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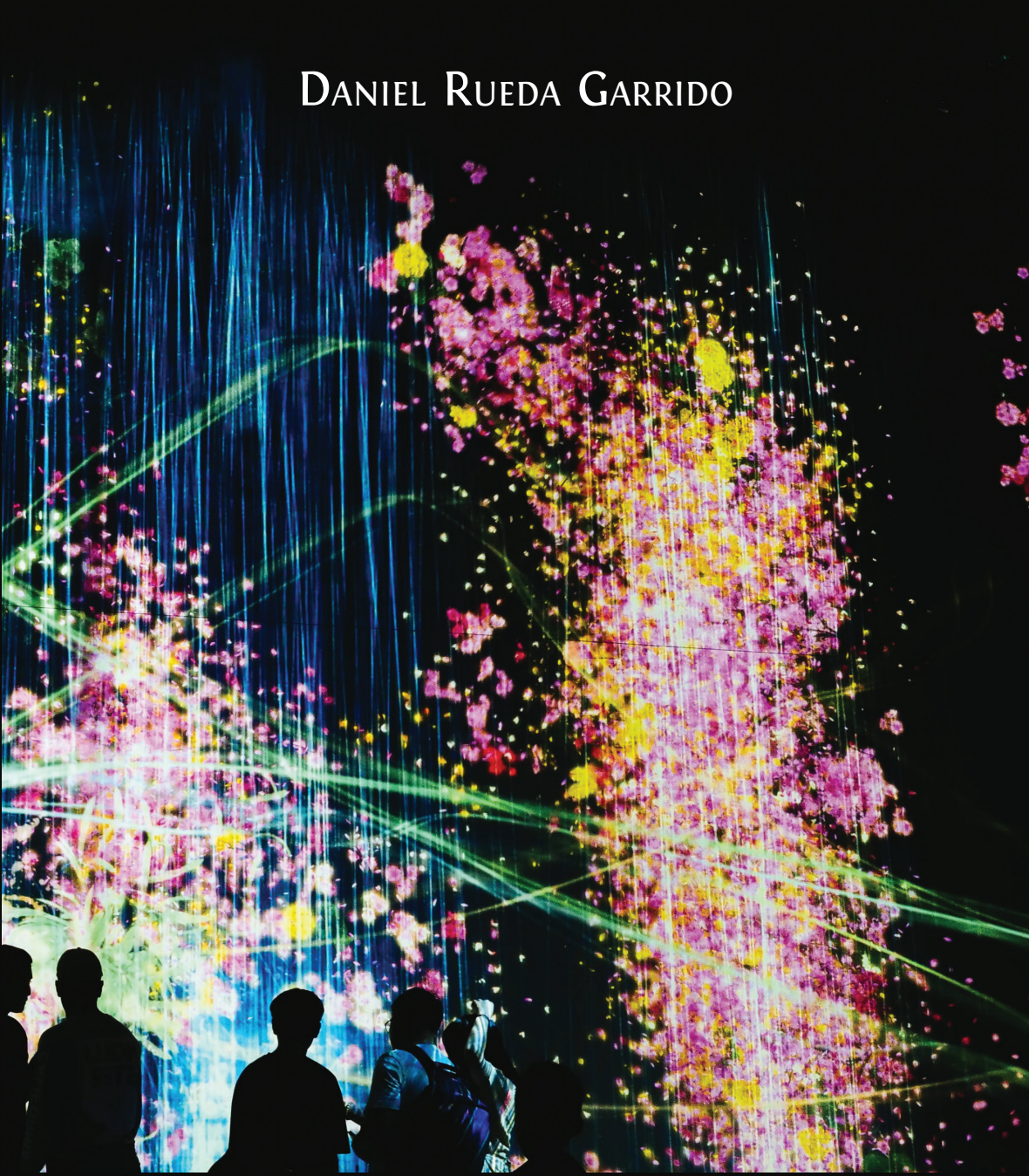

Forms of Life and Subjectivity

Rethinking Sartre's Philosophy

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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.