

**Against Liberalism:
The Social and Political Consequences of the Theory of the
Subject**

Julian A Castano Gallego

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Politics and International Relations, the University of Auckland, 2021.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to understand how individualism became cemented in contemporary philosophical, political, economic and moral thought. Understanding where exactly the locus is, we can attempt to dismantle it once and for all so that a site can be created to construct relational spaces where both ourselves and the world can flourish. This thesis identifies two different trajectories that originate in the Enlightenment in terms of thinking through the theory of the subject, the self or the individual: the subject as insular on the one hand and as collective on the other. The first trajectory presents the subject as dematerialised and informed by the division between subject and objects but also between subjects. As such the subject can only relate in the negative, that is, the subject returning to itself in order to represent the other. Here the early modern subject and its liberal offspring are presented. The second trajectory evidences the deep relationality from which the subject is constituted, here, transindividuality finds its heightened expression through Spinoza's dismantling of this first trajectory. This second trajectory emphasises on the interconnection between subject and objects that are nonetheless obscured in our current epoch and also argues that in order for relations and the world to flourish, we need to move beyond the capitalist mode of production. This project argues for the later trajectory and against the former but also attempts to show how the former has become the fulcrum from which liberal theories stem today. Once these two trajectories are clearly drawn, they will be intersected in the last two chapters of this thesis, in theory and practice, in order to evidence that liberal conceptions of justice are unable to provide a stable solution to local and global issues and to intimate how a transindividual interpretation not only helps in bringing these issues to light but provide a conceptual and practical opening for radical change. Through transindividuality we therefore can evidence the alienation that obscures the relations of subjects to objects and to other people, relations that constantly obtain under the current mode of production which liberal political and economic positions obscure through the figure of the individual.

Dedication

To my friend and recent wife Lauren Willing, to Alberto, Elda, and Shannon Walsh gracias por todo.

Acknowledgments

Since this thesis aims at revitalising the collective nature of the subject it is important to acknowledge that the author of this project is an individual in the plural. As such, part of this thesis belongs to the graduate research group lead by Campbell Jones, to the University of Auckland General library and their friendly staff, to my dog Lola and my patient wife, the Hunua ranges, the sauna of Tepid baths and the pubs of Auckland central – places where most of these pages were thought through. A special acknowledgement and deep gratitude to Campbell Jones for his outstanding commitment to his students and for his constant and patient guidance throughout this thesis. Also, to Shannon Walsh for his friendship and all the conversations which helped shaping it.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	I
DEDICATION	II
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	III
INTRODUCTION.....	1
<i>A general curiosity.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Making sense of the subject</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The plan</i>	<i>5</i>
PART ONE: THE INSULAR TRAJECTORY	12
CHAPTER 1: THE EARLY MODERN SUBJECT	13
<i>René Descartes and the rational subject</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>John Locke and personal identity.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Immanuel Kant against the rational subject.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>The early modern subject.....</i>	<i>27</i>
CHAPTER 2: THE LIBERAL SUBJECT	30
<i>Locke and the liberal standard.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>The individualistic subject in Adam Smith.....</i>	<i>37</i>
PART TWO: THE COLLECTIVE TRAJECTORY	45
CHAPTER 3: I AM AFFECTED, I AFFECT, THEREFORE I EXIST	46
<i>Spinoza with Descartes.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Spinoza against the early modern subject.....</i>	<i>53</i>
CHAPTER 4: TRANSINDIVIDUALITY	59
<i>Tracing the transindividual</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Alienation of relations versus alienation as relations</i>	<i>66</i>
PART THREE: THE <i>TOPOS</i> OF INTERSECTION.....	78
CHAPTER 5: A THEORETICAL INTERSECTION	79
<i>The liberal subject, Rawls, and the local.....</i>	<i>79</i>

<i>Sen, Nussbaum and the global</i>	85
<i>An instrument unfit for purpose</i>	89
CHAPTER 6: A PRACTICAL INTERSECTION	92
<i>Unequal environment, hybrid subsumption and so-called externalities</i>	93
<i>Transindividual environment</i>	97
<i>Activating transindividuality</i>	99
CONCLUSION	101
WORKS CITED	106

