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A Fragile Craft: The Principium Individuationis and the Law

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss certain circumstances of the "constitution of the self" or individualization through diverse forms of experience. The creation of the self as *individuum* is depicted as having authorship over his actions in three distinctive yet interconnected instances of early stages of the Western Civilization: in Homeric society, in the Greek Polis and in a philosophical suggestion for a fully individualized citizenship. The law is set in this discussion as an external entity that forms the outer limit of human experience. Furthermore, fixed identities of the past and fluid identities of the modernity are analyzed not as pure social forms but as schemata of societal existence that imply the intermingling of opposite traits.

Key words

Individual; self; identity; positioning; fluidity; law

Resumen

Este artículo pretende debatir algunas circunstancias de la "constitución del ego" o individualización a través de diversas formas de experiencia. La creación del ego como *individuum* se representa la posesión de autoridad sobre sus acciones, en tres instancias de los albores de la civilización occidental, diferentes pero interconectadas: la sociedad homérica, las polis griegas y una sugerencia filosófica de una ciudadanía plenamente individualizada. El derecho se establece en esta discusión como una entidad externa que forma los límites periféricos de la experiencia humana. Además, se analizan las identidades establecidas en el pasado y las identidades flexibles de la modernidad no como meras formas sociales, sino como patrones de la existencia social que implica la mezcla de rasgos opuestos.

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Palabras clave

Individuo; ego; identidad; posicionamiento; flexibilidad; derecho

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1. Introduction

Nietzsche refers to the principle of individualization by depicting Schopenhauer's boatman: Just as the boatman sits in his little boat, trusting his fragile craft in a stormy sea which, boundless in every direction, rises and falls in howling, mountainous waves, so in the midst of a world full of suffering the individual man calmly sits, supported by and trusting the principium individuationis (Nietzsche 1993, p. 16). The principium, according to which, "we are conscious of our unique being in the world, as human beings" (Papastephanou 2005, p. 137) and we have the ability and the chance to choose what is best for us in every circumstance and through this to choose ourselves. The principium individuationis can also refer to the hidden possibility behind each one's action to reach his full potential, in other words, to become fully oneself, if there can be such an end and such a telos into human action. Individual, Subject or Self are the terms used in different contexts to indicate the 'fluid' end result of this dynamic process.

The term 'individualization' is widely used in modern sociological discourses to indicate the process whereby individuals "produce, stage, and cobble together their biographies themselves (Beck 1997, p. 95). The individual is presumed in this context (the context of reflexive modernity, of advanced modernity that rests basically on self-confrontation) as "actor, designer, juggler and stage director of his or her own biography, identity, social networks, commitments and convictions" (Beck 1997, p. 95). Beck echoing Sartre contends that "people are condemned to individualization" (Beck 1997, p. 96). Despite the fact that Beck's analysis of the erosion of class-consciousness and the prominence of certain forms of self-management has been criticized (Elliott 2002, Atkinson 2007), his thesis on reflexive individualization remains analytically significant and thought provocative. In sharp contrast with the past, modernity offers us, mainly in the western world, the possibility of shaping our individual lives according to certain plans or at least the illusion of being able to do so (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

There are, of course, many divergent angles to analyze the shapes and forms individualization can take or has taken throughout human history. This is the first part of an essay on individualization and the law which belongs to a programmatic work that aspires to progress toward an elaboration and expansion of its thematic analysis in the future. Within the limits of this part and as much as this space permits, it aims to chart the territory of some preliminary theoretical points of departure with regard to human agency and suggest their connection with certain aspects of individualization.

2. The solitude of existence

The solitary boatman or any other human being thrown into the world spends his life trying to formulate an individual answer to the question of what is possible and important in life (paraphrasing Rorty 1989, p. 23). This metaphor of navigation includes according to Foucault interesting components (Foucault 2005, p. 248). First there comes the idea of a life as a journey, as a real movement from one point to another. Second, the metaphor implies that this journey has an objective, a scope, a telos. This scope appears to be a harbor, a place of safety from every risky endeavor. Third, this port is imagined as homeland, probably as our place of origin. It could also imply our true inner homeland. In any case, the path toward the individualized self will always be something of an Odyssey (Foucault 2005, p. 24). The forth element of this metaphor of navigation is that the journey is dangerous, full of tests and trials. Finally, from this idea of navigation we should keep hold of the idea that this dangerous journey implies a knowledge, a technique, a 'fragile craft' in order to be accomplished (Foucault 2005, p. 24). To this knowledge one could add that of a lived experience as a source of a distinctive savoir faire.

The dialectics of this process turns a hollow 'I' into a distinctive I, an Individual. This endeavor has probably started as an exercise in self-consciousness (Mumford

1956). Rousseau was perhaps among the first to affirm the fundamental alteration in the nature of man in his passage through the ages from the state of nature to civilized society (Charvet 1972). Yet we know very little about our beginnings. We suppose there has been a series of negations so that humanness could be brought about as distinctively unique. Being human thus marks a new Anfang, a new beginning. "The Anfang, says Hegel, proceeds towards being, in that it distances itself from or 'sublates' non-being. This is the key move in the dialectic: the negation of negation, the annihilation of nothingness (*néantissement du neant* in Sartre's rendering 2003) in any initiatory, which to say authentically creative act." (Steiner 2001, p. 118). Hegelian dialectic as it appears in the Phenomenology of Spirit (Hegel 1977) implies the continuation of the negation of a thesis through an antithesis and the result of a synthesis that is still far from permanent. Therefore, a typical Hegelian viewpoint with regard to self-consciousness follows the same pattern: the self-consciousness of being alive is not a true, substantial self-consciousness. All it knows is that as something alive its identity consists only in constant encounter with the other and dissolution of self in the other, i.e., in participation in the infinity of the cycle of life (Hegel 1977, Gadamer 1976, p. 60). A human being is depicted as the continuous present of his historical circumstance and yet remains the only being that has the ability to overcome the boundaries of his circumstance. Hegel describes this process when he introduces the transformation of self-consciousness, this being-for-self into a new form of self-consciousness, a self-consciousness which thinks, i.e., a consciousness which is free self-consciousness (Hegel 1977, p. 151). What we have here, asserts Gadamer, is something truly universal in which you and I are the same. It will be developed as the self-consciousness of reason (Gadamer 1976, p. 72). Thus, a central element for both Hegel and Gadamer is self-reflexivity as a constituent element of free self-consciousness.

Self-consciousness appears first and foremost as self-creation. Of course, there are particular contingencies which make each one an individual 'I' rather than a copy or replica of somebody else (Rorty 1989, p. 25); there is something common in this effort to all men of a certain epoch and even something common to all men at all times, not just to one man once.[1]

Zygmunt Bauman who discusses extensively the idiosyncratic characteristics of individuality in the 'Liquid Modernity' as he labels our epoch (Bauman 2000, p. 53), discussing Georg Simmel's sociological position on the issue says: "In the centre of Simmel's vision, and so of his world and his understanding of his own place in that world, always stood the human individual-considered as a bearer of culture and as a mature *geistige* being, acting and evaluating in full control of the powers of his soul and linked to his fellow human beings in collective action and feeling" (Bauman 2004, p. 15). We notice here the depiction of individuality acting through collectivity, linked to collectivity and yet striving to remain distinctive. For Bauman identity is revealed to us only as something to be invented rather than discovered; as a target of an everlasting effort, 'an objective'; as something one still needs to create from scratch…. Bauman, thus, accepts as a matter of fact 'the frailty and forever provisional status' of individual identity (Bauman 2004, p. 16).

