back to moments before capitalist totalization remains to be proven. However, it is equally true that Annan associated the appearance of the intellectuals with aristocratic families of long tradition: families like the Macaulays, the Trevelyans, the Arnolds or the

84 William Whyte, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy Revisited', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 10:1 (2005), 15–45 (p. 27).
85 *Ibid*., p. 16.
86 Quoted in *ibid*., p. 17.

Huxleys, that is, 'an aristocracy of both brains and blood'.[87] However, these data are not sufficient to show the intellectual form of life of these aristocrats. What does seem undeniable is that during the nineteenth century the references to a caste of intellectuals are persistent, a caste whose characteristics are cultural formation and disinterest. As William Whyte puts it:

> That there was a desire to create an intellectual elite in the nineteenth century is undeniable. From Coleridge's clerisy to Wells's Samurai, the ideal of a cultivated, disinterested and learned caste was celebrated again and again. Clergymen like Frederick Temple, scientists like John Tyndall, conservatives like W. G. Ward and radicals like Beatrice Webb, all agreed on the need for a 'voluntary nobility'; an 'aristocracy of talent'; a 'real aristocracy of character and intellect'.[88]

This 'real aristocracy of character and intellect' makes us think again of the 'minority' of Ortega y Gasset as opposed to his 'mass-man'. But, in this type of aristocrat, was it a mere desire—as the quotation seems to claim—or a real community whose form of life distinguished them from the rest, largely because of their knowledge, talent and disinterest (understood as disinterest regarding material success and economic maximization)? The fact is that it existed mainly after the reforms of the old English universities, namely Oxford and Cambridge, from the middle of the century onwards. This reform consisted of the abolition of celibacy, which meant that professors and fellows could marry and therefore complement intellectual and family life. This caused the children of the aristocratic families who populated these universities to marry into strong family networks and create the core of the intellectual elite. To this must be added the effort that these aristocrats made, not only in the universities but also in private colleges (such as Eton) to cultivate moral character and talent rather than practical skills (including business skills) in their students, seeking to form a true intelligentsia. The consequence of this was the creation of a group or community not only united through the old colleges and universities but in a different spirit, which implied a form of life that stood out from the rest:

> Family and friends, schools, colleges and clubs, together produced a new class. Or, to be more exact, produced a social fraction, with its own

87 *Ibid*., p. 16.
88 *Ibid*., p. 18.

> common culture and shared identity. This was well understood at the time. Works like P. G. Hamerton's *Intellectual Life* (1873) reflected the notion of a peculiarly cerebral lifestyle: characterized by plain-living and hard-thinking; public-spirited and politically engaged.[89]

This was certainly the role model for the kind of intellectual that is beginning to emerge across Europe, and the same is true of the process by which it is emerging. This indicates the incipient process of assimilation of other subjects into the intellectual form of life. Thus, educational institutions will be inspired with the mission of fostering this new group of honest, cultivated and disinterested intellectuals. In Spain, it will inspire the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, which will lead Spanish culture and education at least until the Civil War (1936–39), and in Belgium it will be reflected in the Université Libre de Bruxelles, and others.[90] It should be stressed that this intellectual aristocracy was initially aristocratic by blood. The aristocrats who send their children to those great English universities and colleges of the mid-nineteenth century still maintain a certain purchasing power (from their declining social status) which, however, they invest not in capitalist totalization but in the training and talent of their children. The latter puts them at odds with the commercialization of their class (even though among their relatives there are individuals devoted to business), as many had

89 *Ibid*., p. 26.

90 There is an extensive bibliography on the Institución Libre de Enseñanza and its relationship with intellectuals. The following are some of the works that the interested reader can use for further consultation: Vicente Cacho Viu, *La Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Madrid: Fundación Albéniz, 2010); Antonio Jiménez García, *El krausismo y la Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Madrid: Ediciones Pedagógicas, 2002); Inman Fox, *La crisis intelectual del 98* (Madrid: Edicusa, 1976); Yvan Lissorgues, 'Los intelectuales españoles influidos por el krausismo frente a la crisis de fin de siglo (1890–1910)', in *La actualidad del krausismo en su contexto europeo*, ed. by Pedro Álvarez Lázaro and Enrique Ureña (Madrid: Editorial Parteluz, Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 1999), pp. 313–52; Antonio Molero Pintado, *La Institución Libre de Enseñanza: Un proyecto de reforma pedagógica* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2000); *La Institución Libre de Enseñanza y Francisco Giner de los Ríos: Nuevas perspectivas*, II: *La Institución Libre de Enseñanza y la cultura española* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Residencia de Estudiantes, 2014); Solomon Lipp, *Francisco Giner de los Ríos: A Spanish Socrates* (Waterloo, ONT: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1985); Daniel Rueda Garrido, 'Krause, Spanish Krausism, and Philosophy of Action', *Idealistic Studies*, 49:2 (2019), 167–88. About the intellectuals in Belgium, specifically the Krausist intellectuals, see Susana Monreal, 'Krausistas y masones: Un proyecto educativo común. El caso belga', *Historia de la educación: Revista interuniversitaria*, 9 (1990), 63–77.

been assimilated to the form of life of economic maximization together with the bourgeoisie:

> Many intellectuals were keen to distinguish themselves from the 'commercial classes'; from the 'bourgeois spirit' and its 'timid, negative, and shuffling substitutes for active and courageous well-doing' [...] They were appalled by the drawing together of the great landlords and millionaire [...] The plutocrats were seen to value money and show over the knowledge and discrimination of the educated elite.[91]

This aristocracy will become a distinctive group in contrast to their environment (which wants to assimilate them to the expansive capitalist form of life), but in a way, what they do is to continue the intellectual form of life of the aristocrats before the capitalist assimilation. The intellectual aristocrats at that time were, however, those who occupied cultural positions and professions such as teachers, magistrates, lawyers, politicians, or writers, hence the prestige of their social status. They should be distinguished from the landed aristocracy, to whom they were nevertheless related, but who were more concerned with economic profit and who would have been the initiators of capitalist totalization. In contrast, part of this intellectual aristocracy resists and opposes assimilation by defending its own form of life, as in this vivid vindication of it by P. G. Hamerton:

> We come to hate money-matters when we find that they exclude all thoughtful and disinterested conversation ... Our happiest hours have been spent with poor scholars, and artists, and men of science, whose words make us rich indeed. Then we dislike money because it rules and restrains us, and because it is unintelligent and seems horrible.[92]

These words illustrate this form of intellectual life of which I have given an account as part of a subjectivity different from the capitalist one and which comes to oppose it in an attempt at resistance.[93] However, following the advance of capitalist totalization after World War II, the denial and assimilation of other communities and their forms of life will be launched through what has been called neoliberal capitalism

91 Whyte, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy Revisited', pp. 26–27.

92 Quoted in *ibid*., p. 28.

93 In the following chapter, I elaborate a more detailed case on subjectivities other than the capitalist, taking the example of the artistic form of life, and its resistance in relation to the notions of power and hegemony.

and globalization, although, in fact, the whole progressive movement of capitalism as a form of life can well be called a process of gradual universalization. This is a universalizing process that has spread to virtually the entire world by the end of the twentieth century, and which will make some thinkers such as Francis Fukuyama announce the end of history, thus consummating the identification of the capitalist form of life and the nature of the human being.[94] In other words, the full self-realization of the human essence in the world. And yet to many critics, the subject of the capitalist form of life, like that of every form of life, seemed only to be reaching a supreme moment of reification whereby more than human essence, the essence of an alienating consumerist system, was revealed. What I want to show in the following sections is that precisely what is revealed in these moments of neoliberalism is the essence of the capitalist form of life and of its subjectivity through the intensification of both the principle of economic maximization and the structural process of reification, by which the subject maximizes more the more it becomes reified.

4. The Dialectical Process towards Reification

The term 'reification' comes from the writings of Karl Marx and has been used in different ways since then, mainly within the Marxist tradition, although in a more general sense it has moved into other dimensions of culture such as literary works, for instance, the novels of Michel Houellebecq.[95] Although it had already been referred to in early works of Marx, it is considered to have made its first appearance in the first volume of *Capital* (*Das Kapital*, 1867). There, reification is established as the process by which the relationship between people becomes a relationship between things:

> There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things [...] This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they

94 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

95 Axel Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 18–19.

> are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.[96]

The reifying process in Marx will be completely linked to the concepts of exchange value and commodity fetishism. The relationship between the producer and the owner is a relationship between things, precisely because the worker's labour power is standardized in the exchange value of the produced object, which happens to be perceived as a fetish, isolated from the production process and the producer (as when a part is seen isolated from the whole), and instead, valued according to its relationship with other objects in the market. The owner thinks about the worker's labour power in terms of the exchange value of his products or the relation between the objects, and not between the people: thus the producer/worker is reified while his work or labour power has been reified. As can be seen, the seed of the concept of reification is indissolubly rooted in the capitalist production system and Marx emphasizes the reification of labour relations as the structure of capitalist society.

But it will not be until Georg Lukács coined the term in his *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), and especially in one of the studies included in that work 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat' (1922), that the term reification takes on a meaning of greater importance with respect to the analysis of capitalist society and, in general, with regard to social and cultural studies, thereby decisively influencing the first generation of the Frankfurt School and the development of its critical theory—without forgetting the great disagreements between these authors and Lukács.

In the first page of his essay, Lukács says that 'reification' means 'that a relation between people has taken on the character of a thing'.[97] This definition of reification connects it with Marx, that is, it expresses the objective dimension of reification related to the relations of objects in the market, but it will only be with the incorporation of Max Weber's concept of rationalization, that Lukács will complete its subjective dimension.[98]

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96 Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. XXXV (London: Lawrence Wishart, 2010 [1867]), p. 83.

97 Georg Lukács, 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat', in *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971 [1923]), pp. 83–222 (p. 83).

98 Alan How, *Critical Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 65–66.

That means that reification is not just a way in which the subject thinks of others in terms of things and the calculations needed to control them for profit, but reification would be at the core of its consciousness, and it will eventually be able to reify itself. According to Lukács, the cause of this reification is, of course, the capitalist system of production in terms of the relationship between the values of commodities in the market and the aspiration to maximize profits in transactions. From the point of view of the phenomenology of the process, the subject becomes a reified being, lacking in commitment with respect to his surroundings and with the attitude of a passive observer, characteristics that for Lukács constitute a second nature.[99] However, this reifying process finds its redemption in the consciousness of the proletariat, which by breaking the illusory duality between the subjects and their objects will recompose the original unity in which the subjects/proletarians, identified with the objects of their work, reach their own human value and reveal a praxis not corrupted by reification.[100] The Frankfurt School deepened the concept of reification associated with instrumental reason and extended it to all dimensions of capitalist society, especially to cultural manifestations, which both Adorno and Horkheimer will call the 'culture industry'. Fundamentally, it is these two authors who, taking up the concepts of reification and commodity fetishism, will focus their analysis on the consumer society of capitalism in the post-war period.[101]

The political and economic strategies carried out in the aftermath of World War II precipitated what has been called neoliberal capitalism. Therefore, we must highlight the different way in which the reification identified by Marx and Lukács, as a structural phenomenon of the capitalist economy and society, is fulfilled in this last phase of capitalism. In the first place, while Lukács emphasizes the reification of the social relationship of the workers and owners that causes a praxis that replicates the instrumentalization carried out by the worker who sells his labour power to obtain a benefit; in consumer society, certainly expanded and globalized from the 1970s, the emphasis is on the other end of the chain, not on the sale but on the purchase (not on the offer but on the demand). It is at this time, with the emergence

99 Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 89.
100 *Ibid*., pp. 141–42.
101 How, *Critical Theory*, pp. 65.

of Fordist production,[102] that citizens cease to be mere workers but also become large-scale consumers, which was true only of the ruling classes in the previous period: 'Fordist styles of production were based on the extension of mass produced markets through innovations in production line and assembly plants. Fordism describes the extension of former luxuries such as cars to all workers and indeed the growth of capital generally.'[103] The reification is carried out mainly through the consumption of products that companies (through mass media) now present as necessary for the consumer. Secondly, and related to the above, while in Lukács and Marx the reification is fundamentally realized through the reification of the labour power of the proletarian class, in the post-war consumer society, the reification is not only of the proletarian class but of all people, because society begins to be standardized through the consumption of products with which the consumer identifies. And thirdly, due to the homogenization of the consumerist explosion and the cultural colonization by the neoliberal policies of the 1970s, while for Lukács it was only the proletarian class that, as a true subject of history, was called to revolution by means of class consciousness, by contrast, in the era of neoliberal and global capitalism, it is the multitude (which is no longer a particular class, for the proletarians themselves are also owners), by becoming aware of the reification of their lives in all orders, through consumerism (even the consumption of information and mass media in recent decades) and the progressive de-legitimization of social institutions, who will make the revolution and take the organs of power and control of society.[104]

According to this revised literature, the reification process is then intrinsic to the capitalist totalization from its origin. However, it is in the advanced stages of capitalism that its results are more noticeable and its expansion is global. That is, the capitalist form of life has become universalized—assimilating all those other forms with which it has come into contact—not only within one society, such as the English,

102 A. J. Veal, 'Economics of Leisure', in *A Handbook of Leisure Studies*, ed. by Chris Rojek, Susan Shaw and A. J. Veal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 140–61 (pp. 143–44).

103 Adrian Franklin, 'Tourism', in *A Handbook of Leisure Studies*, ed. by Chris Rojek, Susan Shaw and A. J. Veal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 386–403 (p. 392).

104 See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

the American and the European, but in most of the world's societies. Therefore, I now turn to the reification process in the last decades.

4.1. Moments of Reification in the Era of Neoliberal Capitalism

The first moment of reification is the negation of the subject by the object within the neoliberal order as global market. This moment can be identified in full around the 1970s with the neoliberal turn, but, of course, the first version of it it was already in place in the nineteenth century, with the then-called liberal capitalism and afterwards from the 1960s, as stated by John Agnew, David Harvey and Jim McGuigan.[105] This first moment of reification is substantially shared by the earlier times of capitalism. The difference at first (other than the different ways in which reification is obtained) is in quantity and will become a difference in quality, for it will imply an evolution or transformation within the form of life. As Andreas Wittel remarks:

> The capitalist market has become increasingly powerful, pervasive and hegemonic, the logic of the capitalist market colonises and destroys the logic of community, and [...] the market swallows more and more areas and aspects of life that hitherto have not been regulated by monetary measurement and monetary exchange.[106]

That is, the global market reaches an ever greater portion of the society's population and pervades aspects of people's private life previously untouched, and it is implemented through mass media and new technologies, starting with the invention of the TV and the beginning of consumerism as an essential part of the people's form of life,[107] the consumption of information as commodity[108] being the core element of

105 John Agnew, *Hegemony: The New Shape of Global Power* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2005), p. 169; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 2–3; Jim McGuigan, 'The Neoliberal Self', *Culture Unbound*, 6:1 (2014), 223–40 (pp. 226–27).

106 Andreas Wittel, 'Counter-Commodification: The Economy of Contribution in the Digital Commons', *Culture and Organization*, 19:4 (2013), 314–31 (p. 314).

107 Noam Yuran, 'Being and Television: Producing the Demand to Individualise', *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 17:1 (2019), 56–71.

108 Jernej Prodnik, 'A Seeping Commodification: The Long Revolution in the Proliferation of Communication Commodities', *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 12:1 (2014), 142–68 (p. 155).

the political and economic initiatives carried out by the U.S. from the 1960s in order to impose its form of life and become the hegemonic power.[109] The object (what is presented exterior to the subject and the real opposition to the subject) is the market, and its negation of the subject entails a negated subjectivity; the subjects hold themselves as in a constant state of lacking something. The market creates in the subjects a desire, which is otherwise translated as the need for something which is outside of themselves:[110] the need for something to complete this sudden acknowledgement of incompleteness or scarcity. This is what we have pointed out above as a difference with respect to the austere form of life; desire is reified precisely because it is not the desire for a specific object, but to maximize, namely to be a subject that maximizes by fleeing from lack or austerity, which translates into always wanting more: 'For it is not a matter of the extinction of desire but of its reproduction by choosing in the world the complement that it lacks and needs to ensure its renewal.'[111] This phenomenon, produced by the implementation of the logic of the

109 For culture as soft power, see Naeem Inayatullah, 'Why Do Some People Think They Know What is Good for Others?', in *Global Politics: A New Introduction*, ed. by Jenny Edkins and Maja Zehfuss (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 430–53.

110 In this sense, capitalism shows the shared structure of Christian religion as stated by Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001 [1905/1930]), for it posits an incomplete subject, a subject that requires of a (divine) aid to reach its completeness and that is theologically marked as an incomplete being (desiring but unsatisfied) by the original sin. This experience of incompleteness is explained by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Vol. I (London and New York: Verso, 2004 [1960]), pp. 79–83, and taken up, in relation to consumerism, by André Gorz in *Critique of Economic Reason* (London: Verso, 1989). These references, however, might have a source in Marx's *Capital* (*Das Kapital*), when in the chapter devoted to the fetishism of commodities, he suggests, according to Michael Jennings, that 'commodities work to suppress the human rational capacity and appeal instead to the emotions, much as a religious fetish appeals to and organizes an irrational belief structure'. See Jennings, 'Introduction', in Water Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 1–26 (p. 13). From the ontology of forms of life, it is understood that this incompleteness and experienced dissatisfaction, would have its root in the constitutive negativity of the form of life, from which one always flees uselessly, as it is its condition of possibility; in the case of capitalism or form of economic maximization, as has already been said above, its dissatisfaction is born of never ceasing to experience austerity, as its constitutive opposite. All maximization, like all consumerist accumulation, involves the rejection of austerity.

111 Pierre Verstraeten, 'Appendix: Hegel and Sartre', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. by Christina Howells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 353–72 (p. 364).

market in the society, triggered the whole process towards the reification or commodification of everything within the future totalization, in terms of Sartre's dialectic, which is the absolute triumph of the global capital. I would like to underline the importance of this phase for the whole subsequent process, for the reader must note that once the subject is negated by the object producing the consciousness of incompleteness, the subject from that very moment becomes a negativity, that is, its subjectivity is that of a negated subject, and when that incompleteness is completed temporarily by a market product, that is, the negation of the first negation, the subject is no more a subject but a consumer, and it has already passed through the threshold into the capitalist neoliberal order, being integrated within it, as Sartre put it, and in the logical movement towards its dissolution as a final moment of total integration or identification with the market and its logic: to render everything a commodity.[112]

The second moment is the reification of their freedom. The subjects sublimate their needs through an induced rationalizing process. It is then that the subjects, rendered consumers, identify themselves with the object based on reasons. This identification has to do with the possibility of choosing between growing offers in the global market: 'The latest [for Jean Baudrillard's time] such freedom is the random selection of objects that will distinguish any individual from others.'[113] This choice between the objects of the market is what provides the subjects with a fictitious individuality—as an individuality that comes from an object—but which can only be understood against the background of capitalist subjectivity as a totalization. The consumer, who as subject felt alienated and more importantly constrained by the restrictions of offers, once the need for such products was created, is then driven by the logic of the process to demand more variety of goods, translated as the liberation from the experience of unfreedom. In turn, this assumed liberation derives from the reification of the subject's freedom through the product chosen by the unleashed freedom of choice. Satisfaction and liberation are what the market offers to posit a consumer, who is otherwise a forever unsatisfied,

112 Paul Mason, *PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* (London: Penguin Books, 2015).
113 Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 11.

incomplete and unfree subject. And we can notice with Baudrillard that by then the entire life had become a field of consumption: 'We have reached the point where "consumption" has grasped the whole of life.'[114] This process ended up establishing the free, conscious and rational consumer as a determination—consolidated through habits—of the global market in its integrating cycle of negations of the subject in its various intrinsic aspects.

The third moment is the reification of creativity—linked to imagination. This reification of creativity is to a certain extent also of identity through objects of consumerism. In fact, it is the reification of the capacity for conversion. Changing oneself within the form of life avoids the crisis and thus the demand for a change of form of life altogether. It can be said to contain the doubts and the demand for change of the subjects within the same framework in which the doubt and the demand for change arises. As the consumers become rational and free through the freedom of choice and the increase of supply, and as they become more integrated within the market, they adopt the positive determination of the consumers who not only choose between several products of the market but also create the product and, in doing so, to a certain extent create themselves. Of course, this creation is made possible by a series of tools that the system offers, and never by constructing the object with elements not offered and, therefore, outside the freedoms contemplated by the market—which is the capitalist form of life as a principled facticity; having, thus, the imagination confined within the limits of consumerist activities.[115] Slavoj Žižek expresses it singularly in the following text:

> Perhaps the properly frustrating dimension of this eternal stimulus to make free choices is best rendered by the situation of having to choose a product in online shopping, where one has to make an almost endless series of choices: if you want it with X, click A, if not, click B. We can go on making our small choices, 'reinventing ourselves', on condition that these choices do not disturb the social and ideological balance.[116]

114 *Ibid*., p. 33.