Introduction

They are casting their problems at society. And, you know, there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then, also, to look after our neighbours. – Margaret Thatcher.¹

A general curiosity

A week after Thatcher's death Samuel Brittan wrote a piece in the opinion section of the *Financial Times* praising the so-called Iron Lady and the political and philosophical legacy of the above statement. Brittan defined Thatcher's position as methodological individualism, a concept that he tried to defend in *Capitalism with a Human Face* which he centred in the liberal tradition and as a cornerstone of political thought. This type of individualism is best described as securing one's needs first and foremost, then the family, and if possible, the rest of the people in one's immediate vicinity.² Society or the government – which he seems to conflate – serves only as 'a mechanism with which people can help each other and force would-be free riders to make a contribution'.³ This is a widely held position in mainstream political discourse, for instance, J. F. Kennedy's inaugural address where he asked people to act as individuals as opposed to expecting the government to come to their aid.⁴

But where does this position come from? And more importantly, is it not more intuitive for someone to think themselves as deeply social as opposed to individuals in an

¹ Thatcher, No such thing as society.

² Brittan, *Capitalism with a Human Face*, 85–89.

³ Brittan, 'Thatcher Was Right – There Is No "Society"'.
⁴ Kennedy, 'Ask Not What Your Country Can Do for You...'

almost abstract society? These questions have become the constant occupation of my intellectual journey and the drive for this particular thesis. Namely, what if any are the philosophical assumptions that determine the discourse of liberalism? Is this a position that can obtain once being thoroughly analysed and placed under a critical lens? Individualism seems to permeate all aspects of society and can have deleterious impacts when attempting to mobilise as a collective. For instance, being concerned about individual affairs may not leave enough space to ponder how those affairs are collectively constructed.

This perhaps is nowhere as evident as the presentation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) where Article 1 states: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood’.⁵ There is a prescriptive position here, universalising the identity of the subject as endowed with reason and conscience without explicating by virtue of what or whom this endowment occurs. The normative position, that is, individuals should act in a familial spirit towards others is strikingly vague in that it does not clarify what a ‘spirit of brotherhood’ is nor indicate that these individuals ought to or must comport in such a manner. At face value, it is possible to argue that when setting aside the seemingly benevolent aspect of Article 1, one can make visible a prevalence for the individual over the collective which in this case appears just as a weak prescription. That is, the core of the article, the endowment of a certain moral standard and rights are focused on the individual without a serious emphasis on the relations from which these are formed, the individual here appears to precede the social.

A naïve hypothesis can then be posed: it may well be that it is due to this emphasis on individualism that collective issues such as global inequality, the climate crisis, and perhaps the current pandemic are issues that are so difficult or perhaps impossible to resolve. How

⁵ Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

can then these positions be reformulated so that the collective concern does not become just a weak suggestion? One can say with Derrida that ‘we must bring to light what it was that, right from the start, within these attempts at a universal characteristic, limited the power and extent of the breakthrough’.⁶ Understanding the theory of the subject and its implications in political theory are the themes for what is presented in the first part of this thesis, these will be traced from key figures of the Enlightenment. The second part will attempt to reanimate the power and extent of a possible breakthrough or better, a breakaway from individualism, this will also be traced from the Enlightenment but further interpreted through contemporary theorists. The third part will serve as a place where these ideas will be interpreted in theory but also in practice. As such, the subject is disassembled and put back together in a manner that it can no longer be thought through in isolation. Like Moten elegantly puts it, ‘the restoration of the subject will have been made possible by the subject’s having been broken’.⁷

Making sense of the subject

Making sense of ourselves and how we are positioned in the world has been a question that has preoccupied philosophers throughout history. This is what can be described as the theory of the subject, that is, the attempt to understand what it is that constitutes a person, a self. Is it the mind, the body, both or something else? The position from which my thesis starts stems from a challenge of the classic idea of conceiving the self in relation to a deity or higher being which was disrupted by the secular movement of the Enlightenment. While philosophers like Descartes sought to rationalise the ideas of God and self, others constantly sought to dissociate these two. Thinking of the self as a rational individual, a self-conscious person that has the capacity to determine both themselves and their exterior runs so deep into

⁶ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 98–99.

