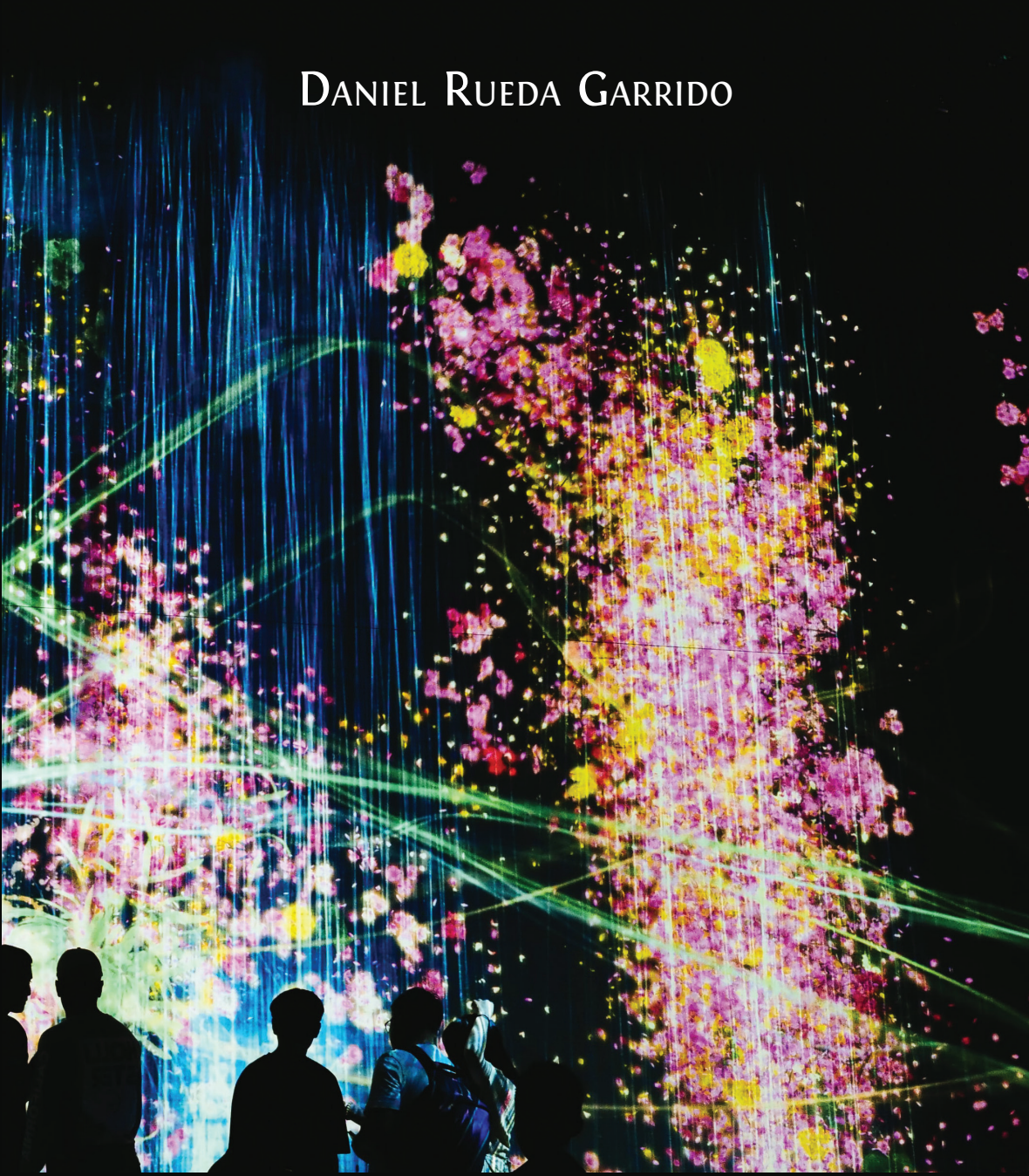


DANIEL RUEDA GARRIDO



# Forms of Life and Subjectivity

## Rethinking Sartre's Philosophy



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# 4. Forms of Life, Imitation and Conscious Will<sup>1</sup>

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## 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,<sup>2</sup> 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)

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- 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.

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).<sup>3</sup> 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

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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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.'<sup>6</sup> Their goal was to prove that 'the existence of an automatic, unintended, and passive effect of perception on behavior

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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'.<sup>7</sup> 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)<sup>8</sup> 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

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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.<sup>9</sup> 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)<sup>10</sup> 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

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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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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<sup>13</sup> and Sartre<sup>14</sup> and the current cognitive psychology<sup>15</sup> denominate pre-reflective consciousness (Sartre also calls it non-positional consciousness), which is the possibility of having the

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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.<sup>16</sup> 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).

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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.<sup>17</sup> 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

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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,<sup>18</sup> who took 'freedom to be only a function of the actual sources or the actual causes of action'.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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,<sup>21</sup> 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

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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,<sup>22</sup> 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).<sup>23</sup> It is not a direct cause, meaning that it is not a sufficient cause

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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.<sup>24</sup> 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'.<sup>25</sup> 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

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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.<sup>26</sup> 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!'<sup>27</sup> 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'.<sup>28</sup> 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

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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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

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.

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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 anthropological 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 anthropological 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 against 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'.<sup>31</sup> 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:

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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.<sup>32</sup>

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.

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<sup>32</sup> *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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup>

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.<sup>35</sup> 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

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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".<sup>36</sup> 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'.<sup>37</sup> 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 anthropological 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

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<sup>36</sup> See Kane, 'Libertarianism', p. 31.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

relevant fact there *to be known*'.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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,<sup>40</sup> 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 anthropological 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.

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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.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

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 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.<sup>43</sup> 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

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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,<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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

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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/10.1177/1474885118763881>.

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 anthropological 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 agentic 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 anthropological 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.