A slightly different stance is taken by Ortega y Gasset (Kaufmann 1965) who refuses to see humans as thrown into this world once and for all. For him the stone is given its existence by nature; it need not fight for being what it is-a stone in the field. Man, though, has to be himself and to remain faithful to his dream or image of himself in spite of unfavorable circumstances; that means he has to make his own existence at every single moment. He is given the abstract possibility of

[1] Richard Rorty recognizes in these two circumstances 'the tension between an effort to achieve self-creation by the recognition of contingency and an effort to achieve universality by the transcendence of contingency'. This implies two distinctive individualisms: on the one hand this of a poet and on the other that of a philosopher. Yet the poet needs the philosopher and the philosopher is good to hear the poet.

existing, but not the reality. He has to fill this abstraction with his plan of authentic life. Man has to conquer his life hour after hour. Man must earn his life, not only economically but metaphysically. Ortega y Gasset's metaphysics is, of course, the reality of social life as he is remembered as the thinker who considers 'man and his circumstance'. He suggests the invention of projects of being and of doing in the light of circumstance. According to him this alone is given to man: circumstance. Through this man becomes the novelist of himself.

Accordingly, yet from a philosophical angle that pays less attention to immediate boundaries of agency Sartre (1946) asserts that "man is not only what he conceives himself to be, but that which he wills himself to be, and since he conceives himself only after he exists, just as he wills himself only after being thrown into existence, *man is nothing other than what he makes of himself*".

Similarly, Foucault's central idea on the issue is that there is no natural subject, but only a becoming-subject that constitutes itself through the mediation of forms in which the individual must recognize itself (Han 2002). It is noted that such a thematic has clearly Hegelian connotations, and reminds us of the Erfahrung through which consciousness determines itself in a series of apparently objective figures which it is each time led to recognize as its own, in the moment of Aufhebung. Yet there are, as Han asserts, at least two differences between Foucault and Hegel: Firstly, recognition does not take place between two consciousnesses for Foucault, but from self to self. Secondly, the self-constitution is neither understood by Foucault as a teleological dialectic, which would order the 'forms of subjectivity' from a general perspective culminating in their unification/totalization, nor as the anticipation of the proceeding realization of some essence of man. Foucault seems to adopt the Nietzschean perspective of the creation/destruction of the self by defining the creation of the 'forms' as the destruction of what we are, and the creation of something totally other, a total innovation. This insistence on an alterity that refuses any mediation (totally other), and on a novelty that would work like a new beginning, is sufficient to refute the perspective of an Aufhebung, according to which, following the expression of Solomon so dear to Hegel, nothing would ever truly be 'new under the sun' (Han 2002, p. 163). Yet one would wish to question the possibility of a total erosion/destruction of a former self in spite of any innovative self taking its place.

A very different thinker, Levinas, also regards the formation of the 'I' as an ongoing process. According to him 'the I is not a being that always remains the same, but is the being whose existing consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it' (Levinas 1996, p. 36). That, which happens to the 'I', is a constituent element of its transformation. A pretty much diversified view comes from Jacques Lacan, for whom there is an Ego, a figure of only imaginary unity, distinguished from the Subject. The Subject, though, has no substance, no nature, being a function of the contingent laws of language and of the always singular history of objects of desire (Badiou 2001, p. 6). This suggests, of course, not only the continuation of the process of the formation of the 'I' or the Subject, but moreover the liquidation of the Subject. This entails for the Subject a restless process of becoming without being able ever to be. In other words, a watery, not positioned self-consciousness. The Ego according to Lacan is precipitated by a misconception: the child who consciously views his mirror image for the first time, takes the coherent self as the presiding and delusory image for who he is. He may spend the rest of his life attempting the impossible, the illusionary: attempting to become identical with that total, ideal self. Narcissism is the name of the illusionary visions of self-perfection. For Freud, it is the authoritative voice of super-ego's intervention that breaks the mirror image. Yet this punitive voice should later in life be revised, refined, become more humane (Lacan 1977, p. 1-7).

A very much refined idea about the liquidation of the Subject is given by Derrida's discussion on auto-affection. Auto-affection is the name Derrida gives to the

experience of self-presence, the sense of consolidated self-identity that must be dispersed by deconstruction. Of course, the principle of auto-affection appears to be at odds. If a self is to know itself and constitute itself through the act of knowing, it must take up an interpretive distance on itself. That distancing and the subsequent knowing, entail an act of interpretation, an interpretation of the self by itself. The self-reflectivity of this interpretation can be re-interpreted, and so on. The dialectics of the Self suggest that in the auto-affection of hearing oneself speak other voices always contaminate the resulting voice. Yet there can always be repetition and novelty, as long as the process goes on (Gasché 1986, p. 18, 194-195, 231-236).

3. The self and the face of the other

The intervention of the 'Other' opens up the creation of subjectivity and, at the same time, the 'wounds of negativity'. Otherness is seen primarily in the face to face encounter with the other person, in the image of the self in the mirror, in the image of the other as unity as seen through the eyes of the infant, and lastly, in the fact of otherness as seen in the reality of death. Prior to the other the self is not yet actualized and not yet a subject (Fryer 2004, p. 31). Unity, self sufficient freedom, contentment in capacity, these are things that are not yet known. It is the intervention of the other that marks the creation of the self as a self (Fryer 2004, p. 32). Simultaneously, the encounter with the other creates the necessity for the Law. The Law here is the general name to indicate different forms of normativity that, of course, result into divergent schemes of subjectivity. As such the Law turns out to be the king of every circumstance as the external (and the interior as internalized conditioning) that constitutes the formation of the Subject. Thus, the turn toward the Law is compelling, because it promises identity (Butler 1997, p. 108).

The first (exterior) marker of individualization is the face of the other (Fryer 2004, p. 39, Perpich 2005, p. 103). The ego experiences for the first time its inability to reduce the other to a self-identical object, tangible as an image or a concept. Objectification of the face tends to be achieved when the Law inscribes a label or a stigma on the face of someone to suggest that this is a signifier of a signified (Nussbaum 2004). Every label, every stigma, every anathema we put on the face of the other tends to turn it as an entity into an immutable object that can be grasped at sight.

Following the thought of Levinas (1996) we can convincingly argue that a human face in spite of its exteriority cannot be taken as an image that can be simply seen. The face is that which refuses to be contained (Levinas 1996, p. 194), that which cannot be comprehended, mastered, encompassed (Fryer 2004, p. 40). The encounter with the face is not a visual encounter, as vision is an experience of dominion, or capturing a moment in time. Instead, the encounter with a face is (also) a linguistic experience. The other person establishes her being in speech. "Speaking, rather than letting be, solicits the other person". Language, of course, sets another series of discursive conditions (Ermarth 2000).