115 The reader must note that here again we encounter the limits of what we have freely given to ourselves in terms of a form of life; that is, the market as an object, the form of life in its entirety as a desired necessity.

116 Slavoj Žižek, 'A Plea for Leninist Intolerance', *Critical Inquiry*, 28:2 (2002), 542–66 (pp. 542–43).

This consumer is the ideal type of entrepreneur, those who efficiently make decisions and create their own style, adopting the logic of the market and integrating themselves more and more into it through their own creation as an object. But at the same time, the entrepreneurs continue to show their fundamental lack, which, on the one hand, made possible the later moments of their development within the neoliberal order, and, on the other, they will continue to attempt at satisfying endlessly and uselessly. For they have no intrinsic essence or characteristics beyond the subjectivity provided by their form of life, which in reality is only possible through the desire to fill this constitutive lack (maximization and accumulation are never enough). We must not forget that they are subjects only as part of the totalization and through their integration process. Paradoxically, they are subjects insofar as they become objects of the form of life represented by the global market.

The fourth moment is the reification of identity. The subjects, who are nothing more than indeterminate possibilities without their form of life, in the times of their final reification, become homogenized in several fashions. For Baudrillard, the identification with the objects was clear, even if not as clear as would become later in the digital era: 'As the wolf-child becomes wolf by living among them, so are we becoming functional. We are living the period of the objects: that is, we live by their rhythm, according to their incessant cycles.'[117] It is suggested to the reader here to think of what has been already shown in Chapter 4 about social conditioning: we are exposed to behaviours that we then imitate through our identification. The subject becomes a new product in the market, a product exploited through the network. The enterprising consumers, alienated in the products with which they have identified themselves in previous moments, now seek to create themselves as object. If, before, it was the object of consumption on which their identity was projected, in this last moment of reification, it is the consumers, in the role of the Internet users, who become the objects of consumption at different levels. They create their whole life through the network, forums and social media minute by minute. It is in these moments of digital capitalism where the reification is more intensely perceived through the masks provided by the profiles of the users and the role-play in virtual reality games. As Fredric Jameson pointed out in

117 Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, p. 29.

relation to postmodernism, the cultural side of capitalist neoliberalism: 'postmodernity itself (the free play of masks and roles without content or substance)'.[118] But even more than in virtual reality games or user profiles, the most typical mask of this digital age would be that of the users' own faces turned into objects (photos, videos, selfies, etc.) that increase or decrease their exchange value in the market depending on the visits to their place on the Web or the likes and dislikes, the effect of the comments and the reactions caused by the exposure of their life on social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or Chinese Weibo, WeChat, and so on. What postmodernity is itself is a game of masks without substance (or the subject as a mask that comes and goes for economic purposes); the mask is the reification of the subject, who does not look anymore (masks do not look, do not have a subjectivity beyond them) but it is designed to be looked at by the market and surveillance system, the only *subject* of the global order. The life of the users get identified with the life of the subjects; their masks have become their true face; the users are the subject reified through their integration in the global/digital market game. Their human value becomes an exchange value in the digital world, where the consumer/user has been created entirely as an object, and where, as digital agents, makes profitable their reification, often economically.

To illustrate my point, I will refer to a film which shows perfectly the characteristics of the reification of the subject in this era. The film is *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017). If we are to distinguish more neatly between the subject and the determinations of the dialectical process within the totality that signifies the global market, we should say first that the subject is what is negated and the integrating role and behaviour is what is affirmed. But the subject is only such insofar as it is reified. This entails that the subjects experience themselves as a negation from the moment they enter within the logic of the market, when they consume for the first time and become a consumer (because the neoliberal order constitutes the entire social life, it has become inevitably one or another form of consumerism). This, as is famously expressed by the film *Jumanji*, is the moment when the subjects enter the game (in the film, the characters literally enter inside the video-game), from

118 Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1996* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 60.

which, once inside, nobody can leave until the game is finished (which can be compared with the famous Eagles' song, 'Hotel California'), but in the allegory of *Jumanji* something else is implied: the game has an end. And this end of the game, even if it involves collaboration between the characters, who have all been transformed by the game into other individuals (reified to become subjects of the game totalization), requires a winner and losers. When it has reached the end, all players, already fully integrated into the game and surrounded by mortal dangers, have to conjure the game by calling it by its name in order to break its spell. That is, the game calls its own name through the characters, and to call its own name is to know itself: only what has been completed as an integrated totalization can be known (what is still in process cannot be known in its entire and final state). Can we think of a more accurate allegory to describe the neoliberal capitalism in which we are immersed as a totalizing process?

Along with this process, subjects can be seen in their reification as commodities within two parallel lines: (1) While engaged within the global/digital market, which covers gradually more of the subjects' life in terms of time and space,[119] their positive determinations within the neoliberal order are that of satisfied, free, creative and identity bearing users/consumers, which paradoxically leads to their absolute commodification by the logic of the market, which the users/consumers follow inherently so as to make of themselves objects within the market. (2) The users/consumers as affirmation within the totalizing process have their negativity, which, in dialectical terms, is everything that negates them. These subjects entail subjectivities that are a flight from their opposite form of life—the austere form of life—that which makes them incomplete or unsatisfied, unfree, uncreative and lacking an identity; that is, a negative subjectivity that only appears as an absence, but is equally constitutive. As has been said above, nothing daunts the subject of the capitalist form of life more than austerity.

119 See Agnew, *Hegemony*; Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

5. Maximization through Reification: The Internal Contradiction of Capitalist Subjectivity

According to what has been said, we can agree that reification is the general process by which the subject becomes a means for an end, which is the totalization. This instrumentalization makes the subjects objects of that totalization. Subjects are mediated by their totalization, which is their form of life, and at the same time, as objects or reified subjects, they mediate with respect to it. That is, the individuals who have been denied as free and independent beings by the totalization, nevertheless through the latter become subjects, which entails certain defining features, as well as certain freedoms and responsibilities. As mentioned above, we find in this double dialectic between the subjects and their form of life, as a totalization, a contradiction that is, nevertheless, constitutive of the capitalist subjectivity; namely, that the principle of maximization is realized with greater intensity and effectiveness the more the subject is reified. That is, when the subject has become more integrated into his form of life to the point of being a more perfect incarnation of it. What this means is that reification is to put oneself as a means to one's own economic maximization. So, paradoxically, I feel a more perfect capitalist subject the higher my maximization is in terms of my positing as object in the market (related to work, education and academia, entertainment and leisure, and so on). This contradiction seems to be confirming the thesis of the Frankfurt School that this instrumental reason is at the root of capitalism.[120] However, it could rather be understood that it is a structural requirement of every form of life, although in each one with its particular characteristics. The latter is what I suggest. Thus, in what follows, I analyze and develop the ideas that have just been put forward in relation to subjectivity as a synthesis of the two previous sections.

As has been suggested above, from the revised Sartrean dialectical reason, the capitalist form of life, identified with the global market as a totalization, aims to make objects or rather commodities of the subjects, who are negated in terms of autonomy, freedom, creativity and rationality beyond their form of life. The neoliberal individual carries out a form of life which is reified within the structure of the economic

120 See Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004 [1947]).

exchanges. The entire life of the individual has become the field of the market, and the market in the neoliberal order points to the total commodification of everything, not the subjectification, in the sense of making subjects (against a master), but profitable objects within the economic law of supply and demand. The self is thus, according to the above, not individualistic, I claim, but a mere object directed by the system in which it is integrated; a Sartrean being-in-itself, accessible by a multitude of potential consumers/user/watchers through the Web. This object, however, is an incarnation of the global market, and is therefore principled by the latter. Its becoming an object is its way of being a subject. Thus, even in its reification, as an incarnation, it is an in-itself-for-itself. The so-called 'Generation Selfie', for instance, has in this way been wrongly accused of being egotistic or selfish in this respect, for what the young man or woman who takes a selfie is showing is the emptiness or absence of use value in himself or herself, through their own reification on the Web-market, where transformed into a mere object (of desire or envy or like and dislike), they gain exchange value, sometimes at considerable moral or physical risks. A number of young people have died and continue to die in the attempt to take a selfie in dangerous situations to impress the audience in the social network and to get more *likes*: the exchange value of the times. The subjective experience is no more an experience but the reification of the moment through an image or a video (a post on the network). The subject experiences himself as an object on the Internet (as for instance, in its online profile, which is more of a relational object), an object that has become a commodity for itself and for others.[121] In this last respect, the reader must take into account the recent studies on Facebook and other social media, and the light they are shedding on how these corporations obtain their revenues by making the users more engaged in posting, commenting or watching videos and images.[122] If the users are integrated elements of the global market (where they are also reified in order to gain exchange value), in terms of subjectivity, their integration is voluntary, so that the more

121 See Grațiela Sion, 'Constructing Human Body as Digital Subjectivity: The Production and Consumption of Selfies on Photo-Sharing Social Media Platforms', *Review of Contemporary Philosophy*, 18 (2019), 150–56.

122 See Siva Vaidhyanathan, *Antisocial Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). Also, Christian Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

they are integrated into their form of life, the more they are reified, to the extent that their experience, and thus their subjectivity, is made impossible when not engaging in the global market and, more recently, through the Internet. An example of this is offered by Jodi Dean, who refers to a report carried out by Sherry Turkle:

> Reporting on her interviews with teenagers, Turkle describes young people waiting for connection, fearful of abandonment, and dependent on immediate responses from others even to have feelings. For example, seventeen-year-old Claudia has happy feelings as soon as she starts to text. Unlike a previous generation that might call someone *to talk about* feelings, when Claudia wants to *have* a feeling, she sends a text.[123]

This initially surprising text does nothing more than confirm the existing dialectical relationship between the subject (subjectivity and the digital market) and its reification. The young woman, only when she is an object, that is, when she is externalized and shown as an object for herself and for others within the digital world, shows her subjectivity, her desire, her needs, her incompleteness, etc. In reification and only in it, appears the neoliberal individual's subjectivity: the object, as the denier of the subject, paradoxically has become the beacon of subjectivity. Perhaps it is this dialectical relationship that produces the complexity of the phenomenon and its confusion. Of course, it is from this relationship that the death of the subject can be understood, and the survival in the same object that has *killed* him. A subject, in short, that is only such insofar as he is denied by the object, this taken as the global market. And this last statement embraces and explains further what James Heartfield stated: 'The only way to understand this mismatch is that the human subject persists, but in denial of its own subjectivity. Overwhelmed by the sense of powerlessness that grips each of us, we characterise our society in profoundly impersonal, even inhuman ways.'[124]

The neoliberal subject posited as a negation has then a negated subjectivity which only can be grasped as an absence—the opposite form of life that constitutes him negatively—which, nevertheless, is the fundamental explanation of why individuals throw themselves into the totalization, i.e., into the global market as a global capitalist

123 Jodi Dean, 'Nothing Personal', in *Rethinking Neoliberalism*, ed. by Sanford F. Schram and Marianna Pavlovskaya (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 3–22 (pp. 15–16).

124 Heartfield, *The 'Death of the Subject' Explained*, p. 238.

form of life.[125] The latter wouldn't work if didn't posit that negation in the first place, which is its possibility. The absence is then the effect of positing its negation; what the individual experiences as an absence (no satisfaction of their needs, no freedom, no personal identity) leads them to the affirmation of the form of life in which they are included. Therefore, the positive characterization of neoliberal subjectivity by means of attributes such as freedom, self-creation, consumerism, entrepreneurship, and so on,[126] is but the manifestation of the self-imposed form of life; the process in which the subjects integrate themselves as objects or commodities (endowed now with proper exchange value) within the global market. It is thus the consumer, in its progressive facets of satisfied, free and rational consumer, entrepreneur, digital user and creator of himself, no more than roles, masks or reifications of the subject, who is not something separated from his reification. Rather, the subject is the negated face, the negativity necessary for the affirmation of subsequent moments towards totalization. I affirm myself as an object because of an experienced need, lack or desire that I seek to satisfy. These social roles—and regular behaviours—which constitute the subject's form of life, are key players in capitalism together with taxpayers, who are also consumers: 'The *successful entrepreneur*, *sovereign consumer* and *hard-working taxpayer*, these are key players in the capitalist game today.'[127] In the critique of ideology such as that carried out by authors like Žižek, this negated subjectivity, experienced as an absence that triggers individuals to integrate within the neoliberal order, can be read as the neoliberal ideology that makes possible the neoliberal order. In the words of this philosopher: 'We "feel free" because we lack the very language to articulate our unfreedom [...] Our "freedoms" themselves serve to mask and sustain our deeper unfreedom.'[128]

As a final thought with which to summarise what has been said, the capitalist subjects exhibit that constitutive contradiction between their form of life and themselves as subjects. Or, what is the same, between

125 David Harvey, 'Universal Alienation', *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 16:2 (2018), 424–39. See also, David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (London: Profile Books, 2014).

126 McGuigan, 'The Neoliberal Self', p. 234.

127 *Ibid*., p. 225.

128 Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 2.

the maximization of economic profits that governs their behaviour and the reification to which they freely and voluntarily submit for a better incarnation of the form of life. That contradiction is constitutive of the ontological unit. This has led through the whole capitalist dialectical process to the conception of man-machine. That is, the transformation of 'the living worker into a mere living accessory of the machine',[129] already from its origins, and more recently, to the fusion of human free will and machine efficiency in its contemporary version of transhumanism.[130] The subject in the capitalist form of life thus seems destined to be transformed into an efficient object with respect to its own vital principle: the greater the reification, the greater the maximization. And consumerism is just another form of maximizing in the sense of becoming the very objects that we consume and with which we aspire to future maximizations. However, does this particular contradiction of capitalism not include the contradictory structure of other forms of life as well? Is not the subject a means whereby the Glory of God is expressed in the form of religious life, so that the greater his reification as a divine object or instrument, the greater the Glory of God on earth? And is not the artistic expression of the subject equally greater and more genuine the greater his instrumentalization with respect to art? I am only pointing out with these suggestions the constitutive contradiction of the dialectic structure of every form of life. So, would this arguably call into question Horkheimer's thesis of instrumental reason as inherent to capitalism?[131] If we accept that these mediations (which are otherwise unitary and constitutive) participate in the reification as well as in the integration of the subject into his form of life, then means and ends coincide, and the instrumentalization is therefore only apparent. There is an analogy between means and ends. By wanting to behave in a certain way, subjects want their form of life. In every action, however instrumental it may be,

129 Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 134.

130 There is a growing literature on transhumanism. Some recommended readings are: Roberto Manzocco, *Transhumanism—Engineering the Human Condition: History, Philosophy, and Current Status* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International, 2019); Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, eds, *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014); Stephen Lilley, *Transhumanism and Society: The Social Debate over Human Enhancement* (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, New York and London: Springer, 2013); Julian Savulescu and Nick Bostrom, *Human Enhancement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

131 Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*.

in Horkheimer's sense of subjective reason,[132] subjects affirm themselves as objects in the midst of the world; not for an end beyond the action—as if they were taken themselves as instruments—but for the action itself. To be that object is the end. Thus, for example, in working to earn a salary, work is not merely an instrument, it is primarily the end itself, the way of being and acting that one wants to incarnate. To be that person that works for a salary is the end. For, the ontological principle, in this case, economic maximization, is not a mere end of the action, it is constitutive of the action itself and of the other habitual actions of the subject. It is, in short, the subject. The object and the subject coincide. The subject becomes more and more like the form of life, as an object, and, vice versa, the form of life becomes more and more realized in 'the midst of the world'. The artist tends to incarnate better and better his Art as the religious person tends to incarnate better and better his God (which, for example, has a long tradition going back to Thomas à Kempis' *Imitatio Christi*). In the same way, the capitalist subject tends to incarnate better and better the market as economic maximization (the law of supply and demand). Thus, what has not been previously detected in the analysis of capitalist subjectivity is precisely that it is constituted by that contradiction between the tendency to realize oneself as a subject and the tendency to posit oneself as an object, so that the more one integrates oneself as a subject of one's form of life, the more reified one becomes and vice versa. This contradiction of mediations between the subjects and the totalization they incarnate could also be at the foundation of every form of life.

6. Conclusion

In the historical period studied, there is a particular threshold that is overcome: the negation of the austere form of life of peasants and craftsmen. This could thus be understood as the original possibility of the capitalist form of life, which constitutes an escape from that life of austerity. This flight is a denial of that life, which is assimilated to the principle of economic maximization. It is made to disappear under a new form of life. I have argued that, according to the dialectical structure already examined, every negation implies the affirmation of

132 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

the opposite of the denied form. That is, if the opposite of living an austere life is to live a life in which one maximizes economically, the negation of the former is the affirmation of the latter, in this case under the principle of the form of life it assimilates, which is the capitalist one. This reveals a phenomenon specific to the situation in which both forms of life meet: the negation of the austere form of life is a reinforcement of the life of economic maximization. This is a situation that I have suggested may be the reason why the capitalist form of life expanded so strongly and rapidly during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This implies an exploitation of the subjectivity of those subjects who contribute to the emergence and expansion of the capitalist form of life. When the subject who lives in austerity and flees from the accumulation and maximization of his work (i.e., who lives for his needs as foreseen in the present, and who works only to cover those needs established by himself and his family) is denied in his subjectivity, he converts to a life of maximization under a principle of maximization. It is the driving force behind the agricultural and, soon after, the industrial revolution. The same phenomenon occurs when the subject that is denied, for example, is an artist—as we show in the next chapter. The one who leads an artistic form of life (of self-expression), by being denied will become a subject who maximizes through the opposite of his form of life, namely, the representation of reality and the reproducibility of art. Or, with the aristocracy, those who presided over culture and knowledge, the assimilation of the latter by the capitalist form of life will make them irremediably into businessmen, sustained by ignorance and alienation, that is, the denial of their prior ontological principle. Thus, while some of these aristocrats resist capitalist assimilation and integrate into their own totalization as a community of intellectuals, to which they gradually assimilate subjects from other forms of life, others will derive economic profits from their possessions by joining the so-called mass society, or at least integrate themselves as a mass-man, in the sense of Ortega y Gasset; that is, someone who has his value outside himself, and therefore, who is alienated and reified as another object of the expansive market, where the greater the reification, the greater the economic maximization.

If class struggle is understood as the struggle between oppressors and oppressed, in the sense of one group imposing itself on another,

denying the latter, it is no longer class struggle that takes place after the triumph of the capitalist form of life incarnated in the mass society. Class struggle refers, as discussed in this chapter, to the moments of incipient universalization through assimilation of groups or communities in contact with the expanding capitalist community within England and Europe in the nineteenth century. Once the form of life (with its principle of individual economic maximization) of this community has spread throughout most of the society homogenizing it, what remains are internal struggles, between already assimilated subjects, for further maximization. Within the mass society there will be elites and followers, but both will be capitalists, and while some will seek to preserve their elite status as the most perfect incarnation of their form of life, others will seek to replace the elite. The difference between them is now not in their form of life, as it was between the owners and the workers, or between the middle class and the aristocracy, but in the greater or lesser economic maximization, that is, in the salary or income associated with professions and trades.

It has been indicated that the process of universalization of the form of life continues until the postulated assimilation of all individuals and all aspects of their lives. The necessity of the process consists in its progressive expansion through the assimilation of the forms of life with which it comes into contact. This is not merely a necessary process, but also a contingent one. In other words, it is contingent upon the beginning of totalization at a given time and place, but once that has begun, the process necessarily tends towards its universalization. Without the assimilation of other forms, capitalism would have remained within the limits of a community of subjects for some time, and possibly would have been assimilated to other forms of life. The assimilation of other communities to the capitalist form of life, from the point of view of consumption, seems to be based on the desire to supply a created need, a lack posed by the absence of maximization, in such a way that the subject is temporarily completed by the object (which reified the desire), so that the desire to have the object ends up being the desire to be the object itself (which reified the subject's identity). With the object, the subject maximizes economically, because the object has made him superior as a subject (his human value depends on his wealth), and being superior means having greater exchange value (being able to sell

himself at a higher price). The latter must be thought of in terms of human capital, labour capital, social capital, and so on. But different types of capital, such as those distinguished by Pierre Bourdieu, can, after all, be translated or converted into economic capital.[133] The greater the social prestige, academic training, work experience, and so on, the greater the salary or economic value. Today, even something similar to digital capital could be included in the equation. That is, the number of followers in the digital media and the number of 'likes'. These are beginning to be taken into account, both for employment contracts and for literary awards or prizes. In short, economic maximization is also at the root of the consumerist attitude. For consumption is a means of reification, and presenting oneself as an object is a necessary condition for the maximization of the subject.