⁷ Moten, *Black and Blur*, 123.

the way that the individual is theorised that it has cemented in moral, economic and political philosophy. Although progressive for its time, the idea of the rational self-conscious individual has severe implications for the way we relate to the world and each other. So much so that that the very idea of relating appears to be constantly contested at best, or inapplicable at worst.

Through this thesis I have sought to trace this idea, that is, how from the Enlightenment onwards it is possible to trace the subordination of relations via the separation of object and subject but also among subjects, through key figures of the Enlightenment and some modern theorists. This thesis engages with the original works of the authors I rely on and presents a critical analysis of the way these theorists account for the idea of the subject, that is, how is it that – according to them – someone accounts for themselves and the otherness around them. The focus of this thesis, however, is not to present a comprehensive theory of the subject for that would require analysing each and every author that has either ponder it directly or articulated the basis from which one can be inferred. Nonetheless, this thesis focuses on key and important figures of the Enlightenment and is an effort to present two clear paths, one from which contemporary moral, economic, and political theories derive and another that provides alternatives to overcome the issues these contemporary theories encounter.

This thesis has also been an effort to think through crucial elements of the theory of the subject in order to have the grounding knowledge necessary to engage with contemporary debates. That is, in order to engage with contemporary attempts to solutions or critical perspectives in terms of the subject it is necessary to truly understand or at the very least to articulate an interpretation of the source of problem. As such this thesis can be of help when thinking through the potentialities a collective conception of subjects can generate, particularly – and this is not explored in this thesis – when thinking on the role the

unconscious plays in the formation of subjects and how some conceptions, particularly from the first trajectory, actively obscure the figure of the feminine subject.⁸

The plan

Two general hypotheses animate this thesis: first, whether the ideas that inform a theory of the subject from the Enlightenment are what inform individualism today and second, whether there are any conceptions which stem from the same period that challenge these ideas but can also rearticulate a different position, and alternative conception of subjects. This thesis focuses on four moments that depict two different trajectories in terms of how the subject is thought through. These trajectories can be conceptually formed as vectors, which in mathematics and physics provide a way to understand how planes are constructed as well as physical quantities.⁹ These two vectors or trajectories are radically different from one another but they are not necessarily in diametrical opposition. On the one side we have the insular trajectory, the subject is a radically isolated idea which I term the early modern subject. This idea in turn informs what I call the liberal subject. On the other hand we have a collective trajectory, the subject is thought as relational and therefore dynamic in its nature. I argue that this is what informs the concept of transindividuality. Once these two trajectories are clearly delineated, I will articulate a point of intersection that will elucidate important theoretical and practical consequences. Structurally then, this thesis is broken into three parts, namely, the insular trajectory, the collective trajectory and the *topos* of intersection. Each of them is comprised of two chapters which I will proceed to describe as follows.

In chapter one I describe the theory of the subject of René Descartes, John Locke and Immanuel Kant. These authors, although they differ in several ways, specifically in their

⁸ For an introduction of the subject in psychoanalysis see Jones, 'Collective Subjects'; Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*.

⁹ Clapham and Nicholson, 'Vector'.

treatment of substance and consciousness, coincide in representing the subject as one that is devoid of any relationality. Descartes for instance presents the subject as a thinking thing and it is this fact of being conscious of thought which secures a person's existence, 'I think, therefore I am'.¹⁰ Similarly, Locke depicts subjects as rational, that is, a self-conscious thinking thing. Nonetheless, the subject, what he terms person is one that can in fact inhabit different bodies since the only thing which secures its permanence is the person's capacity of being conscious of past actions. The body for Locke is but a tool the person utilises to own itself and nature.