Levinas (1996, p. 9) discusses also the basic distinction between objects and humans. If things lack ethical standing and can be put to any use whatsoever-if, that is, they are only things, it is because the relationship with them is established as comprehension. Comprehension consists in every case going beyond the particular in order to grasp it through that in it which is general or universal. In comprehension, the thing is possessed and if it 'resists' me it does so only as an obstacle… The resistance I encounter in the face of another human being is of an altogether different kind: the encounter with the other (autrui) consists in the fact that despite the extent of my domination and his slavery, I do not posses him… That which escapes comprehension in the other is him, a human being. A human being is always something more than the exterior limitations put to circumscribe

him. Thus, the exteriority and the interiority of a human being is a duality that sets up the dichotomy between perception and reality.

4. Natural man as a fiction in Rousseau

The natural man of Rousseau is a fictitious entity serving primarily analytical purposes. The solitary man in nature is of course an enormously attractive figure both for Rousseau and Daniel Defoe (Robinson Crusoe). While the former depicts this creature as an elevated animal, the latter depicts an isolated individuum as an autonomous agent. In the first instance the discussed creature cannot be seen as a standard for political life. In the second instance and despite Robinson Crusoe's isolation, he can be accepted as a standard minimum for political life.

According to Rousseau (1950, p. 211), the consciousness of natural man, devoid of imagination, memory, and intelligence, is given over solely to the sweet sentiment of its present existence. Original man is not preoccupied with himself simply because there are no others around, for, as Rousseau asserts, this is not true. Natural man mates, contends with others for food, or may simply pass by another of the same species. In each instance he is nevertheless attentive solely to himself and to his own needs. Rousseau distinguishes two radically different modes and sources of a sense of one's self or self worth: amour de soi (love for oneself) and amour propre (vanity or pride) arising out of a comparison of oneself with others. Only the first is characteristic of natural man, for in the true state of nature vanity does not exist, for each particular man regarding himself as the sole spectator to observe him, and as the sole judge of his own merit, it is not possible that a sentiment having its source in comparisons he is not capable of making could spring up in his soul. Natural man regards another human being as an object with which he must contend, not as a subject with a consciousness like his own to which he must respond (Zetterbaum 1982, p. 61).

The polar opposite of natural man is the citizen. The former lives for himself alone, while the latter occupies himself wholly with the regime of which he is a member. Natural man as a solitary being ignores the virtuous sociability. On the other hand, the citizen ignores the goods of solitary happiness. The example of the genuine citizen set by Rousseau is that of a Spartan woman. A Spartan woman had five sons in the army and was awaiting news of the battle. A helot arrives; trembling, she asks him for news. 'Your five sons were killed'. 'Base slave, did I ask you that?' 'We won the victory'. The mother runs to the temple and gives thanks to the gods'. That is according to Rousseau the female citizen. The identity of the mother is given its being by the polity (Zetterbaum 1982, p. 62). She is a mother of five who had a beautiful death, as it was called, for the sake of their country. The same ideal arises in ancient and early medieval times in what we know call Europe: Death on a battlefield, says Dumezil (1983, p. 15), is what every well-born German wished for. So true is this that the Scandinavians had devised a sort of sacrament destined to save by a shortcut those unlucky ones who had the misfortune to meet with a natural death by old age or illness: the account which the Heimskringla gives of the reign of 'King' Odinn says that he instituted a 'mark of the spear', a scratch that, inflicted on a dying man, would provide for him the eternal happiness which normally ought to result only from a mortal blow received from an enemy.

Natural man is simply identical with his own being. This antithesis, of course, is a constructed scheme. Man in nature was seldom alone and the pre-historic depictions of funeral rites suggest he was at least afraid, probably anxious and sometimes even felt guilty for the death of his fellow mates.

Rousseau depicts the female citizen by describing the result of an ancient *agon*, at the heart of which lies the concept of *arete*. *Arete* was associated with the goodness, courage, and prowess of a warrior (Hawhee 2002, p. 185). One of the best examples of early agonistic manifestations of *arete* can be found in Homer's Achilles, who is referred to as strong, swift, and godlike (1.129, 1.140), the great

runner (1. 224), and the best of the Achaeans (16.279). His *arete* in the Iliad has a double force, for not only is he a brave and brilliant warrior, but from the beginning he decides for himself to die in battle at Troy (1. 536), with the utmost glory, a guarantor of *arete*.

It is thus apparent that the change, the transition from the natural to the artificial, political existence of man occurs when men begin to substitute for their self-derived opinions of themselves the opinions of others. *Arete (virtue)* functions as an external phenomenon, depending on outside reputation for its installation. According to an established economy of actions, certain acts, such as dying in battle or winning a victory at the Olympic Games, were considered *agathos* and hence deserving of honor and certain others were not. The latter were considered the cause of shame i.e. of diminution of public time (honor).

In addition to depending on acknowledgment, then, *arete* also has a performative dimension, it is something that must be enacted, embodied. One cannot simply be virtuous, one can only become virtuous by performing virtuous actions in public. *Arete* is thus not an achieved telos, but a constant call to action. As a repeated style of living, ancient Greek *arete* is therefore, initially, a performative bodily phenomenon, depending on visibility- on making manifest qualities associated with virtuosity (Hawhee 2002, p. 187). Its privileged stage of action is a community that organizes its social control around the functional use of the notions of honor and shame.

At the heart of this cultural climate lies the concept of integrity or 'sense of self' that grows in the individual during his maturation in a group. To the degree that such integrity is intact the individual enjoys a sense of wholeness, unity, adequacy, and the like. Integrity is symbolized and projected by complex rules of conduct and appropriateness that often go under the label of 'code of honor'. When those rules are breached the integrity of the individual is felt to be injured, shamed, mutilated, polluted, and so forth. The response required from a man badly treated may range from an apt insult, to homicide, to withdrawal, to a ritual of reconciliation. The Law regards such an issue a private dispute; that should be resolved through the actions of two collectivities: the group of the perpetrator, who share collective passive responsibility, that is an obligation to suffer a loss (at the extreme end of which one of them can be eliminated) and the group of the victim, who share collective active responsibility, that is an obligation to respond (they share the shame as long as they do not respond properly to the affront) (Miller 1990, Hyams 2003, Archimandritou 2007).

5. Modes and transformations of subjectivity

Human experience and hence human subjectivity relies on or is the product of a certain *epoché*. Foucault asserts (Han 2002, p. 153) that there is a dialectics between a self and a community that is inscribed on the self as experience. Experience is understood according to his analysis as a correlation, in a culture, between fields of knowledge, types of normativity and forms of subjectivity. This dynamic process implies 'understandings' (or meanings), 'rules' and 'modes of consciousness of oneself'. A lived experience is thus translated into a way of thinking. Farenga (2006), on the other hand, explores different types of correlation that result into different modes of subjectivity in archaic and classical Greece. We shall follow the description of three examples that appear in linear procession, to understand the different settings that produced divergent modes of consciousness during that era.