133 Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. by John Richardson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 241–58.

7. Forms of Life and Subjectivities of Other Communities in the Capitalist Era

1. Forms of Life, Communities and Social Classes

Not all forms of life in the period of capitalist growth were assimilated in the early stages. With the rise of the middle class in the second half of the nineteenth century in England, as well as in other Western European countries, and the imposition of a unique way of being and acting as being properly human, many other communities end up being assimilated, which in turn will have some consequences for the very incarnation of the capitalist form of life in its hegemonic expansion as a mass society (the one that would be exported through colonization and international markets). Again, it should be specified that when I refer to a form of life I do so from the ontological point of view that has been elaborated throughout the previous chapters of this book; it is never a concept directly equated to that of social class, even though there have been moments in the process of integration and universalization when a particular class has exclusively incarnated that form of life.

To show even briefly some of these forms of life in parallel and in contrast to the capitalist form of life already hegemonic in the second half of the nineteenth century in Western Europe, seems necessary if we are to understand more vividly their practical application as well as their dialectical development. In the period mentioned, we can find a high number of different forms of life which, however, are being assimilated by capitalism. According to its constitutive principle, we can identify the austere form of life, the survival form of life, the philosophical form

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of life, the scientific form of life, the artistic form of life, the religious form of life, and so on. These forms of life imply different ways of being and acting living together in the same geographical area and under the expansive influence of the hegemonic form of life that seeks to deny them in their principles and to assimilate them. As mentioned previously, its study leads us to formulations similar to Barbara Rosenwein's. For this author, in the same historical period a plurality of modes of feeling can be found that form what she calls 'communities of feeling'. And in fact, it is these communities that give shape and expression to our emotions:

> There is a biological and universal human aptitude for feeling and expressing what we now call 'emotions'. But what those emotions are, what they are called, how they are evaluated and felt, and how they are expressed (or not)—all those are shaped by emotional communities.[1]

These feelings shared by a community imply particular ways of expression and assessment: 'Emotional communities are groups—usually but not always social groups—that have their own particular values, modes of feelings, and ways to express those feelings.'[2] I would like to note that the definition distinguishes communities of feeling from social groups just as I have distinguished the latter from forms of life. In that sense, forms of life, which are particular ways of being and acting, would be a broader category that would determine the way such communities feel: in other words, the ontological principle that drives the totality of the ways of acting that provide identity to the individual who freely adopts them. However, in Rosenwein's formulation and exploration of these communities, there is no principle or guarantee of that unity; as the author herself states:

> They are not 'bounded entities'. Indeed, the researcher may define them quite broadly—upper-class English society in the nineteenth century, for example—or rather narrowly, as I do in this book. More narrowly delineated communities allow the researcher to characterize in clearer fashion the emotional style of the group. Larger communities will contain variants and counterstyles—'emotional subcommunities' if you will.[3]

1 Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 3.
2 *Ibid*., p. 3.
3 *Ibid*., p. 3.

Her method is empirical and linguistic. The examination of texts, in particular letters belonging to individuals from various regions and families from the late Middle Ages in England and France, leads to the postulation of different communities of feeling based on the use of vocabulary and the repetition of certain words. The advantage of this method lies in its empirical procedure through the analysis, contrast and comparison of texts of the time and of the geographical area concerned. This allows it to make subtle distinctions between the supposed emotional community of the author of a text and the emotional community of the subjects to which the text refers. Thus, it does not attribute emotions to historical characters or social groups guided by the interpretation or projection of the author of the text, who at all times reveals his own community:

> When Monstrelet described emotions, he did so from his own vantage point and that of the emotional community of which he was a part. It is wrong to use Monstrelet to reveal the emotional life of the people he wrote about, at least those outside his courtly milieux. Rather, Monstrelet tells us about *his* emotional life—or at least, the norms about it that he wished to reveal.[4]

The distinction made in this passage can certainly be applied equally to forms of life. The author of a text always writes from his form of life and from the reaction that other forms of life produce in him and even the denial that he receives from them. In the case that he is dealing with his own form of life, what he shows is a subjectivity that can be objectified with respect to the rest of the members of his community. The disadvantage lies in the fallibility of attributing qualitatively different feelings based on texts written under specific conditions that do not agree with the postulation of a general rule and, even less so, if the feelings are not shown to form a network under a greater unity. The mere association of similar words used by certain individuals to express their feelings can speak more of a linguistic-social community than of a community of feelings. Rosenwein does not overlook such association: 'Like "speech communities", they may be very close in practice to other emotional communities of their time, or they may be very unique and marginal.'[5]

4 *Ibid*., p. 174.
5 *Ibid*., p. 3.

The latter does not imply that I deny the existence of communities with qualitatively different feelings or the uniqueness of their expression. What I mean is that emotions cannot be independent of their expression under a particular way of living. Or, what is the same, someone under the capitalist form of life can only feel and spontaneously express emotions that are proper to that form of life and not to another, because emotions have to do with a way of being, doing and feeling (as well as valuing). And the same can be said of the other forms of life. The empirical study cannot ignore the constitutive principle of the actions and habits that are intended to be studied. The totality and the unity are prior to their parts. And the constitutive principle is the totality that waits to be revealed under each of the subject's actions and habits.

On the other hand, the methodology used by Rosenwein focused on the linguistic analysis of texts; while claiming to take nothing for granted, it presupposes a community as a whole in which the texts would make sense. The community of feeling should be prior in the methodology to empirical evidence. And in fact it is, as the author herself recognizes:

> The technique of this book is microhistorical: to look at particulars and yet to claim that they tell us something about larger groups in similar situations around the same time. For example, I spend much time on Rievaulx under Abbot Aelred not only because he represented the emotional community of one Cistercian monastery but because I *hypothesize* that Cistercian monasteries in general fostered similar (though not surely exactly the same) emotional styles and sensibilities.[6]

The same can be said of the onto-phenomenological approach to forms of life. In this initial approach, one starts from the intuition of these forms incarnated in real communities. The evidence is double: that of the phenomenological process and that of the factual process. That is, the description of consciousness in its constitution by the ontological principle adopted and the actions and habits that emerge from it as a necessary possibility, and which are empirically observable. This description, on the other hand, is not that of an exclusive subject nor that of all human beings, but that of a certain community identified with that principle. And although Rosenwein thinks that communities of feeling are boundless, as we have seen in the above quotation, nevertheless, if

6 *Ibid*., p. 12. The italics are mine.

we take them as part of a form of life, they must respond to a totalization whose principle is fixed a priori. This totalization depends on the actions of its subjects. And these tend to impose it on others, that is, to assimilate others, from instances of power. Thus, each community of feelings would be preserved and enacted by the exercise of its power over the others. This is what she herself assures of the Philippine tribe of the Ilongots:

> The anthropologist Renato Rosaldo described the agonized anguish that the Ilongots of the Philippines felt when in 1972 martial law declared a ban on their beloved practice of headhunting. But presumably Ferdinand Marcos and the Protestant ministers long opposed to the practice were very pleased that the Ilongots generally complied. Who suffers, who delights, has a great deal to do with who is in power. An emotional regime that induces suffering in some does not induce it in all.[7]

So, here we have a community that if it loses its power, it also loses the possibility of realizing its habits; something that seems to miss the author here. For feelings cannot be separated from the actions and habits of the community. However, it is clear from the quote that each member of the tribe shares this feeling of sadness about a habit that they apparently consider part of their identity, part of their form of life; otherwise, they would not express it with such anguish. Such a feeling, in order to be understood, requires the positing of the community of feelings to which it belongs and the contrasting of it with that of those who do not belong to it, in this case clearly the Protestant ministers. But, what I am advocating is that both can only have full meaning embedded within or, if you will, born out of a particular form of life.

Communities that incarnate various forms of life can live together with others, but all tend to be assimilated by the hegemonic one, that is, the one that imposes itself. So all these forms experience its influence, while the hegemonic one adopts under its principle meanings or plural connotations as it advances in its dialectical process of universalization through assimilation. As we have seen, such processes are both necessary and contingent. Necessary because they obey the universalizing essence of every form of life as it embodies the image of what it means to that

7 Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 22.

subject and that community to be human. And contingent because in its universalizing expansion it confronts and denies the forms of life with which it enters into opposition under particular situations. As it expands, it comes into contact with more forms of life. This is why the forms of life that I will now discuss are forms that are denied at a more advanced stage, once the principle of economic maximization has expanded enough to motivate the behaviour of a large part of the European social population, and in particular England and France. The population, however, does not absolutely identify with the community that incarnates the capitalist form of life. Nor is this community any longer the middle class, since its form of life has expanded so much as to deny it as a class.

At this time, around the second half of the nineteenth century, there are still various forms of life outside of capitalism. Among them, I will focus on the artistic form of life. The reason for this choice is twofold: on the one hand, there is an abundance of accounts about this form of life as expressed by its own subjects: artists, poets, painters, sculptors, etc. On the other hand, the contrast with and the resistance against assimilation by the hegemonic form (already described in previous chapters) in specific subjects-artists such as Charles Baudelaire show us quite clearly its characteristics. In any case, the interest of this form of life lies in itself, because it shows its internal structure as well as the way in which it opposes capitalism in its universal expansion. No less interesting is how this form of life can explain the evolution of the capitalist form of life and its subjectivity in later moments, specifically in the last quarter of the century. For the progressive negation of the artistic form of life means the relative affirmation of its opposite under the principle of maximization: if artistic life is opposed to the life of reduplication of objects, its negation by the principle of maximization will mean the assimilation of its opposite as reduplication and reproduction of artistic objects in the industrial production chain (and in the technological reproducibility of photography that Walter Benjamin will denounce some decades later), but also in the reproduction of reality in literature, such as in realism and naturalism, which explains the rejection of both, especially of naturalism, by the so-called symbolists, who incarnate, as we see below, the artistic form of life:

> The symbolists believed they were reacting against naturalism; naturalism and symbolism-decadent may appear to be polar opposites: the one stresses objectivity and exteriority, systematization-mechanization, description or direct presentation of visible things of a given society here and now; while the other values subjectivity and individualism, idealism and spiritualism, the intimation and suggestion of things invisible and transcendent.[8]

For all this, I will explore the artistic form of life through Baudelaire, as its major representative in industrialized France in the mid-nineteenth century. A warning seems necessary at this point. It is not historical, sociological or artistic interest that underpins the following section, but merely philosophical. In other words, what interests me is to apply the concept of a form of life as an ontological unit to a particular case. With this I intend to illustrate the theoretical exploration and bring it closer to the reader's phenomenological experience.

2. Baudelaire, the Artistic Form of Life and its Subjectivity

The artistic form of life was one of several marginal forms of life during the nineteenth century in Europe. It was a form on the fringes of the capitalist totalization that began with the decline of the previous century. As a life of reflection and recreation in the aesthetic intuitions, it used to be led by aristocrats. Famous are the cases of Lord Byron in England and Victor Hugo in France. However, with the already mentioned denial of the aristocracy by the middle class, the latter will start to assimilate features typical of the aristocracy under the all-powerful principle of maximizing economic profit. In France, for example, this principle will be the motto of the bourgeois regime of Louis-Philippe that will end in the revolution of 1848:

> This was the time of limited franchise in which only those who were rich or who were in a position to become so were allowed to participate in politics and the decision-making process, a period in which the plutocrats took over command and the slogan of the anglophile premier Guizot,

8 Roland Grass and William Risley, *Waiting for Pegasus: Studies of the Presence of Symbolism and Decadence in Hispanic Letters* (Macomb, IL: Western Illinois University, 1979), p. 10.

> 'Make money', became the catch cry, if not even a sort of categorical imperative of the age.[9]

Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) spent his youth during this triumph of the bourgeoisie and the capitalist form of life. It is at this time of integration of the various communities into capitalism that the lives of the artists, now largely belonging to the expanding middle class, come to singular attention, produced in part by admiration and in part by horror. Many of these bourgeois artists, like the Pre-Raphaelites in England, led by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Ruskin, or those called *poètes maudits* by Paul Verlaine, can be said to lead an artistic life in contrast to the life of their social class:[10] 'If Baudelaire was the first of what Verlaine was later to call the *poètes maudits*, it was because he strove to coincide entirely with his literary creation at a time when society showed very little respect for poetry.'[11] These artists share an aesthetic creed, an attitude towards life and society. With regard to the aesthetic creed, it was established as that of art for art's sake. For them, art had no other purpose than art itself. Victor Cousin was the first to defend this idea in his essay on religious art: 'As Cousin states, "Religion exists for the sake of religion, the moral exists for the sake of the moral, and art should exist for its own sake". Art is a purpose in itself, and, as Alfred de Vigny pointed out, "the modern ... spiritual belief".'[12]

This art for art's sake is already in itself the principle that will move the artist's vital attitude and his antagonism with a society where utility and economic profit predominate. This antagonism is, without a doubt, the one that most clearly integrates and unites all artists, those who in this era are also beginning to be included under the label of symbolism. In France, perhaps the first to express this antagonistic form of life with that represented by the bourgeoisie would be Théophile Gautier in the preface to his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* and in his poem 'L'hippopotame'. Among the French symbolists, most of whom

9 Dolf Oehler, 'Baudelaire's Politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, ed. by Rosemary Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 14–30 (p. 14).

10 Paul Verlaine, *Les poètes maudits* (Paris: Léon Vanier, 1884).

11 John Jackson, 'Charles Baudelaire, a Life in Writing', in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, ed. by Rosemary Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1–13 (p. 11).

12 Rosina Neginsky, 'Introduction', in *Symbolism, its Origins and its Consequences* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 1–14 (p. 3).

followed the aesthetics of Edgar Allan Poe, were Gautier, Baudelaire, Leconte de Lisle, Théodore de Banville and, in a second generation, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud and Verlaine, among others.[13] Three anthologies of these new poets were published under the title *Le Parnasse contemporain* (1866, 1871 and 1876). They all had a shared attitude: '"Hatred of successful mediocrity", of a society in which those poets lived, was the basis for that attitude. Their style indicated the withdrawal from the world around them and the aspiration to stand aside and be above the society in which they lived.'[14] What I then attribute to Baudelaire could be attributed to a lesser or greater extent to all the artists who identified themselves under the attitude of symbolism. All of them expressed a view that emerged from their integration into the artistic form of life.

The examination of the latter in the person of Baudelaire is intended to illustrate the ontological conception of forms of life proposed in the previous chapters. I am not trying to prove any historical thesis but to complement the theoretical approach with a practical case. Or, in other words, to show how the understanding of the life of historical subjects gives rise to an onto-phenomenological constitution that unites them as potential members of the same community through the ontological principle with which they identify and the actions they carry out. And this is seen most clearly when contrasted with other communities whose form of life and subjectivity is opposed. In the opposition and resistance between the two, one can also see the tendency towards the universalization of all forms of life through the denial and assimilation of others. This is what I intend to reflect in the following sections.

13 Influenced by Verlaine, Ruben Darío, the greatest representative of Hispanic modernism, wrote a book entitled *Los raros* (The odd ones) in 1896, in which he gives a semblance of poets who had followed the path of art —what they called the *ideal*—and who were considered socially marginalized, among them Verlaine, Edgar Allan Poe, Stéphane Mallarmé, etc. Darío himself was considered an outsider. This communion between poets can be extended to other artists such as musicians and sculptors. See Mary McAuliffe, *Dawn of the Belle Epoque* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), p. 262.

14 Neginsky, 'Introduction', p. 4.

2.1. Baudelaire and the Artistic Form of Life

Of the artists mentioned above, I will take Baudelaire as the highest representative or the most perfect incarnation of that form. But what does this artistic form of life consist of? If we return to the earlier quotation from John Jackson, we now highlight the characteristic that seems to have made Verlaine take Baudelaire as a model of the group or poetic community. This characteristic is that he 'strove to coincide entirely with his literary creation'. The poet identified with his artistic work so much that it would not seem possible to distinguish where one ends and the other begins. His life was his writing. When we think of an artistic form of life, what do we think of if not a life dedicated entirely to art? A life that in a certain way is also art. The subject and the object of art merge. Incidentally, that was what Baudelaire understood by pure art: 'What is the modern conception of pure art? It is to create a suggestive magic which contains both subject and object, the external world and the artist himself.'[15] In a more than figurative sense, it was about incarnating art with its classic ideals of beauty, truth and goodness through the artist's own personality, who thus became a kind of priest of an art religion. From his perspective as an individual subject, the artist captures and transmits an absolute, since for Baudelaire the arts are always the beautiful 'expressed by the feeling, the passion and the reverie of each one, that is to say the variety in the unity, or the diverse faces of the absolute,—the criticism touches at every moment the metaphysics'.[16] There is a correspondence between the artist or his character, what Baudelaire calls *naïveté*, and the essence of that absolute or totality, which could be considered the spirit of an era (*Weltanschauung*), and which I uphold to be the artist's form of life, but the latter is in clear opposition to the general spirit of his time or the hegemonic form of life: 'just as there is a *naïveté* of the individual artist, there is, so to speak, a corresponding *naïveté* or distinctive genius of a particular age'.[17]

15 Charles Baudelaire, *L'Art Romantique*, ed. by Jacques Crépet (Paris: Louis Conard, 1925), p. 119, quoted in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Baudelaire*, trans. by Martin Turnell (London: Horizon, 1947/1949), p. 22.

16 '[La beauté] exprimé par le sentiment, la passion et la rêverie de chacun, c'est-à-dire la variété dans l'unité, ou les faces diverses de l'absolu,—la critique touche à chaque instant à la métaphysique.' Quoted in James Andrew Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and the Art of Memory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 9.

17 Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and the Art of Memory*, p. 10.

An artistic form of life, and undoubtedly that incarnated by Baudelaire, was thus a life whose ontological principle was to express aesthetically the intuitions of the poet. These intuitions were certainly subjective, but those of a subjectivity shared by other subjects equally identified with that form of life. Those intuitions constitute their Ideal. And in their capturing, the imagination has a fundamental role:

> Imagination is not a fantasy; it is not a sensitivity either, though it would not be possible to imagine a man with an imagination who is not sensitive. Imagination is an almost divine ability which perceives intuitively the intimate and secret relationship, the correspondences and analogies.[18]

His life consisted of the aesthetic expression of those ideal intuitions. With these intuitions the poet gave meaning to his reality. These intuitions of the ideal showed the meaning of that which in merely perceptive world did not have. This is established in his poem 'Correlatives' (*Correspondances*):

> Nature is a temple, where the living
> Columns sometimes breathe confusing speech;
> Man walks within these groves of symbols, each
> Of which regards him as a kindred thing.[19]
>
> *La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers*
> *Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;*
> *L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles*
> *Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers*.[20]

And since they were part of the poet's world, their expression consisted of the expression of his own world, what he calls his dream. It was self-expression. Baudelaire suggests this in his sonnet 'The Ideal' (*L'Idéal*):

> That poet of chlorosis, Gavarni,[21]
> Can keep his twittering troupe of sickly queens,
> Since these pale roses do not let me see
> My red ideal, the flower of my dreams.[22]

18 Jean Cassou, *Encyclopédie du Symbolisme* (Paris: Somogy, 1971), p. 160. Translated and quoted in Neginsky, *Symbolism, its Origins and its Consequences*, p. 5.

19 Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by James N. McGowan (includes parallel French text) (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 19.

20 *Ibid*., p. 18.

21 Chlorosis is a sort of anaemia, and Gavarni was a cartoonist and engraver of frivolous figures.

22 Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, p. 39.