Kant has a position that presents the subject, or better, represents it as the 'I' which accompanies every representation. This subject has to pass through the object in order to represent anything being inside or outside of it. However, Kant privileges the subject as any representation has to be mediated by both time and space and these are only found within the subject. Even though it may appear as though relationality obtains in the Kantian subject, it is the subject that determines the permanence of things in time and space and this presupposes that the object may well be just what the subject infers. This leads to the conclusion that, through the mentioned authors, there is a direction within this trajectory that is deeply marked by a constant urge to set apart the immaterial from the material, the subject from the object. I argue that the subject, the individual, or self which appear as concomitant ideas in the early modern subject undergoes a process of dematerialisation leaving matter at best to a subordinate position and at worst to mere contingency.

In chapter two I refer to the work of Locke and Adam Smith to evidence the radical individualism of the liberal subject which, I argue, is informed by the early modern concept of the subject. First I show that the three tenets of liberalism – freedom, equality and property – are underpinned by an appeal to reason. Persons are only capable of reason, that is, of being

¹⁰ Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, 4–5. §7

a self-conscious thinking thing. But a person, the subject for Locke is only one side of being human, the immaterial side. Being human is composed of a person and living substance, a body. This separation of body and person allows Locke to develop a theory of appropriation where it is perfectly possible to own the labour of another body in order to acquire property.

I argue that Smith reveals the radical individualism of liberal subjects in his theory of sympathy. Here he argues that we are unable to truly form an idea of what the other feels, the most this individualistic subject can achieve is to imagine what they would if they were in that situation. For Smith, much like the precursors of the early modern subject, the subject appears as isolated and incapable of true relationality. The best this subject can do is to form an approximate idea of the other as an image of the sympathiser, the subject, in order to abstractly connect to the world. I conclude that the early modern subject is characterised by a deep dematerialisation which in turn determines the liberal subject as radically insular and individualistic. The liberal subject, can only account for others and the world around them by looking inward, the subject returning to itself in order to determine that which is exterior to it. There is only negative relationality present, at least for these authors in the formation of subjects.

Chapter three of this thesis follows a moment that attempts to rethink the early modern subject. Based on Spinoza's work on Cartesian metaphysics and his theory of the affects in the *Ethics*, I argue that Spinoza's work proves the shortcomings of the early modern subject by arguing that not only body and mind are invariably united, but that the intellect is only formed to apprehend that which affects the body. Understanding the causes of the affects of the body is what Spinoza terms adequate ideas. People are constantly in relation to the world around them, if they are affected externally and do not understand why or how they are, that is, if they understand the affect as a cause, their ideas are inadequate. They are but passive vessels in the world. On the other hand, if they are able to form clear

ideas of the affects, they are internalising them, they are bringing them into their bodies. They are active in the quest for knowledge. For Spinoza, the subject is a conception that is fully immersed in relationality, namely, any attempt to situate ourselves has to first pass through, interact with their exterior. This is the direction of the second trajectory, *we are affected, we affect, therefore we exist*.

This relationality is what animates transindividuality. The constant and dynamic interaction that determines both someone and the world around them. Transindividuality is then best described as a ‘process by which the individual and collective are constituted’.¹¹ This idea of transindividuality then implies that a theory of the subject can never be conceived in the singular. The subject, in its dynamic nature is always collective and the individual is but a moment situated in a vast set of relations which constructs them.

Here is where the work of Karl Marx plays a vital role when thinking of the subject as transindividual. If with Spinoza, someone is first to account for all the phenomena that affect them so that they can situate themselves in the world, the otherness that is constantly around them must determine to a considerable extent the way that someone accounts for themselves. Through Marx’s critique of political economy, as Jason Read and Étienne Balibar emphasise, it is possible to demonstrate how the capitalist mode of production determines the way we relate to the otherness around us.

Therefore, chapter four, the second moment of the collective subject trajectory, follows the work of Read and Balibar in their treatment of the spheres of production and circulation in the first volume of Marx’s *Capital*. In this analysis, I argue that although the two authors concur in terms of the alienating function of both spheres, that is, how subjects appear as isolated in these spheres, they distance themselves regarding the effects that alienation produces. While for Read these two spheres entail an alienation of relations,

¹¹ Read, *The Politics of Transindividuality*, 6.