Exemplum A: It is said, first, that Early Iron Age communities created a heroic self when they used religious (funerary) ritual to render justice to deceased warrior chiefs (basileis); and second, that around the time of early state formation (or the emergence of the polis) this heroic self achieves a considerable degree of autonomy. Achilles, according to this analysis, is a hero who chooses his fate,

proclaims publicly his actions as consistent with a just fate and demands its recognition by peers. He becomes thus the first of remarkable individuals to pose a programmatic question "what sort of a person must I become if I am to decide this question of justice? (Farenga 2006, p. 37). Cantarella (2010), suggests that the archetype of the modern man is Ulysses, as he is the one who manages to become the author of his actions and at the same time exemplify self-restrain on certain characteristic occasions.

Exemplum B: In the 440's -430's, a different model of citizen and self appeared in Athens. Collective responsibility faded away and the face of the individual person appeared on the public scene. Protagoras and Pericles suggested that the boundaries defining community and the individual need not conflict and might even converge. According to this model, a shared set of collective practices could stimulate citizens to lead lives whose public conduct was free yet still regulated by civic norms and whose private inclinations varied freely according to preference without transgressing the limits of civic tolerance. This model exemplifies the purity of the communitarian archetype, for shared values, political participation, and collective moral solidarity (Farenga 2006, p. 537). It is the one fully functional for the citizen isegoric-isonomic democracy.

Exemplum C: Within the city-state, full citizenship and political participation still entail part of the story of the self. Thus an area of private resource and judgment is defiantly asserted enabling Antiphon to declare war on the city-state's grip over citizens' allegiance and the civic ideal of the good life. Antiphon, opens a breach within Protagorean-Periclean Citizenship, first in his work 'on Truth, when he encourages each citizen to define by himself what is good through an inner deliberation engineered by the will (gnome) and second, in his work on Harmony, when he advices the citizen, now transformed and armed for a return to social life, with a superior kind of wisdom (sophrosyne) to negotiate the worth of those goods (Farenga 2006, p. 538). Through this negotiation the citizen can define for himself the good life he aspires to live.

These examples, fragmentary as they appear, depict nevertheless a major transformation: they suggest a transition from a community that functioned as totality and imposed fixed solutions for its members' conflicts, as well as (relatively) fixed positions and identities for its members, into a new community that eventually permitted the citizen to become the major author of his life. In other words, this meant for the citizen a transition from the fully imposed to the (partially) chosen identity. Achilles had just one (pre-established for him) way to achieve eternal glory, Antiphon, suggested that each individual could find his own way to reach his goals. For Achilles glory was an attribution to his way of being and to his actions while for Antiphon glory was the end result of his creative works of thought.

At the same time, the solitary warrior, as the eventual transformation of the solitary hunter, of the nomad, is initially an entity out of the sphere of the state. His personal valor and his achievements could be seen as *'athlos'* and receive an individual premium; nevertheless, they are regarded, up to a certain point in history as external aspects of a community as a whole. Hercules, is a solitary hero, in between a hunter [who tends to eliminate Chaos] and a warrior [who tends to use his power to set boundaries]. He belongs to his community but his actions although they refer to it and moreover benefit it, do not in fact be part of its basic functioning. They are exceptional. Hercules represents the first step toward acquisition on the part of a community of a power that has been external to it. The underpinning principle of his actions is the Law of nature, 'might is right'. Yet he uses this Law for the benefit of his community; his actions are based on a moral code (Archimandritou 2015, p. 36).

Georges Dumezil, in his analysis of Indo-European mythology, has shown that political sovereignty, or domination, has two heads: the magician king and the

priest-jurist. Rex and flamen, raj and Brahman, Romulus and Numa, Varuna and Mitra, the despot and the legislator, the binder and the organizer. Undoubtedly, say Deleuze and Guattari (2010, p. 3-4), these two poles stand in opposition term by term, as the obscure and the clear, the violent and the calm, the quick and the weighty, the fearsome and the regulated, the 'bond' and the 'pact'. But their opposition is only relative; they function as a pair, in alteration, as though they expressed a division of the One or constituted in themselves a sovereign unity. The two together exhaust the field of the function. They are the principal elements of a State apparatus. War, initially, is not contained within this apparatus. At this stage, the war machine is in itself irreducible to the State apparatus, outside its sovereignty and prior to its law: it comes from elsewhere. Hobbes was able to see that war and the State are contradictory terms; they cannot exist together and each implies the negation of the other: war prevents the State, the State prevents war (Clastres 2010, p. 277). Again Hobbes, despite the fact that conceives the Savage world as natural world and not as a community in its own rights, is the first to understand that one cannot think of war without the State, that one must think of them in a relation of exclusion (Clastres 2010, p. 177). Yet war is an inherent element of primitive community, the principal means of maintaining this community's non division, of maintaining each community's autonomy. In this circumstance war does not open a new field in the political relations between men: the war chief and the warriors remain equals; War never creates, even temporarily, division and hierarchy in primitive society between those who command and those who obey; the will for freedom is not canceled by the will for victory, even at the price of operational efficiency. The war machine does not engender inequality in this instance (Clastres 2010, p. 280). According to the principles of this type of society, war is indeed a private goal, the warrior's personal end. War at this level is no longer a structural effect of a primitive society's modus operandi; it is an utterly free and individual enterprise in that it proceeds only from the warrior's decision: the warrior obeys only the law of his will. Yet by doing this he serves at the same time societal needs.

We can distinguish, at this point, two dissimilar types of primitive societies. Clastres does create a dualism between primitive society and warrior (primitive) society. Primitive society being warlike by essence, all men there are warriors. In the case of 'warrior societies' however, all men go to war from time to time, when the community as a whole is concerned, but, in addition, a certain number among them are constantly engaged in warlike expeditions. In this case a positive relationship prevails between society and the warrior (Clastres 2010, p. 282). In such societies, eventually, to earn the name of warrior is to win a title of nobility: the group of warriors grows into an elite group. Yet this type of elitism does not rupture the homogeneity of the social body. The warriors do not establish an organ of political power. There cannot be such a device because each warrior's self-realization involves a vivid and continuous social recognition through constant test and approval (Clastres 2010, p. 292).

The primitive warrior brings a furor and a secret power machine on an individual basis. He bears witness to another kind of justice, one that comes from certain rules in the natural world, the rules of survival in the wilderness. He is the epitome of incomprehensible cruelty as well as unequaled pity and compassion. He is the one who understands all things not as solid realities but in relations of becoming rather than implementing binary distributions between 'states': a veritable becoming-animal, a becoming-woman, which lie outside established dualities as well as interchange of meanings within certain relations. He belongs to a power machine that is seen to be of another species, of another nature, of another origin (Deleuze, Guattari 2010, p. 4).