Je laisse à Gavarni, poëte des chloroses,
Son troupeau gazouillant de beautés d'hôpital,
Car je ne puis trouver parmi ces pâles rosés
Une fleur qui ressemble à mon rouge ideal.[23]

This is precisely what the artistic form of life consists of, in the self-expression of the poet. In making his life a pure self-expression, his life is his own work of art. His behaviour is born of that totalization in which he is progressively integrated. He recognizes himself as a better artist the more he is integrated into that totalization; so his subjectivity depends on his artistic work to the point that he feels happy or joyful only in relation to his work. Everything else is out of his reach, leaves him indifferent or stuns him. These are the states of mind that Baudelaire described in his letters to his mother:

> What I feel is an immense discouragement, a sense of unbearable isolation ..., a complete absence of desires, an impossibility of finding any sort of amusement. The strange success of my book and the hatred it aroused interested me for a short time, but after that I sank back into my usual mood.[24]

We have previously recognized this process of identification with his work by examining the capitalist form of life. It bears some resemblance to Jodi Dean's example of the young woman who is only interested when she is in contact with technology (quoted in Chapter 6 on reification under capitalist subjectivity). This is the same process of reification but in this case through art. The subject becomes progressively identical to his work, while his work gradually takes over the only thing that remains of the artist's subjectivity. If the subject becomes an artist mediated by his form of life as artistic self-expression, the form of life is realized in the world through the subject. Thus, the more the subject becomes an artist, in terms of the subjectivity provided by the artistic form of life, the greater his reification as an object of art. The contradictory but constitutive process of such a form of life is masterfully represented in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde: the artist is preserved as a pure art object. Separated from his work and from his process of artistic self-expression, the subject is thus fully aboulic, with no interest in the

23 *Ibid*., p. 38.
24 Letter to his mother, 30 December 1857. Quoted in Sartre, *Baudelaire*, p. 31.

superficial life around him. The actions that he would like to carry out in relation to the artist that he is are suffocated under the hegemonic form of life. So, even though he feels sterile to realize his form of life, he feels interested in any action produced by indetermination (we must remember the sense of indeterminacy or randomness discussed in Chapter 4 on imitation and social conditioning), such as those that the poet praises in 'Le mauvais vitrier' ('The Bad Glazier') in *Petits poëmes en prose* (1927). These are irrational actions, without meaning even for the person performing them and, thus, without integrating him into the form of life with which he identifies: 'I felt, to do something great, to perform some fine act; and, alas, I opened the window!'[25] These actions, however, seem to be equally pleasing to Baudelaire, in that they show a break from the behaviour imposed by the hegemonic form of life and from the resulting Spleen or ennui:

> I have more than once been the victim of such crises and impulses, which give us grounds for believing that malicious Demons slip inside us, forcing us to carry out, unknown to ourselves, their most absurd desires [...] Crazy jokes like this [*sudden incomprehensible actions*] are not without their peril, and often one has to pay dearly for them. But what does an eternity of damnation matter to someone who has discovered an infinity of joy within a single second?[26]

Every form of life has its constitutive opposite or negative; that life from which it flees. If capitalism flees from the austere life of the peasants and workers, the artistic form of life flees from the deprivation of its self-expression. That is, from the reproduction of imposed actions. The artist seeks to endow his behaviour, his whole life, with a meaning, like that given to a work of art. The opposite is the automaticity and the alienating production of factories and industrial life. Like Baudelaire, every subject of the artistic form of life is in natural opposition to the capitalist form of life as accumulation and maximization of profit. In this sense, the utility of the capitalist and the practical uselessness of art are opposed. This leads Baudelaire to consider himself useless and even to take it as a justification for his own suicide: 'I am going to kill

25 Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen and La Fanfarlo*, trans. Raymond N. MacKenzie (Indianapolis and Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Co., 2008), p. 16.

26 *Ibid*., pp. 16–17.

myself because I am useless to other people and a danger to myself.'[27] This passage prompted an interpretation from Sartre that deserves to be revisited from the perspective of forms of life. For Sartre, it is the decision to be useless that led Baudelaire to become redundant in his society. In other words, it was a free act of his will to understand himself in those terms, with little to do with society, the environment or others (something very different from what it suggests with regard to the case of the Jews, as we have examined above). Sartre wrote that 'if he [Baudelaire] did not take up a profession, if he refused in advance to show the slightest interest in every form of business, it was because he had already made up his mind that he was completely useless'.[28]

This aspect of his life points directly to the rejection of the concept of usefulness: 'To be a useful man has always appeared to me to be something particularly hideous', he writes.[29] Sartre associates both quotations with a contradictory change of mood. But I do not think there is a contradiction, and definitely it is not a change of mood. Baudelaire was useless for the incipient capitalist form of life because he was the incarnation of an opposite form of life. He did not identify with it and could not act as if he did (at the risk of betraying oneself and then living in self-deception, which he did not do). He *knew* he was useless. It is not a complaint when he says he wants to kill himself because he is not useful to anyone. It is a powerful intuition. The options are either to kill himself physically or kill himself in his subjective identification. That is, to convert to the capitalist, useful form of life.

The poet, rejected in his ontological principle—the one he surely gave himself in his youth when he came into contact with incipient Parisian poets and bohemians—feels like a living dead. He is incapable of integrating himself into the hegemonic capitalist form of life and equally incapable of integrating himself into his own, denied as he was constantly by the former—with which he lived and to which he was exposed. After rethinking Sartre's dialectic, we can now postulate that negation is not merely exercised by facticity, that is, by the habits and behaviours that oppress the poet, but also by the ontological principle. There is a denial of its principle through the capitalist principle that

27 Quoted in Sartre, *Baudelaire*, p. 29.
28 *Ibid*., p. 29.
29 Quoted in *ibid*., p. 30.

drives the actions and habits of the social environment. This makes the denial a real force on the poet, as on any other form of life than the hegemonic one. For, incarnated in the bourgeois middle class, it is constituted by the negation of everything else, everything that is not it (following the negative Fichtean dialectic exposed above). This gave rise to the well-known phenomenon of the bourgeois phobia of the other, that which did not belong to their form of life: 'Baudelaire recognises in the bourgeois that politicoeconomical animal that claims supreme mastery of the world and that will allow no other being near itself, because it is incapable of understanding or tolerating the other, the alien.'[30]

It is not possible from this perspective that Baudelaire acted in bad faith, in the Sartrean sense. That is to say, it does not seem that he was justifying through external forces decisions that he would have taken freely. For, if he freely gave himself the artistic form of life, his denial by his environment was experienced as the impossibility of carrying it out and preserving it. And since what happens is precisely a conflict between two forms of life, in which one cancels out the other, nor can the theory that Sartre will apply to the study of Gustave Flaubert's life as a case of 'objective neurosis' be applicable either.[31] For the artist's difficulties to realize himself are not an internal contradiction that reflects the external contradictions when trying to surpass them. What I argue is that Baudelaire was denied in his inner world (and not only in his material condition and behaviour) by the external world to which he was exposed. Such exposure to the capitalist form meant the denial of the ontological principle that determined who he wanted to be within that community. In other words, the behaviour of capitalist society made his ontological principle impossible. He was free to insist on and integrate himself into his artistic form of life, but he could not do so in contact with the capitalist form of life, which at all times denied him and tried to assimilate him, on many occasions mainly through his loved ones. This explains, beyond Sartre's psychoanalytical interpretation, Baudelaire's tortuous relationship with them, especially with his mother and his lover, Jeanne Duval, the mulatto actress he met in 1842 and who was to

30 Oehler, 'Baudelaire's Politics', pp. 24–25.

31 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert, 1821–1857*, Vol. III, trans. by Carol Cosman (Chicato and Longon: University of Chicago Press, 1989), chapter titled 'La névrose objective' ('The objective neurosis').

remain his mistress for the next twenty years.[32] The latter is described to his mother in the following terms:

> To live with a person who shows no gratitude for your efforts, who impedes them through clumsiness or permanent meanness, *who considers you as a mere servant, as her property*, someone with whom it is impossible to exchange a word about politics or literature, a creature *who is unwilling to learn a single thing*, although you've offered to teach her yourself, a creature *who has no admiration for me*, and *who is not even interested in one's studies*, who *would throw one's manuscripts in the fire if that brought in more money than publishing them*, who drives away one's cat, the sole source of amusement in one's lodgings, and who brings in dogs, because the sight of dogs sickens me, who does not know or *cannot understand that by being tight-fisted*, just for one month *I could, thanks to that brief respite, conclude a big book*—is all this possible? Is it possible? My eyes are full of *tears of fury and shame* as I write this.[33]

His lover is represented to us as an antithesis of the poet. An antithesis whose features are those of the bourgeois and capitalist life of the moment. She makes him a maximizer of his own work, because he seeks to get the most economic profit in order to pay his lover. In one of his poems from *Fleurs du mal* (1857), the poet seems to take revenge on a woman he needs to deny,[34] that is, to kill her allegorically in order to assert himself as a poet; it is his poetry that kills her, in an act of affirmation of the form of life she incarnates.[35] It is a poem to a lady ('A une Madone') whom he stabs with the seven deadly sins, now turned into daggers. In other words, the poet, instead of saving her from her sins, kills her with them in a clear reversal of the Christian morality proper to the *respectable* bourgeoisie.

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32 Jackson, 'Charles Baudelaire, a Life in Writing', p. 5.

33 Letter to his mother, 27 March 1851, in Charles Baudelaire, *Correspondance*, ed. by Claude Pichois, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1972–73), I, p. 193. Quoted in Jackson, 'Charles Baudelaire, a Life in Writing', p. 5.

34 Literary criticism suggests that this belongs to the third cycle of love poems in *The Flowers of Evil*. In this cycle the poems would be dedicated to Marie Daubrun, an actress with whom Baudelaire had a brief love affair between 1854/55 and 1857. See Barbara Wright, 'Baudelaire's Poetic Journey in *Les Fleurs du Mal*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, ed. by Rosemary Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 31–50 (pp. 38–39).

35 On the allegorical mode that underpins all of Baudelaire's work, see Michael Jennings, 'Introduction', in Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaiare* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 1–26 (p. 18).

At last, so you're my Mary perfectly,
And mixing love with pagan cruelty,
Full of a dark, remorseful joy, I'll take
The seven deadly sins, and of them make
Seven bright Daggers; with a juggler's lore
Target your love within its deepest core,
And plant them all within your panting Heart,
Within your sobbing Heart, your streaming Heart![36]

Enfin, pour compléter ton rôle de Marie,
Et pour mêler l'amour avec la barbarie,
Volupt´e noire! des sept Péchés capitaux,
Bourreau plein de remords, je ferai sept Couteaux
Bien affilés, et, comme un jongleur insensible,
Prenant le plus profond de ton amour pour cible,
Je les planterai tous dans ton Coeur pantelant,
Dans ton Coeur sanglotant, dans ton Coeur ruisselant![37]

Art and the artistic form of life are in clear conflict with the morality of the hegemonic capitalist form of life. It will be its opposite, the same one that led Friedrich Nietzsche to write his *Antichrist* and that puts it beyond the good and evil typical of bourgeois society. The latter leads us to examine how the artistic form of life is finally denied by capitalism in the second half of the century, beginning the assimilation of the former insofar as it puts art at the service of maximization through its technological reproducibility.

2.2. Ideal and Spleen: The Subjectivity of the Poet

If the *Ideal* is to give meaning to the poet's life, the *Spleen* is the opposite attitude, the lack of meaning. If the first is associated with a certain spiritual good, the second refers to evil, which is in turn associated with the absurd and bourgeois, as Gautier expressed it in his biography of Baudelaire:

> He hated evil as a mathematical deviation, and, in his quality of a perfect gentleman, he scorned it as unseemly, ridiculous, bourgeois and squalid. If he has often treated of hideous, repugnant, and unhealthy subjects, it is from that horror and fascination which makes the magnetised bird go

36 Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, p. 121.
37 *Ibid*., p. 120.

> down into the unclean mouth of the serpent; but more than once, with a vigorous flap of his wings, he breaks the charm and flies upwards to bluer and more spiritual regions. He should have engraved on his seal as a device the words 'Spleen et Idéal'.[38]

Spleen et Idéal indicate the essential elements for our understanding of the artistic form of life and that which is considered opposed to it and imposed on it. In Walter Benjamin's study of the French poet, he distinguishes between isolated experiences (*Erlebnis*) and long experiences (*Erfahrung*). The kind of experience that is fragmented and meaningless, because it is outside a framework of understanding (what he calls being outside a tradition), would constitute the isolated experience; while the experiences that make up our world and our tradition, those that we pass on to the following generations, would be the long experiences. For Benjamin, the isolated experiences would be those that produce the Spleen or melancholy:

> Tradition is excluded from it. It is the quintessence of an isolated experience [*Erlebnis*] that struts about in the borrowed garb of long experience [*Erfahrung*]. *Spleen, on the other hand, exposes the isolated experience in all its nakedness*. To his horror, *the melancholy man sees the earth revert to a mere state of nature.* No breath of prehistory surrounds it—no aura.[39]

This distinction is equally useful for the understanding of forms of life, and in particular the artistic form of life in contrast to the capitalist one. For the Spleen, associated with these isolated experiences, denounces a lack of communion and total understanding of what is experienced. That lack of understanding lies in its being a fragment, which loses meaning when extracted from its totality. The isolated experience is an experience of the absurdity of that life which the poet experiences. That which is imposed upon him. That is, these experiences identified by Benjamin are those that the poet has of the capitalist form of life. On the other hand, long experiences have to do with those experiences that give us a cultural identity and continuity as subjects. These could well be equivalent to the subjectivity of the poet with respect to his artistic form of life. In them is encoded the Ideal, which, moreover, Benjamin, in the

38 Théophile Gautier, *Charles Baudelaire: His Life* (New York: Brentano's, 1915), p. 24.
39 Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), p. 202.

extract above, puts in relation to the aura, a concept that insists on the mediation of experience by a tradition. With regard to forms of life, we could say that this mediation consists of the ontological principle with which the subject identifies himself and which constitutes his essential subjectivity:

> If we think of the associations which, at home in the *mémoire involontaire,* seek to cluster around an object of perception, and if we call those associations the aura of that object, then the aura attaching to the object of a perception corresponds precisely to the experience [*Erfahrung*] which, in the case of an object of use, inscribes itself as long practice.[40]

This distinction, however, leads Benjamin to a conclusion that finds no place in the ontology of forms of life. For the German author, with the inventions and new technologies of the time, especially the daguerreotype and the camera, isolated experiences (*Erlebnis*) would be given precedence over long experiences (*Erfahrung*): 'They thus represent important achievements of a society in which long practice is in decline.'[41] The latter, in Baudelaire's own view, would be the way the masses experience their own world: 'The masses demanded an ideal that would conform to their aspirations and the nature of their temperament ... Their prayers were granted by a vengeful god, and Daguerre became his prophet.'[42] However, precisely because the poet finds the masses the recipients of a new way of looking represented by the daguerreotype, which he rejects, suggests that this is a subjective appreciation of the poet from his own form of life. That is, those isolated experiences that for Benjamin are typical of the triumph of the masses and their technologies, lead us to question whether it is not from Baudelaire's point of view that the philosopher is looking. For the poet, not only photography but also commerce, utility, professions, money, and so on, all the elements of the capitalist form of life, produced isolated experiences; that is, they are absurd and typical of the Spleen. It is the artistic form of life incarnated by Baudelaire and other poets of the time that is in decline. For, with technological reproducibility, it is being denied and assimilated.

On the other hand, photography and other forms of artistic reproduction do not constitute a qualitative change with respect to the

40 *Ibid*., p. 202.
41 *Ibid*., p. 202.
42 *Ibid*., pp. 202–03.

practices of the bourgeoisie, since they are still driven by the principle of economic maximization. What it does mean is a progressive change of integration in the mentioned totalization, because, with the accumulation and reproduction of photos that are sold as souvenirs, or lithographs that are sold as substitutes for the original paintings, the economic maximization is greater. Moreover, the life of the subject takes a step forward in its reification: vital moments are now fragmentary objects, which will only become continuous objects, gradual substitutes for the life of the subject, with the cinema, and later with video conferences and Internet forums in neoliberal capitalism, as we have shown above.

Therefore, exposure to these isolated experiences is equivalent to the denial of meaning in the poet-artist's life. The Spleen's reaction is therefore the result of the denial of the artist's form of life. With this denial the artist feels deprived. This is the condition in which Baudelaire recognizes himself in his poems and intimate writings.[43] To be deprived means to have been denied in some respect. And more than a specific aspect, it is the deprivation of its ontological principle, of the Ideal. It does not seem to be bad faith, as Sartre interprets,[44] in the sense of blaming external factors which only depend on his will, but a real limitation of the subject's way of being and acting which is not identified with the hegemonic form of life. This brings us back to the difference pointed out in previous chapters between facticity as pure being-in-itself and facticity as being-in-itself-for-itself. In the world of human acts, facticity is principled, born of a totality which is the pre-reflective consciousness of an anthropical image. It is never pure being-in-itself. It always comes from a meaningful whole. The facticity of the capitalist form of life is regular habits and behaviour determined by a principle of economic maximization. It not only denies the ability to act spontaneously in a different way but to do so under a different principle. It is the denial of their way of being through the imposition of an opposing behaviour principled by maximization and its connotations of utility, efficiency, accumulation, and so on. There is only room for recognition of the impossibility of living artistically in a community that does not; or else to live in a way contrary to that which one wants to live, stunned by the feeling of *l'ennui*, a fatalistic feeling of not being able to resist the life that

43 Jackson, 'Charles Baudelaire, a Life in Writing', p. 12.
44 Sartre, *Baudelaire*, p. 30.

is imposed on the artist, very much associated with the Spleen:[45] 'I am bored [or I feel alienated] in France, especially because everyone here resembles Voltaire [...] Voltaire, or the anti-poet, the king of the idlers, the prince of the shallow, the anti-artist, the preacher of the concierges, the father Gigogne of the editors of *le Siècle*.'[46]

This leads either to conversion to the principle of life in that hegemonic community and the assimilation of the subject by the latter, or to withdrawal, either internal or external—either option the subject takes freely, but after having understood the denial, rejection and impossibility of his own form of life. The latter has as a consequence his ruin and disgrace:

> You must, to earn your meagre evening bread,
> Like a bored altar boy swing censers, chant
> *Te Deums* to the never present gods,
>
> Or, starving clown, put up your charms for sale,
> Your laughter steeped in tears for no one's eyes,
> To bring amusement to the vulgar crowd.[47]
>
> *Il te faut, pour gagner ton pain de chaque soir,*
> *Comme un enfant de choeur, jouer de l'encensoir,*
> *Chanter des* Te Deum *auxquels tu ne crois guère,*
>
> *Ou, saltimbanque à jeun, étaler tes appas*
> *Et ton rire trempé de pleurs qu'on ne voit pas,*
> *Pour faire épanouir la rate du vulgaire*.[48]

Thus, Baudelaire and the community of co-subjects of the artistic form of life remain on the margins of society. For 'it is bourgeois society that Baudelaire holds guilty of the suffering of the post-aristocratic period, and not least for the fact that art has gone to rack and ruin, that poets and artists like himself now belong to the *déclassés*'.[49] We could say that he is inside of that society at times, but isolated within it. And no wonder

45 Hiddleston, *Baudelaire and the Art of Memory*, p. 65.

46 'Je m'ennuie en France, surtout parce que tout le monde y ressemble à Voltaire. [...] Voltaire, ou l'anti-poète, le roi des badauds, le prince des superficiels, l'anti-artiste, le prédicateur des concierges, le père Gigogne des rédacteurs du *Siècle*': in Charles Baudelaire, *Journaux intimes* (Paris: G. Crès et Cie, 1920), pp. 65–66. Translation is mine.

47 Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, p. 27 ('The Venal Muse').

48 *Ibid*., p. 26.

49 Oehler, 'Baudelaire's Politics', p. 24.

he, very much like other artists, constantly complains of loneliness. Therefore, when the poet is in possession of himself through his artistic work, he feels like an aristocrat or a prince;[50] but when he returns to his environment, he feels disoriented, clumsy, embarrassed like the albatross in his poem:

> Often, when bored, the sailors of the crew
> Trap albatross, the great birds of the seas,
> Mild travellers escorting in the blue
> Ships gliding on the ocean's mysteries.
>
> And when the sailors have them on the planks,
> Hurt and distraught, these kings of all outdoors
> Piteously let trail along their flanks
> Their great white wings, dragging like useless oars.
>
> This voyager, how comical and weak!
> Once handsome, how unseemly and inept!
> One sailor pokes a pipe into his beak,
> Another mocks the flier's hobbled steep.
>
> The Poet is a kinsman in the clouds
> Who scoffs at archers, loves a stormy day;
> But on the ground, among the hooting crowds,
> He cannot walk, his wings are in the way.[51]
>
> *Souvent, pour s'amuser, les hommes d'équipage*
> *Prennent des albatros, vastes oiseaux des mers,*
> *Qui suivent, indolents compagnons de voyage,*
> *Le navire glissant sur les gouffres amers.*
>
> *A peine les ont-ils déposés sur les planches,*
> *Que ces rois de l'azur, maladroits et honteux,*
> *Laissent piteusement leurs grandes ailes blanches*
> *Comme des avirons traîner à côté d'eux.*
>
> *Ce voyageur ailé, comme il est gauche et veule!*
> *Lui, naguère si beau, qu'il est comique et laid!*
> *L'un agace son bec avec un brûle-gueule,*
> *L'autre mime, en boitant, l'infirme qui volait!*
>
> *Le Poete est semblable au prince des nuées*
> *Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;*

50 Jackson, 'Charles Baudelaire, a Life in Writing', p. 12.
51 Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, pp. 15, 17 ('The Albatross').

Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.[52]

At other times, he feels deprived of his power, the power to be the one he has decided to be (that form of life with which he identifies). Denied by the principle that directs the world in which he lives, he feels his power as a loss, an absence, just as the Andromache in 'Le cygne' ('The Swan') feels the absence of what she once was.[53] In the mythological character the poet sees a reflection of the deprivation to which he is subjected in his own time. And the remarkable thing is that these mythologies speak of transformations forced by a greater power (like all those that occur in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*). Under that physical transformation, the intimate being of the character as well as that of the poet continues to beat:

Andromache, I think of you—this meagre stream,
This melancholy mirror where had once shone forth
The giant majesty of all your widowhood,
This fraudulent Simois, fed by bitter tears,
[...]
A swan, who had escaped from his captivity,
And scuffing his splayed feet along the paving stones,
He trailed his white array of feathers in the dirt.
Close by a dried out ditch the bird opened his beak,

Flapping excitedly, bathing his wings in dust,
And said, with heart possessed by lakes he once had loved:
'Water, when will you rain? Thunder, when will you roar?'
I see this hapless creature, sad and fatal myth [...].[54]

Andromaque, je pense à vous! Ce petit fleuve,
Pauvre et triste miroir où jadis resplendit
L'immense majesté de vos douleurs de veuve,
Ce Simöis menteur qui par vos pleurs grandit,
[...]
Un cygne qui s'était évadé de sa cage,
Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec,
Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage.
Près d'un ruisseau sans eau la bête ouvrant le bec

52 *Ibid*., pp. 14, 16.
53 Jackson, 'Charles Baudelaire, a Life in Writing', p. 12.
54 Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, pp. 173, 175 ('The Swan').

Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre,
Et disait, le coeur plein de son beau lac natal:
'Eau, quand donc pleuvras-tu? quand tonneras-tu, foudre?'
Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal ....[55]

This transformation can be understood as the effect that the hegemonic form of life has on the poet, who feels his being as an absence (a negation), that of a lost majesty, while he finds himself locked in a cage. This explains the contrast between the figure of the poet as a hero or prince and the opposite, that of the useless, guilty and ashamed. The poet, like any subject deprived of his power to be who he is, is ashamed of himself for betraying his own ontological principle. This deprivation is a recurrent motive throughout his work and life. In 'Le cygne', he expresses it as an impossibility and compares it to the experience of being defeated, held captive, forgotten on an island, and so on. The poet conveys a constant state of crisis that never turns into conversion, which is why he speaks of his 'exiled soul'. The impossibility of his being is the result of an external imposition (captive, defeated, forgotten...), it is never felt as a demand of his consciousness:

Of all those who have lost something they may not find
Ever, ever again! who steep themselves in tears
And suck a bitter milk from that good she-wolf, grief!
Of orphans, skin and bones, dry and wasted blooms!

And likewise in the forest of my exiled soul
Old Memory sings out a full note of the horn!
I think of sailors left forgotten on an isle,
Of captives, the defeated ... many others more![56]

À quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve
Jamais, jamais! à ceux qui s'abreuvent de pleurs
Et tétent la Douleur comme une bonne louve!
Aux maigres orphelins séchant comme des fleurs!

Ainsi dans la forêt où mon esprit s'exile
Un vieux Souvenir sonne à plein souffle du cor!
Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île,
Aux captifs, aux vaincus!... à bien d'autres encor![57]

55 *Ibid*., pp. 172, 174.
56 *Ibid*., p. 177.
57 *Ibid*., p. 176.

However, many others have also been deprived (denied) of their form of life, hence the poet identifies with them, even becoming a representative of those other young people of his generation insofar as they have in common that they have been denied by the bourgeois regime of Louis-Philippe. Thus, in the eleventh chapter of *Salon of 1846*, on Horace Vernet, he expresses what for some is his communion with revolutionary France, but which in any case is his union with those who have been displaced and are seeking to take their place in society:

> Nevertheless it is not imprudent to be brutal and go straight to the heart of the matter, when at each sentence the *I* covers a *we*, an immense *we*, a silent and invisible *we*,—*we* an entire new generation, an enemy of war and national follies; a generation bursting with health, because it is young, and already shoving its way along, elbowing in and making a space for itself,—serious, mocking and menacing![58]

In some instances, this 'we' seems to identify with the crowd, with the poet's ability to slip through the skin and bones of others.[59] But, in this particular passage, he refers to his generation, to those who are silent and invisible. These could not be the bourgeois, who were integrated as professionals or businessmen. That 'we' rather brings together those poets and artists who were somehow out of place in a society devoted to material utility and economic maximization; poets and artists who were invisible precisely because they had not yet entered into capitalist totalization, like other groups such as the poor and certain workers. The poet clearly expresses his identification with a community whose members have the same feelings as him of being redundant, and the same attitude of perseverance in a way of being that resists being assimilated by the hegemonic form of life.

58 Quoted in Oehler, 'Baudelaire's Politics', p. 18. The original reads: 'Cependant il n'est pas imprudent d'être brutal et d'aller droit au fait, quand à chaque phrase le *je* couvre un *nous*, *nous* immense, *nous* silencieux et invisible,—*nous*, toute une génération nouvelle, ennemie de la guerre et des sottises nationales; une génération pleine de santé, parce qu'elle est jeune, et qui pousse déjà à la queue, coudoie et fait ses trous,—sérieuse, railleuse et menaçante!'

59 Compare the prose poem 'Crowds' in Baudelaire's *Paris Spleen*: 'The poet enjoys this incomparable privilege, that he can be, just as he likes, either himself or someone else' (p. 22).

3. Artistic Form of Life, Power and Resistance under Capitalism

The power of the hegemonic form of life falls on everyone. In this sense, it is worth stopping to reflect on how we should understand the concept of power with respect to the above processes. Patrick Greaney has studied the issue of power in relation to the social classes of the nineteenth century. Taking Aristotle's conception and Martin Heidegger's interpretation of it, he suggests that power is always relational, that is, a relationship between two powers: one power that seeks to produce change and the other power that resists that change. That is to say, power is defined from the Aristotelian notion of *dunamis*. Power is the capacity to change or resist:

> A power is the archē, the origin that contains within it the relation to 'another' in which it effects a change or transposition. This will be the central, guiding definition for Aristotle and Heidegger, and it shows how power is always relational [...] But Heidegger argues that, for Aristotle, another relation is more essential: the relation between a power that suffers change and a power that resists change [...] In Heidegger's interpretation, Aristotle's emphasis on suffering and resisting power directs our attention differently and orients it according to the experience of power, in which 'that which resists is the first and most familiar form in which we experience a power'.[60]

Despite being denied by society, the power of the poor is in resisting, in not being assimilated (power to remain what they are, survivors or subjects of an austere life, not maximizers). A distinction must be made between the poor and the workers within the crowd. Workers have already been assimilated at an earlier stage of the universalization process. They are already useful to the capitalist form of life (as it has been shown in Chapter 6). The poor still resist, they are denied but remain on the margins. In that sense, they show their power, the power to persevere in their being against the imposition of an external power, because, as Greaney says following Heidegger, 'suffering and resisting powers are inseparable in a way that bears witness to how power is primarily a relation among powers'.[61]

60 Patrick Greaney, *Untimely Beggar: Poverty and Power from Baudelaire to Benjamin* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 3.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

This leads us to review more closely the definition of power that this conceptualization by Greaney contains. His discussion tries to understand power as an actual capacity, which according to Heidegger would be Aristotle's conception, and consists of conceiving an actual capacity—or power to exercise change and to resist—even when it is not enacted, that is, when it is not being exercised. His example is that of the potter, who always maintains his capacity to create vessels when he is not creating, and even if he loses his hands. The latter he calls an 'amputated power'. This conception would be in contrast to that of the philosophers of Megara, for whom when a capacity is not enacted, that capacity does not exist:

> For Heidegger, the definition of power must reserve a place for nonenactment, which can take three forms: interrupting one's work; finishing a project; or abandoning a project. In all three instances, the capability does not disappear but is withdrawn, and Aristotle insists on this as part of his argument against the hypothesis of the Megarians, who saw the actuality of a capability solely in its enactment and thus understood its nonenactment as its nonexistence. For Aristotle, a power that is not enacted is nonetheless actual, and this claim is crucial for understanding the power of those among the poor who are not productive.[62]

Taking these Heidegerian distinctions as a starting point, power exists as long as the capacity to change or resist exists. The poor and working people would retain that capacity even if it were prevented from being realized. But what do we mean by the power to change and resist? On the one hand, change can refer to both exerting a transformation on an object or on oneself as an object. On the other hand, to resist is to reject a change imposed by another subject. With regard to their capacity to change, what subjects preserve—and not only the poor and the working class—is the capacity to act in the world. But such action can only be according to their capacity, just like the potter as a potter has the capacity to create vessels and ceramics. The poor or the worker—or the artist or the capitalist—can only act according to their capacity. In other words, ability has to do with being. And in a way, it is the capacity that defines being. If the potter did not have the capacity to create vessels, he would not be a potter. If the survivor did not have the capacity to act as a

62 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

survivor, which might be represented by the poor; or the austere subject to act directed by the principle of austerity, which might be represented originally by the peasant and the worker,[63] they would not be who they are either. In other words, we are what we do, even if our capacity to do is not enacted. That is, we maintain our possibility of doing. One is the totality of one's own possibilities of action.

But we have also said that this capacity to change, as well as acting in the world, is also the capacity to change the subjects themselves. Therefore, the poor and the worker preserve at all times the capacity to change themselves. That is, the capacity to change the way they act in the world. So a different way of acting implies different capacities or possibilities, and those possibilities imply a transformation of their being. Thus, the potter can give himself (can acquire) the capacity to be an athlete as well. But are the capabilities always complementary or are there cases where the capabilities are exclusive? It could be said that there are capacities that are relatively incompatible in terms of the time needed to acquire them, such as that of being a great musician, a great scientist and a great writer simultaneously. But these changes are relative, *accidental* in Aristotelian terminology, and ultimately not exclusive. The changes that seem not to be able to be complementary are those that refer to substance, namely the so-called *substantial* changes. Thus, while the capacities of the potter are maintained when the potter is not performing his trade, and can acquire other capacities such as that of being an athlete, it is inconceivable that he can enact both capacities simultaneously. And yet, he can still be considered an athlete and a potter. In the so-called substantial changes this phenomenon does not seem possible. To be an athlete and a potter one must first be a human being. If one ceases to be a human being, one ceases to have the capacities of a human being. And one cannot be and not be at the same time. The subject always has the possibility of ceasing to be; a possibility that for Albert Camus was 'the only truly serious philosophical problem' (*Il n'y a qu'un problème philosophique vraiment sérieux: c'est le suicide*).[64] And therefore, in the onto-phenomenological sense that I have defended in this book, he also has the possibility of being a different human being.

63 By this I mean the capacity to act according to their form of life.

64 See Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* [*Le Mythe de Sisyphe*], trans. by Justin O'Brien (New York: Penguin Modern Classics, 1979 [1942]), p. 11.

That is, to stop being who he is in order to be someone else ('To die to live').[65] This is what we have studied as conversion. That change is exclusive, because it is the framework in which its relative possibilities appear. For an aristocrat of the small nobility, whose form of life was knowledge and culture, physical labour could not be counted among his possibilities, nor could he dedicate himself to the maximization of his profits—this latter will be typical of the small nobility of the second half of the century, when it has already entered into capitalist totalization.

Here the power of the subjects has to be related to such a change in the totality of their possibilities as well as to the resistance to an imposed change, for as Michel Foucault put it: 'Where there is power there is resistance.'[66] Before their assimilation by capital, the power of the peasants was to maintain their capacities as human beings whose principle was to lead an austere life, without working beyond necessity or aiming at anything other than the satisfaction of present needs, as shown by the sources discussed in the previous chapter on agricultural life. These capacities were denied by capitalism by imposing new capacities, i.e. a new being that replaced the being of austere life: the proletariat. The proletarians are already subjects of capitalist life in their being, in which they begin to integrate, intensifying and perfecting their capacities, just as a potter with more experience and training is a better potter—without ceasing to be a potter in the absence of training. This will come in a process of continuous integration (in progressive degrees of intensity) until the ultimate stage of neoliberal capitalism where, as shown above, every subject is at the same time an entrepreneur of himself and a maximizer of his properties in a global market (as a reified subject).

This leads us to examine briefly how the power of the hegemonic form of life changes the being of the other forms until they are assimilated into their own power. The power of the proletariat is thus not a power in relation to the necessary resistance to expansive capitalism, but is already a form denied in its original being and affirmed as being constituted by subjects maximizing their economic gains. This is in opposition to what Greaney seems to defend: 'It would be a misreading to conclude from this that the

65 Hegel's sentence quoted in Paterson, *Conversion*, p. 129.

66 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I: *An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 95.

two powers are identical, because the ontological unity of the relational being of power demands precisely the ontic discreteness and difference of beings.'[67] But in fact, it is not that the two powers are identical, but that the power of the capitalist form of life continues insofar as it preserves the workers as an assimilated group and therefore as a group over which the power to change their nature has already been exercised. That power is verified through the ability to maintain that change. Without capitalism, the proletariat would not exist, for it is the assimilation of a life governed by austerity. While such a life remains possible for those individuals who have not been assimilated, for the proletariat the only form of life possible is already that of maximizing economic profit with its body, time and effort. The difference lies in being integrated into such a capitalist totalization to a lesser degree than the middle class, for example, although it soon progresses within the mass society.

If we now take the perspective of the artistic form of life and its subjectivity, it could be said that the poet is both inside and outside this totalization. He is inside because his form of life is being progressively denied through the economic maximization of art. But he is outside because he is in resistance, for the preservation of his power, understood (as I have argued above) as the preservation of his being with respect to the imposed change (equal to a non-conversion). A resistance that, in Benjamin's opinion, is of an atrocious weight for the poet, so that he seems to understand that he lacks the strength to continue and even seeks refuge in the thought of death: 'Someone like Baudelaire could very well have viewed suicide as the only heroic act still available to the *multitudes maladives* of the cities in reactionary times.'[68] The resistance here means to resist the negation exercised by the modern form of life (capitalism), and that negation means the death of the poet or the turning of the poet into a living dead. The poet's death actually is the death of the poetry, the death of the Art incarnated by him as a form of life. For, according to Benjamin, the natural 'productive élan' is that 'poietic spirit' which constitutes the poet naturally or as his given nature.[69]

The denial of the poet's form of life is an insistence on the impossibility of living according to the principle of artistic self-expression in the

67 Greaney, *Untimely Beggar*, p. 4.
68 Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life*, pp. 104–05.
69 *Ibid*., p. 104.

midst of a community whose principle requires maximization, with the implication this has on values, feelings, trades, knowledge, and so on. This denial is always an attempt at assimilation. But as a denial, it affirms aspects of its constitutive negativity. That is, the negation of the artistic form of life implies the affirmation of its opposite under the principle of maximization. If the opposite of artistic self-expression—for, as said above, it is a way of endowing meaning through artistic expression—is automaticity and reproducibility, with the negation of the artistic form of life, capitalism affirms the reproducibility and automaticity of the work of art in what Benjamin will call the era of 'technological reproducibility of art', and the loss of its 'aura'. For Benjamin, the aura is precisely a distance between the subject and the work of art mediated by authority and tradition: 'A strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be [...] The uniqueness of the work of art is identical to its embeddedness in the context of tradition.'[70] The aura gives prestige to the work of art and power to the class that owns it. In other words, the aura, as that singularity confirmed by the aesthetic corpus created by the relevant authorities, represents the cultural and purchasing power of the middle class. The only one who can afford to acquire a Goya or a Rembrandt or a Rossetti. With the expansion of the middle class in mass society, the artist is denied and assimilated by the technological reproducibility of art from the middle of the century onwards. We could say that the technological reproduction of the work of art is the consequence of the negation of the class power. That is, the passage from auratic work of art to the reproduced work of art signals the passage from the middle class to the mass society as the incarnation of the capitalist form of life: from one way of maximization through the auratic perspective to the other one through the reproducibility.[71]

However, if the transition from auratic art to the art of technological reproducibility was already established by Benjamin, from the perspective opened up by our analysis of forms of life and its dialectics, several fundamental aspects must be noted that complete this conception. First, the establishment of the middle class as an incarnation

70 Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Vol. III: *1933–1938*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 104–05.

71 Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life*, p. 79.

of the capitalist form of life is a turning point. The middle class' form of life is established as the only possible way of being and acting, and no longer faces or denies the form of life of a particular class. From 1832 (its rise to political, judicial and cultural power), it progressively denies everything that is not it. Its denial extends to all corners of society, hence the omnipresent theme of the phobia of the non-bourgeois, of the strange. According to the necessity of the dialectical process of expansion through denial, universalization and assimilation, if in a previous moment it had denied the aristocracy, in the next moment it denies, among others, the artistic form of life and the life of survival of the poor. From these denials, the mass society is obtained, in which the capitalist form of life has been definitively adopted. The latter entails the denial of the middle class as a class and its affirmation as a universal form of life. The latter is seen in terms of the shared ontological principle of maximization and accumulation, which has to do with shared habits and aspirations visible in a certain homogenization of leisure, work, consumption, private life, etc.; in a word, what Ortega y Gasset called the mass-man, as already commented in Chapter 6 above.[72] It is at this point that the artist is denied, so that he is integrated into the capitalist totalization through its opposite, namely, material artistic replication through technologies such as photography and industrial art. This kills the ideal of the artist and makes him useful. At this point a distinction must be made between art as a form of life and art as a commercial activity and promotion of social status. The auratic distance to which Benjamin refers, according to this dialectic, would refer to a previous moment, to the denial of the aristocracy or small nobility. It should be noted that Baudelaire is ironic in *Salon of 1846*, when he suggests that the bourgeoisie needed knowledge of art:

> Now, you need art.
>
> Art is an infinitely precious commodity, a refreshing and warming drink that restores to the stomach and the mind the natural balance of the ideal.
>
> You can imagine its use, O bourgeois—you who are legislators or shopkeepers—when the hour of six or seven tolls and bends your weary head toward the coals of the fire or the cushions of the armchair...

72 José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* [*La rebelión de las masas*] (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1957 [1930]).

> Bourgeois, you have—you who are king, legislator or dealer—set up collections, museums, galleries. Some of those that sixteen years ago were open only to bailiffs have widened their doors to the multitude.[73]

For the appreciation and knowledge of art was a quality proper to the aristocracy, which incarnates the form of life of knowledge and culture (the intellectual form of life). And because of that knowledge and culture, it was respected as a superior class. With the capitalist negation by the middle class and its assimilation, aristocratic knowledge becomes an absence, for its opposite, namely, ignorance, is affirmed and put at the service of economic maximization. If the bourgeoisie maintains its appreciation of art, it does so through the mediation of aristocratic authority. The bourgeoisie acquires paintings, tapestries, rare books, but it does so from ignorance. That aura or distance with regard to the object of art that Benjamin attributes to the middle class, in reality, is a distance produced by ignorance. Baudelaire's recommendation in *Salon of 1846* is clear proof that the bourgeois acquired and learned about art in a superficial way as a mere gesture of empty power. What appears to be absent at this distance is the loss of knowledge and spiritual appreciation of art, which was characteristic of a literate, cultured and refined aristocracy. Therefore, the move towards reproducibility is a further stage in the loss of ideal appreciation of art. This converges with the denial of the artist who has now become part of the mass society, for whom he produces an art that is mimetic, automatic, reproducible and economically profitable. This is the moment when craft art becomes part of industrial chains and artistic objects of all kinds as lithographs are mass-produced and distributed through an incipient globalization.[74] Therefore, the process is not one of loss of aura in human experience from a bourgeois to a mass society, but rather a continuous process of

73 Oehler, 'Baudelaire's Politics', p. 16. The original reads: 'Or vous avez besoin d'art. L'art est un bien infiniment précieux, un breuvage rafraîchissant et réchauffant, qui rétablit l'estomac et l'esprit dans l'équilibre naturel de l'idéal. Vous en concevez l'utilité, ô bourgeois,—l´egislateurs, ou commerçants,—quand la septième ou la huitième heure sonnée incline votre tête fatiguée vers les braises du foyer et les oreillards du fauteuil... Bourgeois, vous avez—roi l´egislateur ou n´egociant,—institué des collections, des musées, des galeries. Quelques-unes de celles qui n'étaient ouvertes, il y a seize ans qu'aux accapareurs, ont élargi leurs portes pour la multitude.'