Balibar sees them as alienation as relation. The consequences of these two positions suggest that Read sees the mode of production as one where transindividuality cannot obtain whereas Balibar attempts to bring to light the very relations that constantly obtain but are nonetheless obscured under these spheres.

I defend the position of Balibar but I also attempt to go a step further in his analysis. Following his reading of Marx's definition of society as fluid in which he asserts that indeterminacy defines social relations thus making them highly malleable, my position is that: first, transindividuality is always present, it can be identified in every epoch and this is achieved by complicating the world that determines the subject, that is, the material conditions which in turn determine them, and second, that while in our time transindividuality presents itself as a problem, as alienation as relation because of the capitalist mode of production, it could well present itself in a positive form under a different set of conditions. Transindividuality functions both as a critical method to understand the alienating factors in a social formation and the immanent standard from which a radically new society can form.

Chapter five is concerned with a theoretical application of both trajectories. In this chapter I argue that local and global liberal conceptions of justice are unable to satisfy their objectives due to their emphasis on the individualistic liberal subject. In order to do this, I first discuss the work in distributive justice of John Rawls, namely, justice as fairness as the paradigm for the local and Amartya Sen's and Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach for the global level. Furthermore, I provide a transindividual interpretation of both approaches to evidence that not only the outcomes these authors arrive differ when put under a transindividual lens, but it can provide a more productive way to address these issues. Particularly because a transindividual account succeeds in challenging that which liberal conception cannot, namely the capitalist mode of production.

Chapter six attempts, following Marx, to put transindividuality into practice. What a practical transindividual assessment achieves in terms of inequality and climate issues is to displace the theoretical gaze from insular assessments liberal conceptions propose. Instead, transindividuality will emphasise time and again about the deep relationality and interdependence from both the world and their inhabitants. As such, the way to propose serious alternatives start from challenging the current mode of production. This is because every inhabitant of the planet is unavoidably entangled in it, that is to say, in our current epoch almost every inhabitant of the world is immersed in relations of production and consumption but also those communities who are not, are constantly threaten by it.

Here I demonstrate how everyone who participates in the mode of production is invariably connected both at the local and global level. Furthermore, I also argue that even social formations that do not participate, for instance, indigenous communities in the Brazilian amazon, are also in connection to it and so are we to them, what Marx termed hybrid forms of subsumption. This position opens the field to articulate a mode of production that is informed by the experiences of a-capitalistic communities such as these but also shows how the idea of externalities are both internal and external to the mode of production, that is, externalities are transindividual and a form of hybrid subsumption.

I seek to demonstrate that Spinoza's conception of the individual helps to understand the causes of the climate crisis which fall not on isolated individuals but a collective individual that participates in the mode of production. Since it is this mode which amounts to the majority of the climate crisis, the individual is compelled to challenge the way we reproduce ourselves and construct new ways that place that which we affect and affects us at the very core of them. Because of the deep relationality that the collective trajectory emphasises, when put in practice we can understand that the environment is a vital part in the

formation of subjects thus it has to be at the centre of any alternative mode of production and more generally, life as such.

Part One: The Insular Trajectory

Chapter 1: The Early Modern Subject

The Age of Reason or the Enlightenment was a period of tremendous import in terms of the spring of new ideas and fervent contestation of previously held positions about the self and the part God played in the subject's constitution as well as the world. This discussion is also one permeated by two positions which find their heightened expression in the Enlightenment. Reason over passions and passions over reason. The expression 'early modern subject', which I borrow from Udo Thiel, summarises this position to perfection.¹² In *The Early Modern Subject*, Thiel predominantly focuses on self-consciousness and personal identity in the work of Descartes, Locke, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Christian Wolff and David Hume but also on the historical context within which their ideas stem. Thus, as a paradigmatic shift, positioning my project from the seventeenth and eighteenth century may not be too much of a surprise, but the specific selection of authors may well be, that is Descartes, Locke and Kant.