This primitive warrior, this solitary war machine prior to his incorporation into a function of the State itself is an individual in the process of constant becoming, par excellence. The chroniclers measure the potency of the desire for prestige by the

passion for war and the example of the Abipone tribe, is the same with that of all warlike societies: “They consider the nobility most worthy of honor to be not that which is inherited through blood and which is like patrimony, but rather that which one obtains through one’s own merits. […] For them, nobility resides not in the worth and honor of lineage, but in valor and rectitude” (Clastres 2010, p. 292). At this point and in this circumstance the warrior does not profit from the situation. Glory is not transferable and is not accompanied by privilege. This type of extreme individualization, this type of being true to oneself through personal accomplishment is a unique example of identification within a total primitive society that is considered as a provider of imposed or fixed identities. The life of a warrior does not depend on one occasion. It remains a dynamic process through his active life. He must continuously start over, for each exploit accomplished is both a source of prestige and a questioning of this prestige. The warrior is in essence condemned to forging ahead. He exists only in war. What could be the ultimate degree of bravery of such a warrior? What expedition procures the most glory because it is unsurpassable? It is the individual exploit, it is the escalation to the point ‘Alone against All’ that permits a warrior to assert his superiority over any other warrior. We know that Geronimo, failing to lead the Apache into constant war, did not hesitate to attack Mexican villages, accompanied by only two or three other warriors (Clastres 2010, p. 308). He lost his first wife and child because of a Mexican attack and he would pursue his revenge as far as he could.

These nomad practices changed their character when the warrior groups were incorporated into the realm of the State. Dumezil in his famous trifunctional hypothesis regarding the Proto-Indo-European society postulates a tripartite division of classes in these societies: the class of priests corresponding to the function of the sacral, the class of warriors, corresponding to the martial function and lastly, the class of producers of goods (farmers or craftsmen) corresponding to the economic function (Lyle 1982, p. 25-26). When the State incorporates and regularizes its class of warriors, the warrior belongs to an elite group and yet a pretty much controlled group. Gradually, extreme individualization through personal achievement is diminished as discipline becomes a prerequisite of a good army. Obedience as well as courage is the virtue, par excellence, of the good soldier. Pro patria mori becomes eventually and up to the Middle Ages, well established as the archetype of the beautiful death. Not once and for all, though. As Kantorowicz (1957, p. 232) notes, ‘Patria, in classical Antiquity so often the aggregate of all the political, religious, ethical, and moral values for which a man might care to live and die, was an almost obsolete political entity in the earlier Middle Ages. During the feudal age, when personal bonds between lord and vassal determined political life and prevailed over most other political ties, the ancient idea of patria had all but completely faded away or disintegrated”. Later, the same author mentions “the death of a liegeman for his feudal lord might be glamorized” (Kantorowicz 1957, p. 239) until time permits (around the thirteenth century) the renewal of the ideal.

6. The care of the self

“The unexamined life is not worth living for a human being”, is an old and well known axiom told by Socrates in his Apology (Plato, Apology, 38a). For Nozick (1989, p. 15), this sounds unnecessarily harsh. “However”, he adds, “when we guide our lives by our own pondered thoughts, it then is *our* life that we are living, not someone else’s. In this sense the unexamined life is not lived as fully”. There are two divergent and at the same time intertwined ways for the examination of one’s own life. The first is a theoretical consideration of human life in general and a certain human life in particular. The second is the practical wisdom (sophrosyne) needed for a human life to become fully functional. Aristotle’s Ethics, Epictetus’s The Encheiridion, Marcus Aurelius’s Meditations, Montaigne’s Essays or Nozick’s, The Examined Life are some valuable texts for a theoretical evaluation of human life while examples of specific circumstances of lived lives can provide us with

inspirational insights on how to deal with similar occasions in our own lives. Yet as Popper rightly asserts 'life is problem solving', no matter what.

The strategies we use to deal with the given circumstances of our lives and to bring them toward certain ends are called by Foucault 'technologies of the self'. These "permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault 1997, p. 225). Each individual does have his own 'technology of the self', each 'atomon' owes a view of the world, as precious as anyone else's, no matter where he stands in the social ladder. This is the reason why the Greek Nobel Laureate Poet Odysseus Elytis considers among the sages of this world 'Georgis, the fisherman'. Georgis, the fisherman, gains knowledge and practical wisdom that permits him to navigate through his own life; just like Schopenhauer's boatman, trusting his fragile craft in the midst of mountainous waves. For the poet the fisherman is a person with a face while for the philosopher the boatman is a general category: it is the particular gaze of the poet, asserts Rorty in a Nietzschean tone, that "can appreciate contingency" (Rorty 1989, p. 28).

Foucault (1997, p. 225-227) discusses some general examples of technologies of the self: the first is the Socratic *'epimeleia heautou'* (care for oneself) accompanied by the Delphic Principle *'Gnothi Seauton'* (Know Yourself). Socrates presents himself in his apology as a 'master of *epimeleia eautou'*. He tells the judges: 'you preoccupy yourselves without shame in acquiring wealth and reputation and honors, but you don't concern yourselves with yourselves, that is, with wisdom, truth and the perfection of the soul'.

Christianity provides a new meaning to this care for oneself. By this "Gregory of Nyssa meant the movement by which one renounces the world and marriage as well as detaches oneself from the flesh and, with virginity of heart and body, recovers the immortality of which one has been deprived". Christian asceticism rests on different premises from those of ancient philosophy with regard to the care (and cure) of the self. Yet both tend to the same end point. A third practice is the Stoic attitude which implies certain forms of communication with others, examination of self and conscience and an *askesis*, which does not imply the disclosure of the secret self (as in Christianity), but a remembering (Foucault 1997, p. 238).

Socrates in the Apology suggests that Achilles is a prototype and self-object (28b-d). Both he and the hero find their true way in their reasoning about choosing to pursue a moral commitment that laughs in the face of death, for at that point both stand beyond the limit of mortal life. From this perspective so much cherished by liberal philosophy, the self appears momentarily liberated from ends embedded in a social context: it is now prior to its ends and free to choose them as it will (Sandel 1982, p. 58-59). Despite this apparent liberation, though, both Achilles and Socrates are more attached to certain societal ideals than any other citizen. So much so that no other price than death itself could be the proof of their devotion to them. Through their death, they intend to elevate these ideals and present them as more important than their own lives. We know not about Socrates. We are informed, though, that Achilles while in Hades regrets his choice and says that he would rather choose a humble life than a glorious death. Thus, the end of the journey to our destined harbor may imply a radical revision of our views.

7. Solid identities and exceptional fluidity

As we have already mentioned, a basic constitutive element of subjectivity is temporality (Heidegger 1927, Hall 2007). Subjects first and foremost are contingencies that arise in Time. Thus, temporality, which remains entirely beyond our control either as individuals or as a species, constitutes the very source of our

surrounding circumstances and of the selves produced within them. Psychologists, offer a great deal of recent literature on what is called the 'self'. The dominant explanatory metaphor for the sense of a continuous self, that which incorporates our diverse constituent 'selves' is that of a linear story, a story that moves from plot to plot and ends up in the final novel of our identity formation or according to another discourse of our fluidity (Hall 2007, p. 125). Yet in order for us to understand where the story leads, or how it does function, it is imperative to comprehend the basic cultural premises of our positioned time (Messner 1998). Schematically said, it is the interpersonal situations undergone by an individual, informed by cultural materials that generate the sense of self.

Mauss (1985) discussing these cultural contours in different societies asserts that the notion of a 'person' or individual is already present in certain societies where the individual is absorbed in a collectivity and, at the same time, he is also detached from it in the ceremonial by the mask, his title, his rank, his role, his survival and his reappearance on earth in one of his descendants.