74 Peter Stearns, *Western Civilization in World History* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), p. 106.

alienation whose ultimate motivation is economic maximization, which feeds on ignorance and lack of interest in anything that is not immediately useful and productive (from the denial of aristocratic life and the assimilation of its opposite features by the bourgeoisie). Photography is thus more alienating than painting because it is reproducible and does not require training but only technical knowledge (how to use it for mechanical reproduction). This is the difference Theodor Adorno detected between art and the culture industry:

> The concept of technique in the culture industry is only in name identical with technique in works of art. In the latter, technique is concerned with the internal organization of the object itself, with its inner logic. In contrast, the technique of the culture industry is, from the beginning, one of distribution and mechanical reproduction, and therefore always remains external to its object.[75]

And even more so, this alienation derives from there being a transfer of the skills and autonomy of the human being—of the painter who made a portrait or immortalized an occasion with the strokes of his brush—to the machine, which ultimately makes the photo, becoming an appendage of the subject and the subject becoming dependent on it. The artist's alienation regarding the camera could be said to run parallel to that postulated by Marx in his *Grundrisse* about the worker and the machine:

> The worker's activity, limited to a mere abstraction, is determined and regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery, not the other way round. The knowledge that obliges the inanimate parts of the machine, through their construction, to work appropriately as an automaton, does not exist in the consciousness of the worker, but acts upon him through the machine as an alien force, as the power of the machine itself.[76]

Second, according to Benjamin, the auratic conception has to do with the long experience (*Erfahrung*), as indicated above. And he also claims that the auratic conception is the kind of experience that the bourgeoisie has with regard to art, as opposed to the isolated experiences that art in mass society promotes. However, from the perspective of forms of

75 Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 101.

76 Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 133.

life, the aura as a distance between the subject and the work of art is the distance created by their own ignorance of art and their consequent reliance on the artistic authority of the tradition (mainly the aristocrats). In any case, the long experience or auratic conception, as an experience of unity of meaning within a totality that can be called tradition, entails the expansion of a hegemonic form of life and implies isolated experiences only for those outside that form of life, for example, artists like Baudelaire. In this way, the long experience or the aura to which Benjamin refers can be considered lost only outside of capitalism. For the mass society that incarnates the capitalist form of life, its experience is auratic, because it receives meaning from its ontological principle: thus, the reproducibility of photographic art and lithographs makes perfect sense when it comes to maximizing economic profit and the accumulation of consumption. In short, that long experience is proper to every subject with regard to the possibilities of behaviour, values and feelings of their form of life. In contrast, the isolated experience (*Erlebnis*) would have to do with how the subjects perceive and relate to a hegemonic form of life that is imposed on them and denies them. This means that this isolated experience is proper to every subject with respect to another form of life. A proof of this can be found again in the phobia of the bourgeoisie with respect to the strange, as mentioned above.[77] In that social class and its form of life one could say that isolated experiences shaped its perception of what was opposite, or different, to it. But, contrary to what happened with poets, it avoided these experiences by distancing itself from opposing forms of life and their subjects, as Baudelaire vividly tells us in his prose poem 'Les yeux des pauvres' ('The Eyes of the Poor'). The poet's companion is annoyed when she realizes that as they sit outside a restaurant a family of poor people is looking on, their eyes full of longing; she asks the poet to make the waiter turn them away:

> I was not only moved by this family of eyes, but I felt a little ashamed of our glasses and carafes, so much bigger than our thirsts. I turned my gaze to your eyes, my love, in order to read *my* thoughts there; I plunged

77 Oehler, 'Baudelaire's Politics', pp. 24–25. This is a phobia that one can say is not exclusive to the bourgeoisie with respect to that which is different from itself, but to other forms of life as well, such as that of artists or intellectuals with respect to the capitalist form of life of the bourgeoisie, as has become evident in the last two chapters.

> deeply into your eyes, so beautiful and so bizarrely soft, into your green eyes, those eyes inhabited by Caprice and inspired by the Moon, and then you said to me: 'Those people over there are intolerable, with their eyes open wide as gates! Couldn't you ask the head waiter to get them out of here?'[78]

The experience for the accompanying lady has the characteristics of isolated experiences (*Erlebnis*). These are not part of the usual and traditional behaviour to which the lady is accustomed. They are experiences in a certain way traumatic, because they produce an immediate and spontaneous rejection in the subject. And above all, and combining the above, they are experiences constituted by their lack of meaning: the lady does not understand the attitude of the poor, and in a certain way, she does not understand the feeling that their attitude expresses. The poet is ashamed to be with her in that restaurant, where he says they are drinking beverages greater than their thirst; that is, drinks that do not try to satisfy a biological need, which would be the case for the poor. The poet, who is outside the capitalist totalization incarnated in the expansive bourgeoisie, can identify with those other forms of life that remain on the margins, in this case the survival form of life incarnated in the poor. For the poet, the isolated, incomprehensible, absurd experience outside the totalization in which he is involved as a subject is precisely that of the attitude of the lady, to whom he says he hates her: 'you want to know why it is that I hate you today. It will be, no doubt, harder for you to understand it than for me to explain it.'[79] That experience seems to make the poet realize that in a certain way he cannot love the subjects of that form of life incarnated in the lady who accompanies him. For that experience seems to reveal the abyss between the two. On the other hand, his relationship with the poor is no closer (as mentioned above). However, between them

78 Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*, p. 53. The original reads: 'Non seulement j'étais attendri par cette famille d'yeux, mais je me sentais un peu honteux de nos verres et de nos carafes, plus grands que notre soif. Je tournais mes regards vers les vôtres, cher amour, pour y lire ma pensée; je plongeais dans vos yeux si beaux et si bizarrement doux, dans vos yeux verts, habités par le Caprice et inspirés par la Lune, quand vous me dites: "Ces gens-là me sont insupportables avec leurs yeux ouverts comme des portes cochères! Ne pourriez-vous pas prier le maître du café de les éloigner d'ici?"', in Charles Baudelaire, *Petits poëmes en prose* (Paris: Louis Conard, 1927), p. 89.

79 Baudelaire, *Spleen of Paris*, p. 52.

there exists that invisible communion of subjects denied by capital as *déclassés*.

4. Conclusion

The forms of life respond to communities of subjects who identify with the same ontological principle. These communities are not necessarily social classes, although in some cases, as in the development of capitalist life, the opposite form, that of austerity, could be associated basically with peasants and artisans—but not exclusively, as there would be members of other social classes who would also identify with that form. In this sense, the chapter began by exploring the differences and similarities with the 'communities of feeling' postulated by Rosenwein: a group of individuals who share a way of feeling and valuing. These are also communities equally distinguishable from social classes. The discussion has helped me to establish the need for such communities to respond to an ontological principle or totalization. In fact, even if this principle is not identified, every community of feeling postulated by Rosenwein is based on an overall hypothesis. The forms of life would be these totalizations. For not only do they constitute consciousness a priori, but they are also in the world through their observable actions. The identification of the form of life in the actions that are the object of analysis is, therefore, inevitable if we want to establish the set or framework in which these actions make sense, since that framework is the condition of their possibility.

To this end, I have briefly examined the artistic form of life, as a particular way of being and acting in the world. And I have contrasted it with other forms, especially the capitalist one. I have focused on Baudelaire as the subject who incarnates this artistic form. My choice has been suggested by the fact that it is a topic on which Sartre expressed his thoughts, and this gives me the opportunity to extend my dialogue with him. In Baudelaire's actions, values and feelings, I have identified a totalization whose driving principle is the self-expression of one's own ideals. In this totalization, the poet becomes integrated while offering resistance to the hegemonic life to which he does not want to be assimilated as a useful and efficient subject, from the point of view of capitalist maximization. The latter has served me to show the

ontological structures and characteristics of the form of life and how the subjectivity of the subject depends on them. Subjectivity is born in a situation of assimilation-resistance with other forms with which it comes into contact as objects in the world. It is in these situations that the dialectical process of universalization through assimilation by the hegemonic form of life is triggered.

Conclusion

The purpose of this book has been to provide a holistic concept that overcomes the separation between subjectivity and intersubjectivity, between subjective identity or 'Self' and community identity or 'We'; when I say community I am referring mainly not to the social group but to the subjects with whom one shares a way of being and acting. Why seek to overcome this separation? The answer is that this separation, besides being unreal, seems to reflect a division between the sciences. On the one hand, the phenomenological tradition as well as the cognitive tradition and psychiatry have focused on the subject, his or her subjective world and his or her capacity to understand reality.[1] On the other hand, the social sciences by means of the empirical method have concentrated on the collective, that is, society, its uses and cultural traditions. The constitutive relationship between the subject and its collectivity has, however, received certain important contributions in the fields of anthropology and cultural phenomenology. Nonetheless, the relationship between the two has tended to be based on a blurred concept of culture with ill-defined limits, which is either reduced to individual experience without reference to a constitutive intersubjectivity, let alone a delimited community, or is understood as an abstract entity through

1 This affirmation can be qualified with the dialogue that I maintain in this final section with some authors attached to the phenomenological tradition, which proves that from Edmund Husserl onwards there is an effort to join subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Some authors consider the solipsism attributed to phenomenology as a prejudice. See Timothy Burns, 'Moran, Dermot and Szanto, Thomas (eds), *Phenomenology of Sociality: Discovering the "We"*, *Husserl Studies*, 32 (2016), 271–78 (p. 271). The latter does not detract from my statement that intersubjectivity is found in the subject's own consciousness. I clarify this in the following pages and conclude that the approach from the notion of the form of life as an ontological unit solves this problem, serving as a bridge between the subject and the world, consciousness and action.

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which the subject is absorbed, constrained or blindly manipulated (see the Introduction to this book).

Pursuing this line of research, the question reached a conception that would allow us to understand the subjects as fundamentally free with respect to their collectivity (so that they are not mere products of it, to which they would transfer all responsibility), while at the same time understanding the latter to be in an intrinsic relationship with the subjects, to the point of constituting them in their being and subjective identity. To do this, it was essential to submit the concepts of society and culture to criticism. Both are concepts that are so broad and ambiguous that they end up having no specific meaning. That is why they had to be redefined. And their redefinition had to be called by a different name so as not to be confused with the other. I believe that the notion of the form of life as an ontological unit solves this problem. Not only does it allow us to understand society as a conjunction of various forms of life under a predominant one, and culture as that form of life that becomes institutionalized, but it also serves as a bridge between the subject and the world, individual consciousness and shared actions. Therefore, the main task I have set myself in this book is to ground an ontology of forms of life in the phenomenological experience of our intersubjective self as a shared mode of being and acting in the world.

In Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy we find the term 'form of life' used as the totality of possible uses of language or as a set of possible language games for a community.[2] This concept of a form of life, in dialogue with the phenomenological tradition and in particular with Edmund Husserl's life-world,[3] has been defined, at first, as the totality of possible experiences for a subject in a particular community. With this definition of a form of life, I have come closer to Sartre's philosophy. From his phenomenological ontology and especially from his notion of the principle of the series, I have updated the definition of a form of life as the totality of the possible actions for a subject, taking into account that this totality constitutes the pre-reflective consciousness of the subject from which the series of possible actions emerge. Such a consciousness,

2 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), p. 226; David Kishik, *Wittgenstein's Form of Life* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 39.

3 Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970 [1936]), p. 142.

since following Martin Heidegger would be 'in the midst of the world',[4] would share with that world its principle or essence, taking into account that *world* here I take as facts and actions of a form of life, the facticity of the subject: 'The concept of "facticity" implies that an entity "within-the-world" has Being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its "destiny" with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world.'[5] So the subject takes from the world the essence of his consciousness or principle of being. Thus, according to Dan Zahavi, interpreting Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, that would be 'a world that moreover shouldn't be understood as the mere totality of positioned objects, or as the sum total of causal relations, but rather as the context of meaning that we are constantly situated within'.[6]

This has also been put in relation to Sartre's late notion of the universal singular, whereby each subject would be an incarnation of his world, in a historical and cultural sense. The notion of a form of life that I have arrived at in my preliminary research has allowed me to fuse the subject and his world into a single entity. The subject can be understood as the incarnation of a totalization defined by the series of its possible actions (or habits). This notion has allowed me to suggest a way to overcome the Sartrean dichotomy between consciousness and facticity,[7] reinterpreting them as meaning and action, and the form of life as the totality of possible meaningful actions. So, in a third element, that is, in the form of life, both elements find a synthesis that contains them, assumes them and defines them, while they constitute and express the former. The concept of the form of life as an onto-phenomenological unit has allowed me to rethink Sartre's philosophy, and in dialogue with him to draw the consequences for the study of subjectivity.

4 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001 [1927]). For the 'fundamental structure in Dasein: Being-in-the-world' (*In der Welt Sein*), see pp. 65, 78, 79, 154.

5 *Ibid*., p. 82.

6 Dan Zahavi, 'Phenomenology', in *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth Century Philosophy*, ed. by Dermot Moran (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 661–93 (p. 665).

7 For an analysis of Sartre's persistent dualism in *Being and Nothingness* and beyond in comparison with Merleau-Ponty's monism, see Mark Meyers, 'Liminality and the Problem of Being-in-the-World: Reflections on Sartre and Meleau-Ponty', *Sartre Studies International*, 14:1 (2008), 78–105.

1. With Sartre beyond Sartre

My rethinking of Sartre starts from the consideration of facticity or being-in-itself as human actions and deeds. The latter emerge from a consciousness, and therefore, do so with a meaning. They are meaningful actions. In other words, they are members of a series of possible actions and constitute part of a form of life. Thus, human facticity is never independent of consciousness and meaning, or what Sartre calls being-for-itself. The form of life as an enveloping totalization can only be being-in-itself-for-itself (see Chapter 1). In this way, every action stems from a form of life, and this implies that it is done with a meaning, even if it is pre-reflective. That is, actions are taken for granted, as the normal or natural way of behaving, by means of an attitude to which the actuality feature of what Husserl calls the natural attitude [*der natürlichen Einstellung*] can be extended:[8] 'As what confronts me, I continually find the one spatiotemporal actuality [*eine räumlich-zeitliche Wirklichkeit*] to which I belong like all other human beings who are to be found in it and who are related to it as I am. I find the "actuality" [*Wirklichkeit*] [...] *as a factually existent actuality* [*finde ich als daseiende*] *and also accept it as it presents itself to me as factually existent* [*wie sie sich mir gibt, auch als daseiende hin*].'[9] In this sense, the actions we do and perceive are all meaningful actions—as they arise from a subject identified with a form of life—and as habitual actions or habits are shared by a community. It is its 'general positing' [*der General thesis*].[10] This does not mean that we understand and identify with all the actions of our environment, but with all those that constitute our form of life, taking into account that, in our environment, there are subjects that incarnate other forms of life. That we understand them implies that we perform them normally or that we *feel* it is possible for us to perform them. But also, those actions that we experience confirm us in our form of life, that is, in our way of being and acting. On the contrary, if the actions are principled by a different form of life, we experience them as a threat to the way of being and acting with which we identify. This makes us consider them

8 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction*, Vol. II (The Hague, Boston and Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), §§ 27–33.

9 *Ibid*., pp. 56–57.

10 *Ibid*., p. 57.

as something incorrect or absurd. The 'actuality' [*Wirklichkeit*] that characterizes the natural attitude is therefore relative to a form of life.

To consider facticity to be always governed by an ontological principle, as part of a form of life, and therefore, as being-in-itself-for-itself, has proven to be an important turning point in the discussion on other aspects and themes of Sartrean philosophy. This shift, on the other hand, has been suggested in an incipient way in some of Sartre's texts, in which it is suggested that facticity can open up new possibilities for the subject, which implies an influence on the latter by facticity. However, this idea is questioned by his own philosophical conception of consciousness as freedom.

The turning point has been to put into brackets that, as Sartre argues, consciousness or being-for-itself surpasses reality or being-in-itself—which is based on the for-itself emerging from the in-itself, which is its foundation[11]—to emphasize that in the world of human affairs, the in-itself emerges from the for-itself (when the in-itself is understood in terms of action and habits) and is sustained by the latter. That is, the daily actions and behaviours of a community emerge from the pre-reflective consciousness of a totalization whose principle defines a way of being and acting. Or, in other words, a particular image of what it is to be human.

I have suggested that this turning point can be considered as such when it is understood under the notion of a form of life. Regarding the opening up of possibilities through the creation of facticity,[12] I have analyzed it within the paradigm of ontological conversion. For the creation of facticity means exposing the subject to actions whose governing principle is different or opposite to that with which the subject identifies. The latter deny the subject in his being, and it is the condition of possibility of change through doubt and the eventual understanding of the impossibility of his being, which triggers the conversion. I have studied the latter under the aspects of social conditioning and imitation. To do so, I have explored the way in which imitation works to unite

11 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956 [1943]): 'A being which contingent as being-in-itself, would be the foundation of its own nothingness' (p. 80).

12 Juliette Simont, 'Sartrean Ethics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, ed. by Christina Howells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 178–212 (p. 193).

and confirm in their identity the subjects of a community that shares a form of life or anthropical image. I have tried to show that subjects only imitate those behaviours with which they identify. And that if the latter does not occur, neither does imitation. In imitation, the subjects merely reproduce or play out the behaviour imposed on them. The consideration of the form of life as an ontological unit is what has allowed me to analyze these aspects in dialogue with Sartre. It has been the window from which this book has looked at the relationship between individuals and their human environment, as well as their subjectivity.

The consideration of the form of life as in-itself-for-itself, or the totality of actions with meaning for a subject/community, puts us in the position of questioning whether facticity is something merely exterior that constrains us or some inner element from which we depart, such as character.[13] Facticity as part of a form of life, can either affirm and sustain the integration of the subjects into their form of life, in a gradual process of greater identification with their principle, or it can, on the contrary, deny and prevent the subjects from realizing themselves by integrating into their form of life. The latter happens when the facticity that surrounds them—in the middle of which are the subjects—is principled by an opposite form of life. In this last case, the constriction of movements, or even the imposition of behaviours with which the subjects do not identify themselves, means the denial and rejection of their ontological principle. That is, if their freedom is not denied, the product of their freedom is denied, which implies the negation of the subjects themselves. This has been exemplified by the Jewish form of life, that of intellectuals, peasants, artists, and so on. Such a denial is, in a word, the denial of one's own subjectivity.

The discussion with Sartre on this aspect has involved other authors such as Simone de Beauvoir, and other issues such as freedom and authenticity. Understanding the world of the subject as a form of life also sheds light on these issues. Because the actions of the subjects arise from their consciousness, they are performed freely and spontaneously. Authenticity is not acting as if one is nothing, that is, detached from any ontological foundation and deterministic attitude, which, according to Sartre, leads to bad faith. Authenticity would be acting freely and

13 For a discussion of character as facticity, see Jonathan Webber, *The Existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 16–29.

spontaneously in relation to the being that the subjects have given to themselves. And, for the same reason, authenticity is to change behaviour if the subjects experience a crisis in which they apprehend their previous form of life as impossible or undesirable. This seems a small twist, but its consequences are quite significant. First of all, according to this, the subjects, although free, impose on themselves a way of being and acting, which from that moment on determines their habits, feelings and values, that is, their subjectivity. Secondly, such self-determination is authentic, because otherwise we would be calling 'inauthentic' the way of being and acting with which the subjects identify themselves, and therefore, with which they freely express their being. Thirdly, subjects, if essentially free and therefore without a specific human nature, endow themselves with a particular being. And with that endowment, a new world appears before them. An individual who does not give himself being pre-reflectively cannot be a subject, because without totality there are no parts. Being is the totality of meaningful actions that are made dependent on a particular image of human being. Every subject, in order to be, identifies with an image of human being or anthropical image. Therefore, it cannot be said with Sartre, that we are not what we are, and we are, what we are not.[14] The latter implies an essentiality of non-being, something that goes against his own philosophy: 'despite his desire to accord nothingness a kind of unreal purity or negativity, it nonetheless functions as a "something"'.[15] From this ontology of forms of life, we must rectify this thought by stating instead that, in any case, we are what we are, and while we are, we cannot be otherwise. But we must not forget that our being is what we have imposed ourselves to be, because we have identified with the form of life that was possibly incarnated by the individuals in our environment, or perhaps only one of the individuals, of whom we say that he left his mark on us. This does not mean that we are not the being that we freely have self-imposed. It only means that we self-imposed a different one before—and between then and now we simply are the possibility to be something else. As

14 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*. The quote is specifically about for-itself as the consciousness of the subject: 'Yet the for-itself is. It is, we may say, even if it is a being which is not what it is and which is what it is not' (p. 79). In *L'être et le néant:* 'le pour-soi est. Il est, dira-t-on, fût-ce à titre d'être qui n'est pas ce qu'il est et qui est ce qu'il n'est pas' (p. 115).