First, as my introduction intimated, I agree with Thiel in the sense that undoubtedly, the subject or subjective position informed by 'self-consciousness and personal identity in the form in which they are so widely discussed today originate in the rich debates of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and are significantly informed by the latter'.¹³ Nonetheless, it is my position in contrast to that of Thiel's, that Kant plays a vital role in the construction of the early modern subject because his position is one that can be not only presented as a middle ground between reason and passions, from which Leibniz and Hume respectively are representatives. This is because of Kant's treatment of the empirical object. Furthermore, as I also mention in the introduction, Kant's understanding of the subject presents the closest approximation to a relationality between the subject and its exterior.

¹² Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject*.

¹³ Thiel, 2.

In this chapter, which is presented as the first moment in the trajectory of the subject as individualistic I will first describe the idea of the self as presented by Descartes. Here, the subject is asserted as the capacity of thinking, the ability to form an idea of the external world and the self which in turn validates its existence. The purpose of depicting Descartes' arrival at the subject in the way I am intending is to provide a conceptual web from which the other authors used in this chapter are invariably intertwined. Either in alignment with his main lineaments which is the position of Locke or in presenting a critical account of his work as in that of Kant. The conclusions I arrive in this chapter will serve as the foundation upon which I will argue that the liberal subject firmly stands and perhaps immovably so.

René Descartes and the rational subject

Much of what has been investigated in matters regarding modern metaphysics has been attributed to the legacy of Cartesian rationalism, most notably, from the analytical camp. Descartes' reflective mode of accessing what can be knowable in order to find the 'simplest and most general things', what he termed 'transparent truths'¹⁴ becomes the fulcrum from which modern analytical philosophers rely on.¹⁵ One particular contribution – quite aside from his explorations in calculus, geometry and physics – is the Cartesian idea of the individual, whose main argument is found in the *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641). This is not to say that such an idea cannot be found in his other works. Some articulations can be found in *Discourse on Method* (1637)¹⁶, *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), and *The Passions of the Soul* (1649).¹⁷ However, it is in the *Meditations* where Descartes fully reflects on existence and properly demonstrates his mode of reasoning.¹⁸

¹⁴ Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 27.

¹⁵ Cottingham, 'The Inaugural Address: The Cartesian Legacy'.

¹⁶ Descartes, *Discourse on Method*.

¹⁷ Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*.

¹⁸ Balibar, *Citizen Subject*, 56.

In the *Meditations*, Descartes provides arguments for two specific points, namely, the existence of God, and the distinction between the human body and the soul. It is by thinking through these two aspects and by employing his contemplative-reflective epistemology that Descartes uncovers what the individual is, as it were, composed.

Methodologically, Descartes attempts to dismantle everything that was previously known from the senses in order to uncover what is real and therefore what exists. He argues that, even though most of the ideas that we acquire are induced by or conceived through the senses, these can nonetheless be deceiving. Some dreams, for instance, are so vivid that it is quite difficult to differentiate what is imagined from what is real; we can dream of being hit, say with a hammer on a limb, and feel the pain as if we were really struck by it.¹⁹

Regardless of the immediate reality or otherwise of such events, it is possible through this exercise, Descartes argues, to arrive at certain conjectures that will help uncover what really must exist. This is made clear in his analogy of the painter. In Descartes' words:

It must surely be admitted that the visions which come in sleep are like paintings, which must have been fashioned in the likeness of things that are real, and hence that at least these general kinds of things – eyes, head, hands and the body as a whole – are things which are not imaginary but are real and exist. For even when painters try to create sirens and satyrs with the most extraordinary bodies, they cannot give them natures which are new in all respects; they simply jumble up the limbs of different animals. Or if perhaps they manage to think of something so new that nothing remotely similar has ever been seen before – something which is therefore completely fictitious and unreal – at least the colours used in the composition must be real. By similar reasoning, although these general kinds of things – eyes, head, hands and so

¹⁹ Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 25.

on – could be imaginary, it must at least be admitted that certain other even simpler and more universal things are real. These are as it were the real colours from which we form all the images of things, whether true or false, that occur in our thought.²⁰

From this point, Descartes concludes that in order to find those ‘simpler and more universal things’ we must doubt that human nature can be a reliable source from which the real can be drawn but also that God could help us better assess what is real.²¹ God is depicted therefore as a higher being of great cunning since He does not stop us in any way from being deceived by nature.²² This is the conclusion of the first meditation and perhaps the most significant step in Cartesian logic. In order to ascertain how we come to gain knowledge of anything, we must doubt everything we previously knew and start anew. This implies a form of introspection and doubt of common knowledge; what can really be known can only be known from the perspective of our own self.