The example of the Pueblo Indians, the Zuni, is illustrative of the ways a certain community brings into action to 'impose' a fixed identity and yet to permit the identified in a precise way to become his own self. "In each clan'', says Mauss citing verbatim Frank Hamilton Cushing's document, "is to be found a set of names called the names of childhood. These names are more of titles than of cognomens. They are determined upon by sociologic and divinistic modes, and are bestowed in childhood as the 'verity names' or titles of the children to whom given. But this body of names relating to any one totem-for instance, to one of the beast totems-will not be the name of the totem beast itself, but will be names both of the totem in its various conditions and of various parts of the totem, or of its attributes, actual or mythical. Now these parts of functions, or attributes of the parts or functions, are subdivided also in a six-fold manner, so that the name relating to one member of the totem- for example, like the right arm or leg of the animal thereof-would correspond to the north, and would be the first in honor in a clan (not itself of the northern group); then the name relating to another member-say to the left leg or arm and its powers, etc., would pertain to the west and would be second in honor; and another member-say the right foot-to the south and would be third in honor… While the heart or the navel and center of the being would be first as well as last in honor […]. The studies of Major Powell among the Maskoki and other tribes have made it clear that kinship terms, so called, among other Indian tribes are rather devices for determining relative rank or authority as signified by relative age, as elder or younger, of the person addressed or spoken of by the term of relationship. So that it is quite impossible for a Zuni speaking to another to say simply brother; it is always necessary to say elder brother or younger brother by which the speaker himself affirms his relative rank or authority". […] With such a system of arrangement, with such a facile device for symbolizing the arrangement and, finally, with such an arrangement of names correspondingly classified and of terms of relationship significant of rank rather than of consanguinal connection, there cannot be a mistake in the order of a ceremonial and the people employing such devices may be said to have written and to be writing their statutes and laws in all their daily relationships and utterances. Thus, Mauss (1985, p. 5) asserts, the clan is conceived of as being made up of a certain number of persons, in reality of characters *(personnages)*. The role of all of them is really to act out the prefigured totality of the life of the clan.

In another case, that of the Kwakiutl Indians, we read that "every individual in each clan has a name even two names, for each season, one profane (summer) (WiXsa), and one sacred (winter) (LaXsa). These names are distributed between the various families, the 'Secret Societies' and the clans cooperating in the rituals, occasions when chiefs and families confront each other in innumerable and interminable potlatch. Each clan has two complete sets of its proper name, or rather its forenames, the one commonly known, the other secret, but which itself is not

simple. This is because the forename, actually of the noble, changes with his age and the functions he fulfills as a consequence of that age (8). These descriptions indicate conditions that allow very much fixed identification, so much so that one seems unable to escape his preconditioned positioning. Yet even under these circumstances identity formation can entail much more fluidity than the processes of name-giving and ranking imply. As we have already seen, the warriors in these communities can and usually achieve a highly individualized, based on capabilities and not preconditioned communal status. The same could be assumed with regard to other societies who are known to absorb individuality into a collectively exhibited identity, as it was the case of pre-modern Japan. Individualization in this instance could turn an obedient Samurai into a highly eccentric individual. One of the basic principles of the Bushido, that is, the ethic code followed by a samurai, reads as follows: "A man of service (hokonin) is a person who thinks fervently and intently of his lord from the bottom of his heart and regards his lord as more important than anything else. This is to be a retainer of the highest type. You should be grateful to be born in a clan, [and you should] just throw away your body and mind in a single-minded devotion to the service of your lord. On top of this, if you also have wisdom, arts, skills and make yourself useful in such ways as these permit, that is even better. However, even if a humble bloke who cannot make himself useful at all, who is clumsy and unskilled at everything, is determined to cherish his lord fervently and exclusively, he can be a reliable retainer. The retainer, who tries to make himself useful only in accordance to his wisdom and skills is of a lower order" (de Bary *et al*. 2005, p. 476). This fully integrated, fully absorbed, absolutely devoted individual could nevertheless choose a way and could also eventually (according to certain cultural prescriptions) turn around the tables and decide by himself on his own life and death, by taking ritually his own life. Next to this act of utmost violence on himself he would leave his most personal signature: his death poem. There is much that can be said with regard to this type of devotion, the Spartan phalanx' s devotion to the King, the Roman soldier's devotion as well that sort of devotion implied by the *sacramentum gladiatorium* of the gladiator (Barton 1989, p. 3). All these types of absolute absorption suggest the maximum of individual fixation and yet permit at the same time the highest type of individualization within certain contexts.

Let us return for a while toward the naming practices we mentioned above and discuss the nature of their premises. Baptism, asserts Butler (1997, p. 111), exemplifies the linguistic means by which the subject is compelled into social being. God names 'Peter, and this address establishes God as the origin of Peter. The name remains attached to Peter permanently by virtue of the implied and continuous presence in the name of the one who names him. […] Indeed, 'Peter' does not exist without the name that supplies the linguistic guarantee of existence. In this sense, as a prior and essential condition of the formation of the subject, there is a certain readiness to be compelled by the authoritative interpellation, a readiness which suggests that one is, as it were, already implicated in the terms of the animating misrecognition by an authority to which one subsequently yields. The Law requires the subject to be given a name in order to become subjected to it. The significance of name-giving is again matter of temporality. Personal names are not only labels by which individuals are distinguished, they also convey meaning and information about peoples on a variety of levels (Seymour 1983, Ionescu 2011). Naming raises questions of belonging, ranking, identity, legitimacy, signature and inheritance. As Derrida (1995) points out "There is no purer present, no generosity more inaugural" than that according to which somebody is offered a name. Giving a name is giving him/her nothing/ no thing, yet 'such a thing appropriates itself violently, harpoons, arraigns, what it seems to engender, penetrates and paralyzes with one stroke the recipient thus consecrated.

In our discussion of the Indian practices of name-giving we can assume that they represent fixation in time and place, ranking as well as age and personal

circumstance. Naming also implies the transmission of cultural practices of the past and their projection toward the future. Forenames may, generally speaking, be hereditary or chosen, permanent of changeable yet in any case they constitute one of the most important elements of personal identification. Invisible yet fragile, images made of flesh and blood, personal names signify boundaries that should not be transgressed. Any affront against them can become detrimental especially in honor/ shame societies. The Pueblos and other Indians use the practice of naming as an initiatory ritual, that sets an individual within the hierarchical order of his/her clan and the wider community. This positioning appears at first glance immutable. Yet skill and capability may have an impact we still have not traced when speaking about all these fixed identities of the past.