15 Meyers, 'Liminality and the Problem of Being-in-the-World', p. 82.

being is to incarnate a form of life, to be different is to have incarnated a different form through ontological conversion. It does not mean that essentially we are *nothing*, in the Sartrean sense. It means that our being is always at the same time the possibility of being another. In fact, it is only because we are *something* that we can be different.

Thus the ontological notion of the form of life has made possible a new understanding. We are always *someone* with a particular way of being and acting.[16] As an incarnation of a form of life, we are always a shared consciousness; that is, a totalization shared by all the subjects of the community or co-subjects with whom we equally identify. And furthermore, a shared way of acting emerged out of that consciousness in its totalization. Therefore, our consciousness has content, namely, the series of possible actions determined by the ontological principle that drives the totalization. Conversion, as some religious theorists and mystics have asserted, for example J. Krishnamurti, means an elimination of the previous consciousness as a whole and the creation of a new—for them, higher—consciousness,[17] the beginning of a new totalization. Krishnamurti put it as follows: 'The content makes consciousness. Therefore, when there is total transformation of the content there is a different kind of—I won't call it consciousness—a different level altogether.'[18]

One might ask, however, whether this anthropical image that constitutes consciousness as a whole might not be a kind of recovery of Husserl's transcendental ego, but extended to the community. This is an aspect that I have not examined throughout this book, and which deserves separate study. If, in the first instance, it could be said that both aspire to reveal the foundation of subjectivity, certainly it would not be a mere restitution of the transcendental ego. The latter responds to Husserl's attempt, at least in his *The Crisis of European Sciences*

16 Thus, we cannot be *nothing* and, in fact, we are always *something*. Our nothingness, in any case, is our possibility of being and being as possibility. Its negation as a possibility of being determines our particular being, although its negation as a mere possibility (being as possibility) would result in our impossibility of being at all, our ceasing to exist. We are necessary possibilities or, to put it another way, possibilities that we have made necessary for us.

17 Gretchen Siegler, 'The Process of Conversion: A Transformation of Consciousness', *Anthropology of Consciousness* 4:3 (1993), 10–13.

18 J. Krishnamurti, *Total Freedom: The Essential Krishnamurti* (Krishnamurti Foundation of America, 1996), p. 232.

and Transcendental Phenomenology (1936), to base the life-world on a transcendental totality. That totality would be the condition of possibility of all subjective experiences and even of science itself:

> It is the motif of enquiring back [*das Motiv des Rückfragens*] into the ultimate source of all the formations of knowledge, the motif of the knower's reflecting upon himself and his knowing life [*des Sichbesinnens des Erkennenden auf sich selbst und sein erkennendes Leben*] in which all the scientific structures that are valid for him occur purposefully, are stored up as acquisitions.[19]

Therefore, this transcendental ego would constitute the origin and possibility of human knowledge, because 'Husserl's (transcendental) phenomenology [...] has often been seen as an attempt to thematize the pure and invariant conditions of cognition.'[20] In this last sense, the anthropical image is at a remarkable distance from the transcendental ego. To begin with, the foundation is not knowledge but practice. However, in the sense of being the condition of possibility of human experiences, or of the life-world, one must recognize their similarities to each other. Some commentators discuss whether Husserl contemplated the possibility of different life-worlds and not just one,[21] and in his last writings, of course, he referred to a transcendental intersubjectivity. However, 'despite Husserl's emphasis in the *Crisis* on the communal, intersubjective life-world, he never abandons his commitment to the *ontological priority of the transcendental ego* as that which constitutes world and hence has primacy over the world'.[22] In the latter case, the anthropical image would have a similar function as an enabler of the experiences of particular forms of life. But, for that very reason, the transcendental ego would be above the anthropical image insofar as it would determine the latter as the hard core or essence of the human being. The anthropical image would not be a transcendental ego, but one of the possible transcendental egos, that is, one of the possible

19 Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 98.
20 Zahavi, 'Phenomenology', p. 664.
21 Dermot Moran, *Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 201–03.
22 *Ibid*., p. 230. For a discussion on this topic, see also, Julia Jansen, 'Transcendental Philosophy and the Problem of Necessity in a Contingent World', *Metodo: International Studies in Phenomenology and Philosophy*, Special Issue, 1 (2015), 47–80.

images of human beings, which implies determining their ontological principle and constitutive habits.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the anthropical image is not strictly a transcendental ego. The former is an image of what is conceived as proper to human beings by a community, and therefore, the sum of the possibilities of human behaviour. For this reason, it is aligned with Sartre's criticism of Husserl.[23] The ego emerges in the reflective consciousness. In contrast, the anthropical image constitutes the pre-reflective consciousness, as a whole from which the 'I' or ego emerges. That is, the first is the condition of possibility of the second. For the recognition of oneself ('I') presupposes that totalization which one incarnates. Thus, in 'I am I', the second 'I' is the concreteness of what in the first is a set of possibilities on which one reflects. These possibilities are a particular framework in which the 'I' appears to stand out, as the one who acts in the world in a particular way. I become aware of myself as an actualization of a shared way of being and acting with which there has been a pre-reflective identification. Without the latter, there would be no 'I' acting in the world. The 'I' is an actualization of what I take as belonging to human beings in terms of praxis—from which attitudes, emotions and values derive. And for this reason, it implies a reflective consciousness about that whole.

What I said above and discussed during the book leads me to admit two presumably contradictory propositions. On the one hand, consciousness is free, in Sartre's sense, and has no content of its own. On the other hand, consciousness has contents that it gives to itself and that come from its being in the world. The contents are the series of possible actions governed by a unitary principle. These contents shape consciousness, but they are not exclusive contents of consciousness because they are in the world, i.e., the behaviours of the community. The anthropical image, as a totalization, principles the behaviours and therefore it is inside and outside; it is consciousness and it is *its* world. The freedom of consciousness, as it has been said throughout the book, is committed to an anthropical image, which is constituted as the subject's way of being and acting and, therefore, determines the praxical

23 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness* [*La transcendance de l'Ego: Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique*], trans. by Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: Hill & Wang, 1991 [1957]). The original French version appeared in *Recherches Philosophiques*, VI (1936–37).

images that emerge from it and those that it recognizes with meaning in the world (genuine experiences, or *Erfahrung*). These remarks on the anthropical image definitely move it away from Husserl's transcendental ego. And on the other hand, its constitution as subjectivity, that is, as the ensemble of possible contents of consciousness, separates me from Sartre. The anthropical image is both identity—possible contents regarding human behaviour in the world—and unity—ensemble or totalization regarding a constitutive principle.[24] For consciousness and *our* world, that which we share with a community—as created by our actions—are one and the same thing: a form of life. And this is why changes in one affect the other.

These last lines show how the notion of a form of life also suggests the possibility of overcoming the Sartrean dichotomy of the individual and the other or the social group. It is no longer an intuition of intersubjectivity through the individual's own consciousness—as in the example of the jealousy-motivated peep-hole observer, which implies something to see behind the door and the object of someone's jealousy—but that intersubjectivity is based on a shared way of being and acting.[25] This makes the Sartrean notion of life projects exclusively an individual phenomenon. In contrast, the form of life as a totalization is based on an ontological principle that guides the series of actions. And while this principle is that of a particular way of being human, it has an intersubjective foundation. In other words, my being human depends on the fact that others are also human, and being human implies being and acting in that particular way.

The totalization in which the subject is integrated is the same as that in which the other co-subjects are integrated. And therefore, the actions, feelings and values that emerge from it are equally shared. In fact, it is in the actions and expressions of the subjects that totalization is apprehended. Subjects identify with it, but at the same time they separate themselves from the subjects of the other totalizations. The latter was hardly analyzed by Sartre, who thought that totalization was historical and in it all individuals from all social groups were

24 For an accurate analysis of similarities and differences between Sartre's and Husserl's conceptions of the Ego, see Roland Breeur, 'Bergson's and Sartre's Account of the Self in Relation to the Transcendental Ego', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 9:2 (2001), 177–98, https://doi.org/10.1080/09672550110035899.

25 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 259–60.

integrated. By separating communities according to their form of life, as a series of actions governed by a unitary principle, the subjectivity of each community stands out above that amorphous mass that is culture and historical epoch, which Sartre makes incarnate in each individual. Thus, the form of life opens up the way not only for the analysis of limited communities within society or culture, but also allows us to see the struggle between forms of life to persist in their being and become universal, which affects one's own subjectivity. The latter enters into a situation of resistance-assimilation with those around it, which once again shows the plurality of ways of being and acting. The latter distances itself from notions such as Hannah Arendt's 'actualized plurality', in which social life is considered a plurality of perspectives on a common world:

> Actualized plurality, explicated phenomenologically, means the plurality of irreducible perspectives on a common world as the interacting articulation and disclosure of each one's being-a-perspective, and at the same time, the constant actualization and establishment of a space of appearance and, thus, of a common world, which is the medium and background of this disclosure.[26]

This description loses sight of the character of struggle between forms of life, which are not mere perspectives on a shared world, but rather irreconcilable positions that create and impose a world of their own by assimilating other forms. Moreover, the influence of the dialectical relationship between subjectivities seems to be lost sight of, since my subjectivity is also the way I persist in my own being and resist other forms. The common world would in any case be a common boundary, within which communities persist and seek to universalize themselves. It is the form of life that triumphs that creates a common subjectivity, from which individual idiosyncrasies emerge as variations. It is this common subjectivity that becomes universal as a human being's way of being and acting. All empathy is strictly reduced to that between co-subjects, contrary to Edith Stein's broader concept of empathy, which 'is for her an experience of foreign consciousness in general'.[27] If this

26 Sophie Loidolt, 'Hannah Arendt's Conception of Actualized Plurality', in *Phenomenology of Sociality: Discovering the 'We'*, ed. by Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 42–55 (p. 53).

27 James Risser, 'Locating Shared Life in the "Thou": Some Historical and Thematic Considerations', in *The Phenomenology of Sociality: Discovering the We*, ed. by

seems unreal to us at first, it is because we think from a universalized subjectivity such as capitalism. The lack of empathy with other forms of life on the part of the hegemonic form throughout history, from the expansion of the great empires and the colonizations of past centuries to the contemporary perspectives on immigrants and refugees, is proof of this insight. There is no empathy for the Other (who is outside of our anthropical image), there is denial and assimilation.[28] That is, there would only be empathy when there is assimilation. As a consequence, the broadening of empathy seems to require the universalization of a form of life, making those on the margins integrate as subjects, ceasing to be what they were, that is, seeking their ontological conversion.[29]

Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 29–41. See also Edith Stein, *The Collected Works*, Vol. III: *On the Problem of Empathy* (Washington: ICS Publications, 1989). Empathy, for her, includes the notion of socio-communicative or social acts (*soziale Akte*, *soziale Stellungnahmen*), such as promises, orders or requests; see Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran, 'Introduction: Empathy and Collective Intentionality: The Social Philosophy of Edith Stein', *Human Studies*, 38:4 (2015), 445–61. However, the latter can only have an effect between subjects, i.e., between members of a community, with whose form of life they identify and in which they are integrated. An effective promise is not extended to/required from members whose form of life is different, because their values, feelings and habits are ignored: unless it is assumed that they are subjects, without being subjects. The latter I have shown to be an attempt at assimilation to one's own form of life, putting both forms in a situation of assimilation-resistance.

28 This is even more evident in the case of emotions. The subjectivity of one form of life is different from that of another and that means that its feelings and emotional expression are different. This issue has been explored by the historians of emotions. See Peter Stearns and Susan Matt, eds, *Doing Emotions History* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2014). A paradigmatic case has been for decades the form of emotional expression of the Chinese people, who, precisely because they do not express their emotions like Westerners, have been considered as emotionless: see Norman Kutcher, 'The Skein of Chinese Emotions History', in *Doing Emotions History*, ed. by Stearns and Matt, pp. 57–73. Emotions such as Japanese *amae* are also difficult to translate into the hegemonic Western form of life. *Amae* is 'a propensity to 'depend or presume upon another's love'. See Robert C. Solomon, ed., *Thinking About Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 39.

29 In this regard, the bibliography on the conquest of America is interesting, especially Enrique Dussel's book, *1492: El encubrimiento del otro: Hacia el origen del mito de la modernidad* (Madrid: Nueva Utopía, 1992), in which he explains precisely how the conquering Europeans assimilated to their own form of life what was foreign and 'inhuman' to them, facilitating the conversion of the natives (here 'assimilation' is used in the sense given to that term in this book, that is, the negation of a different form and the posit of it as part of the way it enters into a situation of resistance). Dussel calls this the 'encubrimiento' ('concealment'), which is opposed to the recognition and acceptance of a different form of life. This recognition, from the ontological phenomenology presented in this book, would imply a conversion of

2. Phenomenological Ontology and Subjectivity

The essentialist and universalist study of the human being proper to philosophical anthropology and, for some, to transcendental phenomenology,[30] takes for 'form' what corresponds to 'life', and for 'life" what corresponds to 'form'. Life refers to the vital conditions shared by all human beings, such as that we are born, die, feel, act, value, identify with a group, etc. Form refers to when and how we are born and die, what we feel, how we act, what we value, with which group we identify, and so on. The anthropological philosophy with its Enlightenment roots takes the form of the human being as universal, and life as something particular in relation to diverse peoples. Thus Kantian anthropology can attribute to the subject the hypostatic traits of rationality, morality, freedom, emotions, and so on. Such traits would constitute the form of every human being, so morality, freedom, emotions and rationality are univocal attributes. That is, there is only one way of being moral, free, rational, and so on. On the contrary, the phenomenological ontology takes life as universal, what Sartre calls the 'condition of human beings': 'What men have in common is not a "nature" but a condition, that is, an ensemble of limits and restrictions: the inevitability of death, the necessity of working for a living, of living in a world already inhabited by other men.'[31] And it takes the form as particular, insofar as it is only the universal form of a particular community. A philosophical anthropology such as the Enlightenment that reverses the terms can only lead to a homogenization of the life of the various communities. Such homogenization is proper to a form of life that has become hegemonic and imposes its image of human being, that is, its form, on all others.

Therefore, I have defended throughout this book that subjectivity, i.e., the attitudes, habits, feelings and values of the subjects, is relative to a form of life—which is not simply interchangeable with culture or

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the subject, not a situation of acceptance and coexistence, because every attempt at denial is followed by one of resistance, and every form of life is a denial of the others as a posited way of being human.

30 For a qualification to this common claim, on the other hand, see Zahavi, 'Phenomenology', p. 663.

31 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. by George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1976 [1944]), pp. 42–43.

society. This, on the one hand, rules out its extension to a universal human being, since subjectivity is rather specific to each community. But, on the other hand, it also rejects that subjectivity is an essentially individual and differentiating phenomenon, for the subject shares with his community the form of life that he incarnates. This has led me to analyze forms of life both through a single subject, as in the case of Charles Baudelaire's, and through a whole community, even a social class, such as the middle class or the aristocracy. However, I have not stopped to examine the idiosyncratic differences that the form of life incarnated in one subject might exhibit with respect to another subject. The reason for not having pursued such a procedure is that the time was not right. In this book, as I said above, I have set out to define, show and characterize the forms of life that the subjects incarnate and share. Making a comparison between different individuals in order to detect idiosyncratic variations requires another space, and indeed another motivation. The current book is not about the study of an individual subject but about the form of life incarnated. The variations on the form are understood a priori as proof of the existence of the form. However, as I say, a further approach could (and should) show these variations. The advantage of a later study is that the variations are not diluted as isolated individual characteristics or, worse, as individual entities outside the form of life they share and incarnate. The latter would be their condition of possibility, and therefore can be considered a transcendental notion proper to phenomenology, for

> this move from a straightforward metaphysical or empirical investigation of objects to an investigation of the very dimension of manifestation, i.e. to an exploration of the very framework of meaning and intelligibility that makes any such straightforward investigation possible in the first place, calls for a transcendental stance quite unlike the one needed in the positive sciences.[32]

But at the same time, as long as the form of life is constituted as the facticity that surrounds the subject and to which he is exposed, it would also be an existential notion, that is, verifiable in observable facts. And this in the sense that Maurice Merleau-Ponty affirmed: 'inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly

32 Zahavi, 'Phenomenology', p. 671.

outside myself [*le monde est tout au dedans et je suis tout hors de moi*].'[33] Therefore, the form of life as a notion reveals the indissoluble connection that exists between our actions and the anthropical image or ontological principle with which we identify. Both require parallel studies, from what we do to what we are (to what we have become), which is to reveal its framework and structure as a condition of possibility; and from what we are to what we do (to what we aspire to be), which is to ratify the unity and meaning of the actions that constitute the world in which we are (the form of life as meaningful facticity).

What I have dealt with in part in this book is to show not the internal variations but the oppositions with respect to other forms of life, especially with the hegemonic form of life, and how the relationship between them is given in situations of assimilation-resistance. This relationship seems very exclusive, and I could be asked if there is not another possible relationship between the forms of life, for example, a relationship of cooperation.

If by cooperation we mean resisting the same hegemonic form together, then we could grant some cooperation. But it must be borne in mind that such cooperation would already be absorbed in a relationship of resistance-assimilation. And therefore, the opposing forms of life would have their own ends, even if they coincide in resisting. In fact, to resist is for each one to insist on its own ends, to persist in its being. On the other hand, cooperation takes place between co-subjects of the same form of life; such cooperation must be understood as a free and spontaneous activity with respect to a common end. Co-subjects cooperate in persisting in their being. If their aim is to live austerely in a collective life where goods are distributed in common, cooperation will be both to prevent individualistic behaviour and to escape from the maximization and accumulation of goods. And if the aim is individual economic maximization, to cooperate will be to maintain the possibilities of individual maximization through rules, norms and referees. The subject or community that is driven by a principle of maximization that is not individual, but collective or individual of state, will not cooperate with respect to the end of individual economic maximization. On the contrary, they will enter into a situation of resistance-assimilation.

33 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1945]), p. 474. In *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 467.

The latter is consistent with the line of research carried out in this book. I have shown that the subjectivities of the forms of life analyzed are not only diverse among them but also opposite. Thus, they deny each other in their ontological principles, and therefore in their being. The subjects of the artistic form of life experience themselves as being deprived by a world where the hegemonic form of life does not allow them to express their being. That deprivation translates into existential anguish or *Spleen*, and possibly into doubt about the very possibility of their being. We have exemplified this with Baudelaire's subjectivity through his poems, letters and diaries. In the same way, Baudelaire's attitude of complacency in being useless to capitalist society is an attitude of resistance in itself. Intellectuals, as has been shown, by the same time, also resisted the hegemonic capitalist form of life which threatened to assimilate them to its principle of economic maximization. Their resistance was not so much uselessness as the assimilation of other individuals to their form of life, which was based on knowledge and the formation of character. This resistance, however, kept them socially marginalized in the academic domain of universities and schools where, as it has been said, their form of life became universal in a certain community. With them, the figure of the intellectual was created. This figure could even be identified with later writers such as Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin and Sartre. This could lead us to study in a future investigation how these intellectuals and others are assimilated, or enter into a situation of assimilation-resistance, by forms of life such as those propagated by communism as state capitalism (or individual maximization of the state) or collectivism (collective maximization).

Assimilations such as the one mentioned above have been exemplified by the absorption of the austere form of life typical of peasants and artisans by the capitalist form of economic maximization of labour force, time, family, etc. In these assimilations what is shown is the change of subjectivity and, subsidiarily, social change. I have insisted that the change of subjectivity is experienced as an identity crisis, since it is an ontological conversion. In this sense, I have extended the concept of conversion in keeping with the existentialist concept. One could ask, however, whether the change of subjectivity is always due to an assimilation by another form of life. The answer would be yes on the one hand, and no on the other. In other words, every conversion, by definition,

is the passage from one form of life to another, and therefore the subject that is converted is assimilated by the form of life in which he begins to integrate. The question would be whether this assimilation comes from a relationship of resistance-assimilation. We have seen examples in which subjects have understood the impossibility of their form of life and the need or demand for change, but we have not analyzed the context or situation in which this demand has occurred. In those cases, such as conversion to a form of religious life, it is presumable that exposure to that form has conditioned the conversion of the subject. Other paradigmatic cases have shown that conversion depended on the denial of one's own form of life by itself, in the sense that in a given situation the subject understands that pursuing his ends leads him precisely to embrace opposite ends: the licentious person becomes a spiritual man, the honest man becomes dishonest, and the criminal becomes a hero. These changes, if analyzed from the perspective reached at the end of the book, in a moment of meditation after the journey travelled, can also be understood as a certain situation of resistance-assimilation; certainly not between forms of life in contact, but between the subject's form of life and its negative constituent. So, every subject who maximizes flees from an austere life, and those who live for God by leading a religious life, flee from living selfishly by maximizing their own benefits, and those who live artistically by self-expression of their aesthetic ideals, flee from the life of mechanical reproducibility and the representation/copying of reality. The examples could be extended, but these are sufficient. The important thing is to remark that the passage from one form of life to its opposite, from which one flees, is also a certain assimilation. In this case, it is the subjects themselves who, faced with the dissatisfaction of their own form of life, come to understand the impossibility of continuing to live in that way and seek a new possibility in their constitutive opposite.