Two aspects need to be clarified here. First, when Descartes refers to nature, he uses the term in a very specific way. Our nature refers to the sensual faculties that signal the brain of whatever comes from the outside world and the body, that is, feeling hot, pain, hunger, but also arithmetic and geometry.²³ Second, when Descartes suggests we are to do away with our common knowledge, it is not pretended to imply that all previous knowledge is false. This presupposition is not absolute. Such a presupposition is to be held ‘until the weight of preconceived opinion is counter-balanced and the distorting influence of habit no longer prevents judgement from perceiving things correctly’.²⁴

²⁰ Descartes, 27.

²¹ Descartes, 27.

²² Descartes, 29.

²³ Descartes, 27.

²⁴ Descartes, 29.

These two aspects are of great importance because they provide a distinct blueprint for Descartes' conception of the subject. They both hint at the way the individual makes sense of themselves. Namely, it is through the senses that what is knowable is mediated, but this thing that makes us certain of reality is not, as it were, out there. Nor are the senses themselves fully capable of explicating what we come to describe as certain or real. This capacity is only attained inwardly, which, in turn brings us to the point that all that is agreed upon regarding what is known and real can only be corroborated inwardly. The subject is the source or conduit to the real.

Keeping in mind what has been presented above regarding suspending knowledge as previously known, Descartes arrives at the conclusion that the only thing of which we can be certain, is that we exist. How can we make sure we do exist? Simply by the very fact that we are engaging intellectually in solving these existential puzzles. If we are engaging in thought in order to uncover the reality within all of us that we perceive, we must necessarily exist. We cannot think of something without invariably partaking in the process of asserting this something, therefore we too are something.

In thinking through the tactics of the cunning supreme being, Descartes concludes, 'if he is deceiving me; and let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think I am something. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist (*Ego sum, ego existo*), is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind'.²⁵ The question, however, still remains, what is this *Ego* that necessarily exists? How can we make visible this self from which the real can be known? This is better understood when looking at Descartes' argument to account for the external world.

²⁵ Descartes, 35.

Using the example of a piece of wax, Descartes attempts to understand what is it that constitutes it. Its colour, scent, shape, the sound it makes when struck could all be possible candidates for what wax is. However, when the wax is exposed to fire, it loses its scent, its colour changes and so does its shape and so forth. Yet, we still call it wax, thus there must be something else that constitutes it. Additionally, it cannot be only what we imagine it to be for that will imply it can be anything, the wax is then, what we termed it by our thought process.

The perception I have of it is a case not of vision or touch or imagination – nor has it ever been, despite previous appearances – but of purely mental scrutiny; and this can be imperfect and confused, as it was before, or clear and distinct as it is now, depending on how carefully I concentrate on what the wax consists in.²⁶

The example of wax serves to present the idea of the self in a tangential way. It is through the scrutiny of the senses, the questioning of what the mind can imagine and its distinction from thought that the real is revealed.²⁷ It is in such a process that the understanding of the mind deepens, and thus, the locus of the self arises. The self is not in the body since without the mental capacity of sense perception it is nothing but a corpse.²⁸ The body functions as an instrument, a laboratory from which the different qualities of the material can be scrutinised in order to unearth this substance which differentiates one piece of matter from another. To anticipate, Descartes interpretation of substance will be articulated in chapter three when it will be formalised by Spinoza but also further problematised. This vision of the body as mere instrument is made clear when Descartes tell us,

²⁶ Descartes, 43.

²⁷ Descartes, 39.

²⁸ Descartes, 35.