8. Fluid identities and invisible positioning

Modernity as described by Baudelaire (1964) in 1860, means 'the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art who's other half is the eternal and the immutable'. Modern begins to appear as a term used to mark the period off from medieval and ancient times (Williams 2007, p. 31). Yet 'we discover that the concept is fraught with ambiguity, while its referent is opaque at the core and frayed at the edges (Bauman 1991, p. 4). Despite the fact that it does not necessarily refer to a specific time period it does, nevertheless, imply an experience of rupture and change that is characterized by the loss of stable external references for individual perception (Gluck 2006, p. 748). The end point of this process is described by Lukács's nostalgia as 'the transcendental homelessness' of the modern self, who has lost the possibility of experiencing totality, meaning, and redemption (Lukács 1971, p. 11). Modernity does also imply the transition from a state of solid-static identities to the state of fluid-dynamic identities. The fact that human beings can now act on their behalf as individuals reflects a transition from pre-modern to new modes of agency as well as divergent forms of interdependency. The pre-modern premises of agency located in transcendental authority (gods) or in natural forces which incorporated the social system. Agamemnon does not feel responsible for his *hybris* against Achilles. It is the deity that gave him *'Atis',* a confusing and irritating state of mind. The emancipation of human agency from this type of hard core determinism has been a long and not always linear process. Over time these exogenous forces (e.g. godly powers) have been relocated as authority immanent within society itself, enlarging social agency, relocating authority from God to Church, from Church to State and from Church and State to individual persons and later to citizens. Human agency does not follow anymore a 'divinely orchestrated pattern' but rather a rationally organized progress (Gluck 2006, p. 754).

According to Collins (1989, p. 4, 6), "Hobbes understood that a world in flux was natural and that order must be created to restrain what was natural… Society is no longer a transcendentally articulated reflection of something predefined, external, and beyond itself which orders existence hierarchically. It is now a nominal entity ordered by the sovereign state which is its own articulated representative…" Therefore, next to the new forms of coexistence, "among the multitude of impossible tasks that modernity set itself is the task of order…indeed as the archetype for all other tasks, one that renders all other tasks mere metaphors of itself" (Bauman 1991, p. 4). Pre-modern, small scale communities had been marked by *dense sociability*, which left little room for those defined as strangers (Bauman 1991, p. 62). The modern state instead lives room for the intrusion and is designed primarily to deal with the problem of strangers (Bauman 1991, p. 63). Strangers do not resemble the friends; they do not resemble the enemies either. A flâneur is an alien individual who is absorbed by his constant movement toward the ephemeral. He blurs the lines of the known and the unknown and implies indeterminacy. This is exactly what modern societies tend to fight against (Bauman 1991, p. 61). Not because of a flâneur's tendency toward "the fugitive pleasure of circumstance" (Baudelaire 1964, p. 12) but mainly because of order's tendency to

know what can be knowable and exclude what is considered ambivalent (Bauman 2001).

The orthodoxy of modernity suggests that subjectivity is fluid, life is fragmented and dynamic rather than static, and identity formation is a multilayered open process (Bauman 2000). Or to put it differently, as Hall (1996, p. 277) remarks the subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent self and thus remain fluid. Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted around. These identifications are the points of a continuous dialog between the subject and the broader discourses. Subjectivity, conceived in this way, is always a tension between the positioning set by the formations of discourse within which we act and the fluid multiplicity of identifications against which such positions are employed. The modern subject, the modern individual comes to act by being positioned within broader and impersonal systems of discourse that shape his sense of self. Yet despite a certain positioning the subject remains unspecified and is always in the unpredictable process of becoming. The discourses that tend to fix the subject into a particular position, as Laclau and Mouffe (1985, p. 11) observe, can provide only a partial fix. Foucault (2007, p. 154) on his part asserts that "if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western Civilization, he has to take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self". The dialectic of divergent techniques of domination and that of multifaceted techniques of the self is a huge chapter in the history of ideas not yet fully written. There appears one pretty modern dimension of that: the subject chooses to put himself into types of discourse that imply (even if periodically) his own strictly controlled positioning (e.g. through the use of social media).

9. A plan of one's own life

Antiphon indicates that full citizenship is not enough for a citizen; each citizen should be able to define what is good as a plan of his own life in classical Athens. He suggests, therefore, the creation of a free space for the individual to examine the actualization of his potential. A modern Thinker, one well versed in ancient Greek philosophy, John Stuart Mill, claimed with especial zeal that the cultivation of one's individuality is itself a part of well-being, something good in se, and freedom with regard to this issue is not a means to an end but part of the end itself (Mill 1859). For individuality in this discourse means, choosing for myself, instead of merely being positioned and shaped by the constraint of political or social sanction. Freedom according to Mill's view mattered not only because it occasioned other things-e.g. the discovery of truth- but also because it would enable the development of individuality that is an essential part of human well-being (Appiah 2005, p. 5).

In Mill's words "He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgment to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to decide, and when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision. And these qualities are exactly in proportion as the part of his conduct which he determines according to his own judgment and feelings is a large one. It is possible that he might be guided in some good path, and be kept out of harm's way, without any of these things. But what will be his comparative worth as a human being? It really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that they do" (Mill 1859, p. 65-66).

There are, of course, divergent views and well known conflicts between 'atomistic' and 'holistic' conceptions of society, and the question rises at the end point of these: can we imagine individuals without any involuntary ties at all, unbound, utterly free? One of the many given answers, to resist the postmodern theorists

who are writing so excitedly about 'self-creating' is that by Charles Taylor who says that a self exists only within what he calls 'webs of interlocution' and that living within such strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency (Taylor 1989, Appiah 2005, p. 45).

Yet by interpreting the interpretations of interpretations sometimes turns us like the astronomer who mistakes the fly on the other end of the telescope for a planet, as Appiah critically asserts. We can, nevertheless, induce a tripartite schematization of self-identification, which Farenga (2006, p. 16) organizes to describe theoretically the function of the individual self: there can be an individual script derived from Rawl's (1999) theory (it could have been derived from Mill's theory) that introduces "the voluntary self, a radically autonomous entity, whose right to choose is, above all, prior to any 'good' it or others might choose". There can be an individual script derived from Sandel and Taylor's theory that introduces a "communitarian" or "cognitive" self that emerges not from self-fashioning but rather from deliberating on and accepting ends chosen by others. Taylor (1989, p. 27) asserts: "my identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame of horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other worlds, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand". There can also be another individual script derived from Habermas's theory that introduces a "deliberative self", whose participation in communicative interactions with others promises degrees of transformation both of the level of discourse as well as that of the subject involved. The multiplicity and complexity of human action within certain frames of discourse such as the creation and evolution of a subject of rights, or the function of communicative actions in the public domain are analyzed by Habermas as characteristically modern phenomena. A modern individual more than an ancient self who responded to divergent cultural challenges can in fact be an intermingling of these three abstract selves (Habermas 1984, 1996).

If we wish to move from the mixtures of abstract reasoning to the immediacies of concrete experience we can realize that there are not only stands that we may take but also enlargements of our set horizons through our actions. Let us imagine the position of a Sudanese woman who was recently convicted to die because she had chosen Christianity as her faith. And then, let us discuss her decision to take a new stand that presupposes the change of her self-consciousness toward the given solutions in her society: to go to a western state so that her choice (or circumstance) can be evaluated positively. This is in fact an enlargement of her horizon and a reformulation of her identity. This first step toward freedom of conscience is probably for her as a Sudanese woman a step into the unknown. It does though create for her a new frame of discourse that entails new fixed stands as well as newly mapped life experiences. This stance refers to "one of the great claims individuals advance against compelled communitarian conformity: the claim to freedom of conscience" which is considered a western value, par excellence (Franck 1999, p. 101, 150). As we all know it is far from being the only one: there are a series of lesser claims such as the right of each person to determine autonomously such matters as choice of a name, sex, and career (Franck 1999, p. 150). A simple comparison with the flexibility (or the illusion of it) we share when we have to decide on our plans for our lives makes clear that the response to the question of our free agency cannot be set as a part of the binary opposition between a yes and a no. We are certainly more flexible than other people at other times as Norbert Elias has eloquently shown in his work 'On the Civilizing Process' (Elias 1994).