If conversion is experienced by the subjects as a crisis in terms of the impossibility of their way of being and acting, I have insisted that this impossibility gives way to the understanding of a new possibility, which is the form of life that denies the subject. But this denial of the subject's being when it is conditioned by a form of life with which it comes into contact is understood as the affirmation of the opposite principle. The subject is integrated into a new form of life, with a different principle, and does so from the opposite of his previous principle. We have given

as an example the artist, who, denied in his being, integrates himself into the capitalist life as an economic maximizer through the opposite of his artistic form (the artistic self-expression of some ideals), that is, through the reproducibility of art and the representation of the environment. This can be questioned from the natural attitude, that is, from the one that stays away from the conditions of possibility of change. The natural attitude could make us say that when the subjects convert or leave their form of life, firstly they do not change ontologically, and secondly, even if their subjectivity changes, there is a continuity with respect to their previous one. It would eventually be the same person, the same subject with acquired traits. In this interpretation, the core that would be maintained through the possible changes would be a kind of substance or object. Hence, this can be considered the interpretation of a natural attitude towards the conversion of the subject and his subjectivity. In this attitude, what is hidden or remains hidden is the condition of possibility of such changes and the framework of meanings in which they occur. The subjects are not complete and closed entities but a totality of possible actions that they have given themselves. That is to say, a form of life. If conversion is obtained, there are not just mere changes over a complete entity or core, but the whole subject changes. The latter is transformed by giving himself a new way of being and acting. That is, by giving himself a new totalization in which to integrate. The transcendental structure is the form of life, which makes both subjectivity and conversion possible. In that sense, and only in that sense (for this would lead us to the disputed debate of the 'causa sui', which we will have to leave for another investigation), the subject transforms himself, as an incarnation of the in-itself-for-itself, corresponding to a change in the series of possible actions determined by an ontological principle.

With this book, therefore, I wanted to contribute to the study of subjectivity as experiences and attitudes determined by a form of life, freely and spontaneously adopted. Subjectivity thus understood is a challenge with respect to cognitive theories such as enactivism, in which the individual and his or her cognitive capacities tend to predominate, but it also puts to the test the theories of libertarian authors in the debate on free will, including Sartre himself, with whom I have been in dialogue throughout the book in his various themes. If Sartre's subjectivity consists of how the subject responds to facticity, in terms

of existential psychoanalysis, I have argued that subjectivity is how the subject incarnates and lives his form of life, including the negations by other forms with which he comes into contact. Some of the necessary possibilities of his form of life are found in the subject's experience, and therefore he could never have a spontaneous and free experience that was not a possibility determined by it. Here I have insisted that 'determined' refers to the possibilities necessary to that form of life. That is, it cannot be done, valued or felt in the way that in another form of life is considered necessary. The final equation can be put as follows: my form of life is my subjectivity. This could be questioned from the perspective of individual idiosyncrasy. But, as I have discussed above, and it has been addressed throughout the book, the individual constitutes variations on a common framework. Without that framework, there are no variations, and in fact, those variations, if pointed out and shown, would only prove the necessity of the framework. They add nothing significant about subjectivity, which is not individual, but that of a potential community, their way of acting and being human. It has been suggested that the conception of irreconcilable and irreducible individuality and 'compulsory individualisation', such as Jim McGuigan indicates, is typical of neoliberalism,[34] and which, I add, promotes the solitude and isolation proper to objects, and is already the conception of a reified and highly integrated subject in his form of life. Not to recognize it in this way is to hide the fact that in their subjectivity they are motivated by the same ontological principle and that they pursue the same end. As reified subjects they incarnate their principle more perfectly. This creates the illusion of believing themselves to be exclusive and unique when only the universal subjectivity of their form of life is being expressed through them. In any case, it is the variations that individualize, but, as I say, this individualization only confirms a common subjectivity, which implies common actions, feelings, values and attitudes. Variations should not be confused with subjectivity.

3. In Dialogue with Contemporary Philosophy

I have explored the form of life as an onto-phenomenological unit, its structure, constitutive and inter-relational features, in constant dialogue

34 Jim McGuigan, 'The Neoliberal Self', *Culture Unbound*, 6:1 (2014), 223–40 (p. 233).

with Sartre and, although to a lesser extent, with other members of the phenomenological tradition. In the same way, in specific aspects I have maintained a critical dialogue with other authors and perspectives of contemporary philosophy, thus submitting my analysis to contrast and validation. I would like to highlight, in this section, some of the most significant debates held in the book for the understanding and scrutiny of the form of life and the phenomenological ontology that derives from it.

I have discussed the contemporary trend called new realism. The authors who gather around this label, such as Markus Gabriel and Maurizio Ferraris, uphold an ontology by which both objects and ideas, images and institutions, are all facts. Thus, they blur any line between ontology and epistemology, since the object itself and the object experienced or known by the subject are both equally facts: 'Thoughts about facts are just more facts.'[35] This, among other objectives and (in his opinion) advantages, has that of avoiding idealism as much as constructivism.[36] For the possibility of a significant distinction between the Kantian or neo-Kantian thing in-itself and the experience or phenomenon is cancelled. In other words, they make a clean sweep. From the phenomenological ontology of forms of life, first of all, it cannot be admitted that there is no difference at all between an action as an object in the world and the anthropical image or principle that determines it as its condition of possibility. The latter, as a praxical image, makes action possible. But it is not an object. It is rather what makes the object exist. The distinction is not trivial at all. For to make my praxical image an object, that is, a fact, is to reify the subject's consciousness, and therefore the subject as well. The confusion that arises from considering that there are only facts is that of erasing the distinction between the being-for-itself and the being-in-itself. The form of life does not erase this difference but shows it by forming an organic unity of meaning. That I am my actions, does not mean that I am just an object, but rather, that I am a form of life as a subjectivity constituted by my experience and my actions. The form of life as an ontological unit I have suggested allows us to understand as a meaningful whole what for the new realism are isolated and unconnected facts. On another level, the

35 Markus Gabriel, *Why the World Does Not Exist* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), p. 6.
36 *Ibid*., p. 3.

consideration of the 'facts' of both an action and the experience of it by the subjects fragments and questions the possibility of the identification of the subject with a community with which he shares a form of life. If all are independent and fragmentary facts, the fact that there is a world as a whole is rejected.[37] But if there is no world as a whole, not even the totalization in which the subject is integrated, only the absurd can reign (without the whole there are no parts), which does not explain why we identify with certain communities and reject others, and why in acting as we do, we do so because it makes sense for us.

In dialogue with the theorists of free will, I have argued for a compatibilistic approach in relation to forms of life. If the subjects give themselves a way of being and acting with which they identify, by giving it to them freely and spontaneously, that is, in a pre-reflective but free way, they impose on themselves a form of life that from that moment on becomes necessary. This is what I have analyzed as a contingent necessity. It was not necessary for the subjects to be and act in that way until they imposed it on themselves as such. For example, the one who has given himself the artistic form of life and identifies with it, is determined to follow its ontological principle and to act like the artists, pursuing in every action the self-expression of an ideal. A number of possibilities for action have necessarily been given. This is in contradiction with those who argue that for freedom to be obtained it is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition that the subject has alternative options.[38] For freedom is not about choosing between two options, but doing and being what one identifies with. I am no longer free when I am given a choice between studying History or Economic Science, if what I want is to study Philosophy. The one who can do what he would do even if he has hundreds of alternatives is free. And the one who, having such alternatives, is not allowed to do what he wants, is not free. The form of life is freely self-imposed and in this way its necessity is also sustained. From this point of view, I have defended that freedom would not be based exclusively on the actual causes (AC) of action either, as Carolina Sartorio has argued.[39] To sum up, I will take the actual causes as 'reasons

37 *Ibid*.

38 Carlos Moya, 'Free Will and Open Alternatives', *Disputatio*, 9:45 (2017), 167–91 (p. 169).

39 Carolina Sartorio, 'Actual Causes and Free Will', *Disputatio*, 9:45 (2017), 147–65.

for action'. Therefore, according to Sartorio, the more reasons subjects have for their action, the freer they are. And when there are no reasons but mere impulses or passions, the subject will be less free. For example, the addict who takes drugs does so less freely than the one who takes them on a certain occasion for various reasons.[40] From the ontology of forms of life, this scheme is reversed. The reasons given are always a posteriori, therefore they cannot be taken as reliable guides. In fact, the question would be that of the anthropical image or form of life with which the subjects identify themselves. Thus, the addict who identifies with the form of life of the addict, that of constant alienation through drugs, would be exercising his freedom, as he is acting as he wants to act according to the form of life with which he identifies. The non-addicts who take drugs on one occasion, however, are less free than the addicts, as their action is arbitrary and impulsive, not motivated by their form of life. And by taking the drugs, they do not show freedom with respect to who they are and want to be, but rather, temporary slavery to an impulse or a social situation imposed by the alien community in which they find themselves. Thus, the latter subject is not integrated into his form of life with such an action. In short, freedom is more a matter of identification than of action.

In dialogue with Sartre and Johann Fichte,[41] I suggested a rethinking of the French author's dialectics, which was in turn a revision of the Hegelian-Marxist one. My suggestion has been shown with historical cases. In particular, it has been elaborated through the analysis of the capitalist form of life of economic maximization and the artistic form of life. If Marxist dialectics implied the confrontation between two totalities (i.e., social classes) resulting in a third synthetic one, Sartre's analysis detects a lack of necessity in such a process, mainly due to the fact of being isolated and outside a larger totality, from which it would receive the law or principle of its development. Sartre proposes an internal dialectic between totalization and its parts. Such a totalization would be the history of humanity, as Raymond Aron explains in his analysis of the work: 'under what conditions is consciousness of a *single* history possible? […] the first question, if I understand it correctly, concerns not

40 *Ibid*., pp. 156–59.

41 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, trans. by A. E. Kroeger (London: Trübner & Co., Ludgate Hill, 1889).

just the consciousness of any kind of history, not the consciousness of a fragment of a human past, but of a *single* History or, in other words, of the unity of History'.[42] Thus the historical process would be a determination of that totalization. All dialectical relationships are internal and serve the same purpose. I have suggested that this dialectic, while bringing a sense of necessity, unduly homogenizes by isolating the elements of that history, leaving out a priori everything that cannot be homogenized.

Thus, taking into account the dynamics of the forms of life, I have proposed to replace this eminently internal dialectic with an internal-external dialectic. The latter maintains the dialectic relationship between the whole and the parts, the becoming of the form of life being the necessary determination of the whole, by which the subjects are integrated; but it does not discard the existence of other totalities outside it. The relationship between these totalities would be external, but they would enter into an internal situation of resistance-assimilation by which the hegemonic one absorbs the other form (or forms). This double dialectic allows us to understand how forms of life not only develop gradually through the determination of their parts, but also become universal through the assimilation of everything that is not them. This latter logic is taken from Fichte, for whom the ideal of the human being or Ego is to assimilate all that is not Ego. To this end, what is not has to enter into a relationship of opposition with what is under a greater entity. Thus, the hegemonic form of life as a universal ontological principle would make possible the relationship of opposition between its actions and the form of life of others. In this opposition, negation would seek to affirm the other's form of life in its opposite under the principle of the hegemonic form of life, and this dialectic has allowed the analysis of the process by which the subjectivity of the same form of life experiences changes, whereas other forms of life with their negated subjectivities are assimilated. For example, I have analyzed how capitalism assimilates the subjectivity of the austere form of life of peasants and artisans into its opposite sign, and equally how it assimilates the intellectual form of life (although some of its subjects kept it), affirming its opposite: the life of alienation and ignorance proper to the mass society of the capitalist form of life.

42 Raymond Aron, *History and the Dialectic of Violence*, trans. by Barry Cooper (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), p. 3.

In this sense, dialectic has been understood not only as an instrument, but as the very structure of the integrating process of a form of life. This dialectic avoids the Hegelian-Marxist triad process, thus subscribing to Sartre's critique.[43] For it seems arbitrary that only three elements are developed and in exactly three different stages. It is rather a process in which the form of life seeks to universalize itself, for to persist in its being is to extend it to all others with whom it comes into contact. This process is carried out through conflicts that result in assimilation, but a plural, not a unilateral and univocal assimilation. The capitalist form of life at first only denies and assimilates the austere form of life, which is what it comes into contact with, but as it expands, it assimilates other forms of life, opening up, if you like, various fronts in its process of universalization through plural assimilation. The unilateral process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis with respect to a society, such as that carried out by Marxism, appears from this perspective as a theoretical and reductionist process. The latter has served me to engage with Gramsci and his concept of hegemony.[44] The struggles of the forms of life are intended to persist in the being of these, not to replace a social class and its institutional power that in most cases is out of reach. A form of life is not the same as a social class, and the process of development in a society cannot be reduced to the confrontation between two exclusive social classes, namely owners or bourgeois and proletarians. Society is made up of many forms of life, all struggling to remain what they are and thus resisting assimilation by the one that holds a certain hegemony, while at the same time establishing resistance between them. In order to make sense, social classes—or even the society as a whole—have to rely on the subjectivity that shapes the community or communities that constitute each of them, otherwise they are nothing more than unrealistic and illegitimate homogenizations.

With respect to Benjamin, from the ontological relationship between forms of life, his concept of aura and of long and isolated experiences has been reinterpreted.[45] His contribution has allowed me to explore more

43 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Vol. I (London: Verso, 2004 [1960]), p. 36.

44 Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 196.

45 Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), p. 202.

closely the kind of experiences that would constitute our subjectivity. According to Benjamin, long experiences are those that the subject has within a tradition; they are inherited and constitute a line of continuity, something similar to a certain identity over time. He distinguishes them from the isolated ones in that the latter are outside a tradition, are incomprehensible and absurd and cause traumas to the subject, who is unable to give them meaning. The long experiences are those in which the aura of the experienced object is maintained, while in the isolated ones this aura is lost. I have taken advantage of this analysis by Benjamin to explain the type of experiences that the subjects have regarding their form of life. The actions, attitudes and feelings principled by their form of life appear as experiences that not only make sense, but in some way reinforce the subjects' identity. These experiences integrate the subjects into their form of life. On the contrary, the isolated experiences are experiences directed towards actions and objects of a foreign form of life, which the subjects neither understand nor experience as constitutive of their personal identity because it is the result or expression of an unshared subjectivity. This reinterpretation has allowed me to access the concept of aura and the relationship between forms of life. The loss of the aura in experience, according to this, would not be exclusively related to the passage from the predominance of the bourgeois class to that of the mass society, as Benjamin postulates,[46] but every experience of a foreign form of life is an experience in which the aura disappears. By aura, therefore, we could understand a certain empathy, namely, a constitutive identification on the part of the subject. The lack of aura in the experience would be what indicates the lack of identification. On the contrary, every auratic experience will be directed towards a form of life with which we identify and with which we constitute our subjectivity.

Finally, in dialogue with Barbara Rosenwein, a historian of emotions, I have pointed out the usefulness of her concept of 'community of feeling' and the analysis she makes of these communities by placing them outside the supposedly civilizing, and therefore homogenizing, process advocated by Johan Huizinga and Norbert Elias.[47] I have argued that a community of feeling would depend on and take its constitutive

46 *Ibid*., p. 203.

47 Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 6–7.

principle as a form of life. For it is this that determines our habits and attitudes as well as the expressions of our emotions and values. These communities have their own development, are multiple and do not respond to a totalizing historical evolution. Phenomenological ontology maintains the importance of Rosenwein's empirical-historical approach,[48] as the identification of the parts of a whole, but suggests the task of apprehending and analyzing in advance the totalization on which the parts depend. For without the former, the latter cannot exist. Every part has the whole as a constitutive principle. Without the study of the forms of life as a determining ontological unit, the subjects and specific behaviours can only appear divorced from their original meaning in absurd fragments. In fact, I have pointed out that the same author presupposes a priori totalities in order to study a community of feelings in an empirical way. Echoing Archimedes, the form of life is that *place* where we stand to move the world. This is the form of life: the point of support on which being and movement (change or conversion) are based.

4. What Next?

I believe I have shown that the study of the form of life as an ontological unit leads to undoing the remaining dichotomies in Sartre between facticity/consciousness and individual/society, and that the phenomenological ontology of forms of life can be a fruitful approach to human subjectivity.

I have identified the structure and constitutive features of a form of life, as well as its ontological relationship with other forms as a condition of possibility of subjectivity. And I have explored and analyzed particular cases of forms of life in their dialectic development. However, many aspects have remained outside this first approach. Although I have indicated the way in which the situation of resistance-assimilation implies the notion of power, it is indispensable to reveal the constitution of power in the form of life, from where it is born, how it is exercised and what its internal hierarchy is. If being is to persist in being and resistance is to oppose one power to another power, one would have

48 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

to go deeper into how power resides in being, and how the one who persists the most and becomes the most universal is the most powerful. These ontological premises must inevitably be taken to practical cases, where the relationship between the interest in being and the ontological principle that feeds that interest can be clarified. Or more specifically, to answer why the subjects of the form of life persist in their being and why they have an interest in remaining what they are and in having their form of life persist. The power that is shown in being must have its correlative analysis from the notion of politics, as an organization of life in community. So it is understood that, in that sense, the form of life is always inevitably political.

Similarly, although communities of feeling have been analyzed, I have not devoted an exclusive analysis to the issue of emotions and how they arise from and are determined by the form of life. Considering that forms of life are related through situations of resistance-assimilation, one could ask if emotions such as love, compassion and pity have a place in this ontology. A particularized study of these and other emotions requires showing how the form of life, with its ontological principle, determines love, hate, fear, joy, sadness, and so on. And how such a determination means that, for example, one will love only that which is driven by that principle or that which has an impact on the affirmation and universalization of that principle and, conversely, one will hate that which questions or denies it.

In order for this approach to forms of life as an ontological unit to gain greater consistency, it is essential to carry out separate studies of various forms of life and their various subjectivities. These studies have to be sufficiently comprehensive to establish a certain inventory. The analysis should not only be descriptive but also genetic. That is to say, the series of possible actions, feelings, attitudes of a unitary totalization have to be described, showing their limits and their relations with other forms of life. But it must always be based on and refer to the transcendental structure explored in this book and redefine its genetic relationship with it. In the same way, in a future study it would be necessary to make a genealogy of the forms of life according to their constitutive dialectic relations and the ontological principles from which they derive; this would imply a classification and record of their empirical variants. This task is infinite, but I am confident that in the course of it, together with

other researchers, we will gain a greater understanding of our own subjectivity and the constitution of the world in the midst of which we find ourselves.

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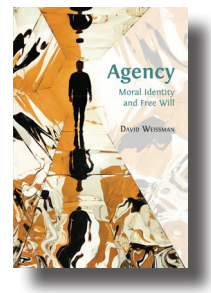

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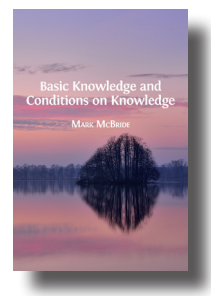

Forms of Life and Subjectivity
Rethinking Sartre's Philosophy

Daniel Rueda Garrido

Forms of Life and Subjectivity explores the fundamental question of why we act as we do. Informed by an ontological and phenomenological approach, and building mainly, but not exclusively, on the thought of Sartre, Daniel Rueda Garrido considers the concept of a 'form of life' as a term that bridges the gap between subjective identity and communities.

This first systematic ontology of 'forms of life' seeks to understand why we act in certain ways, and why we cling to certain identities, such as nationalisms, social movements, cultural minorities, racism, or religion. The answer, as Rueda Garrido argues, depends on an understanding of ourselves as 'forms of life' that remains sensitive to the relationship between ontology and power, between what we want to be and what we ought to be.

Structured in seven chapters, Rueda Garrido's investigation yields illuminating and timely discussions of conversion, the constitution of subjectivity as an intersubjective self, the distinction between imitation and reproduction, the relationship between freedom and facticity, and the dialectical process by which two particular ways of being and acting enter into a situation of assimilation-resistance, as exemplified by capitalist and artistic forms of life.

This ambitious and original work will be of great interest to scholars and students of philosophy, social sciences, cultural studies, psychology and anthropology. Its wide-ranging reflection on the human being and society will also appeal to the general reader of philosophy.

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