Le Goff (1964) informs us, for example, that the social significance of dressing was great during the late medieval period. One should wear certain clothes with certain colors that corresponded to his/hers social standing. Wearing a dress that did not belong to someone's own status was considered a crime or, at least, a deadly sin: it

was either a matter of pride or a matter of degradation. The dress, thus, was in fact a uniform. Those who started wearing clothes that did not signify their status have created the room (the enlargement of their horizons) for the autonomy in choice of clothes: A lesser issue; and a very important space of freedom. There are, of course, even today different levels of autonomy with regard to a dressing code: the level of the possibility of free choice [everyday occasions], the level of social conventions permitting certain dressing codes and the level of the legally prescribed obligation to wear certain clothes on certain occasions. Deviations from the norms set on each level receive differentiated responses: a strange everyday dress may receive a critical laughter, a strange dress on an occasion of a social convention that requires a specific dress code may entail criticism and stricter be the response in the case of a deviation from a legally prescribed dress code. The space does not permit the analysis of the meaningful actions of these actors who deviate from these norms. The above mentioned three circumstances are not static but change through human agency and differ substantially from place to place as they are different from those of other epochs.

The first steps, the first movements toward the enlargement of a situation's horizons are the initiatory processes for the creation of spaces of freedom. If we set aside the grammars of social circumstances and etiquette, that are lesser limitations, the choice can be made only from an internal perspective (our preferences and tastes as well as our financial considerations), because the preferences are neither undermined nor endorsed from an external point of reference (Nagel 1986). Yet this seemingly simple step of choosing something like our food or our clothes, which implies a complicated intermingling of cultural values and practical considerations, is just the first step toward self-consciousness. We only need external freedom to make these choices, which is essential nevertheless. Therefore, the absence of obstacles to proceed according to our desires seems enough. Reflective self-consciousness, though, that is the adaptability of human consciousness into the frame of discourse between its subjective preferences, on the one hand, and the objective standpoint that underpins the creation of the desires for these preferences, on the other, entails something more: reflective human beings asserts Nagel (1986) …want to be able to stand back from the motives and reasons and values that influence their choices, and submit to them only if they are acceptable.

When we say that the actualization of the possibility to choose (our food or our clothes) marks the first step toward self-consciousness we mean that through this step we acknowledge the fact that we can choose a plan of life that corresponds to our inner preferences. Yet the condition of animal desire, that of extreme hunger or thirst, consists in not differentiating between a self as a self and the other. In other words, it is not true self-consciousness. "It is not a coincidence", mentions Gadamer (1976, p. 61), "that we speak in this regard of being as hungry as a bear or wolf-hunger predominates here to the extent that nothing fills us other than what fills an animal absorbed in the single dimension of its instinctual drives". At this point we could add another dimension of self-consciousness: the self-consciousness of desire which is in fact dependant on the object of desire as something other than itself. The "certainty of self reached in its satisfaction" is conditioned by the object says again Gadamer. For him, "it is all too clear that the self-consciousness of desire or of satisfaction of desire, respectively, provides no lasting certainty, for "in pleasure I thirst for desire" (Goethe 1808, Faust, p. 3250). Thus, Faust's is an unhappy Odyssey through the world, because it does not provide him with fulfillment (Gadamer 1976, p. 60).

We still understand partially the world from our standpoint (or standpoints). Schematically, there are two basic routes for broadening or deepening this understanding: a. through introspective self-awareness and b. through the flux of interaction with the external references out in the world through communicative actions of many sorts. Thus we might advance via mutual understanding, influence

or persuasion as Habermas would suggest, toward a higher level of self-consciousness. We are fluid and situated, at the crossroads of a constant becoming. At this point, though, we need to recognize the fact that communicative actions may be vulnerable to what Kierkegaard called the 'wounds of negativity': ordinary limitations to freedom through various forms of prejudice, irrationality, and narrow-mindness, which we take measures to avoid. Some of these measures, says Nagel, involve widening the range of our self-awareness, and some require rather an attunement to the selective need for seeking it (Nagel 1986).

The hero of modernity, thus, lives in a world that offers different gifts and dangers than those of the world of the Iliad, yet the meaning of this world may remain unknowable to him, because of the diffusion and fragmentation of his life experience (Gluck 2006, p. 756). While Achilles needs to reach the full of his potential, the hero of modernity needs either to overcome certain obstacles or to get over a circumstance that circumscribes him. The hero of modernity could also be the one who bears a 'form of life that has the desire for or the will to control over emergence' (Lippens 2012). Achilles may have full vision of his life [his subjective perspective may lay in accordance with the objective perspective about himself] yet his life appears monolithic while a modern hero may have a fragmented vision of his life [as he struggles for self-awareness] and enjoy a multilayered existence.

Having said that it would be a mistake to leave aside a rather practical aspect of human action: the hidden potential of fluidity in societies which offer strictly fixed identification of their individuals and at the same time not to take into consideration the underpinning relative positioning and fixation in our societies, where fluidity moves the sand on the surface of our lives. T.S. Eliot, described the poet's attitude toward fixation in his own brilliant way: "And I have known the eyes already, known them all-/ The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase, / And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,/ When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,/Then how should I begin/ To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?/ And how should I presume"? (Eliot 1915, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock). We are what we have said plus what we have kept to ourselves; We are our words and our talking silences; We are what we have done plus our regrets; We are the sum of our desires plus what we have accomplished; Yet we remain, even for ourselves, something ungraspable, more than all these: humans, moving always beyond the given horizons.

We may again refuse the condition of absolute social fixation as a modern human condition using one core paradigm. For this purpose, we intend to follow Badiou's (2001, p. 11-12) discussion regarding the question he poses: Man: Living Animal or Immortal Singularity? Badiou, begins with the assumption that ethics subordinates the identification of a universal human subject capable of human rights and humanitarian actions to the universal recognition of the evil that is done to him. Ethics thus defines man as a victim. Badiou strongly objects this assertion: "No!", he says. "You are forgetting the active subject, the one that intervenes against barbarism! So let us be precise: man is the being who is capable of recognizing himself as a victim". Discussing the status of victims in concentration camps, the philosopher asserts that some, after a successful brutal effort become as they are treated: animals. Nevertheless, there are some others, through enormous effort, an effort acknowledged by witnesses as an almost incomprehensible resistance on the part of that which, in them, "*does not coincide with the identity of victim"*. Here, what we are dealing with is "an animal whose resistance, unlike that of a horse, lies not in his fragile body but in his stubborn determination to remain what he is-that is to say, precisely something other than a victim, other than being-for-death, and thus: *something other than a mortal being"*.

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