I now know that even bodies are not strictly perceived by the senses or the faculty of imagination but by the intellect alone, and that this perception derives not from their being touched or seen but from their being understood; and in view of this I know plainly that I can achieve an easier and more evident perception of my own mind than of anything else.²⁹

To sum up, the subject, this Ego that Descartes is trying to understand is thus an ideational entity. This thing that constitutes our being in relation to the world is thought and thought alone. 'I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason'.³⁰

To be sure, this conception of the subject is not fully dismissive of the material, of that which is outside the subject, the object. It states that materiality is not constitutive of the subject but a conduit to its constitution. It is through the ratiocination of the material that the subject is understood, the reality of the material is not contested nor does it play a vital role in the realisation of the subject. Once we arrive at the cogito, the material, in a circular manner, is realised through the subject. Moreover, the metaphysics of the material for Descartes can be articulated as an ideational endeavour, as shown in the wax example. The subject therefore is disconnected from the object.

The Cartesian subject is radically singular. The subject does not necessitate of any interaction nor validation from other subjects or objects which would imply a strong relationality. Instead, it only needs simple reflection. Nothing is more easily understood than the content of my own mind. Asserting the real in the world and in ourselves is a task that can

²⁹ Descartes, 47.

³⁰ Descartes, 37.

only be attained by deep contemplation. Having a concrete idea, being able to understand the different matter around the subject validates its existence. Consciousness cements the subject in reality and the material is not, but is thought.

John Locke and personal identity

Locke's idea of the subject runs in his entire thought, his political economy and theory of property. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), specifically, in chapter 27 which is concerned with the concepts of identity and diversity, Locke defines the identity of something as an aspect which remains constant in time. We conceive of identity 'when the ideas it is attributed to vary not at all from what they were that moment wherein we consider their former existence and to which we compare the present'.³¹

From this, Locke deduces his conception of the self via an analysis of the properties of different substances; a full treatment of substances is provided in chapters 23 and 24 in the *Essay*. For the purpose of this section, it suffices to mention that complex substances such as wax and the body can always be pinned down to simple substances from which we do not know much about, apart from the fact that they are both irreducible and the very thing from which complex substances originate.³²

Two important substances are thus thought through in this work: finite spirits and the body. The identity of these does not differ in the sense that such identity is revealed in their existence in time, space, and in their invariability. This is also true for inanimate matter; the identity of wax resides in the simple substance that constitutes it which is constant in time and space. This is what Locke terms 'principium individuationis; and that, it is plain, is

³¹ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 262. §1

³² Locke, 233–54. §1 through to §37 Ch23 and §1 through to §3 Ch24

existence itself; which determines a being of any sort of a particular time and place, incommunicable to two beings of the same kind'.³³

There is an important distinction regarding what constitutes invariability for living substances. Invariability in these cases is not strictly attached to matter as the case of inanimate substances, the identity of living substances resides in the invariability of the life which unites constantly changing matter. Take a plant or an animal. These two living things change in space and time however, we still identify them as they grow as the same plant and animal they were some time before.³⁴ This holds true for the identity of human life, what Locke calls identity of man. This consists 'in nothing but a participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized body'.³⁵

This far, we can prompt the hypothesis that the subject for Locke resides in the 'identity of man' but this would not take us far. As it has been shown above, the identity of living things does not differ at all, in which case we would have to conceive both of vegetable and animal life as subjects, an enticing idea for post-humanists but one that the 'Cartesians at least would not admit, for fear of making brutes thinking things too'.³⁶ To anticipate, brutes for Locke will prove to be not only animals but non-Europeans, the poor, slaves, women and children when we deal with his treatment on property.³⁷

We may ask ourselves then, if 'the idea in our minds, of which the sound man in our mouths is the sign, is nothing else but of an animal of such a certain form', and we have established that form per se does not constitute identity in living things, where is the subject located according to Locke? From what has been presented so far, we can only deduce that it

³³ Locke, 263. §3

³⁴ Locke, 264–65. §4 and §5

³⁵ Locke, 265. §6

³⁶ Locke, 270. §12

³⁷ Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*.

must reside in some aspect pertaining to the identity of this continued life that must differentiate us from other living things.³⁸

What separates us from other living things, this aspect of our continued life, is our rational capacity, which is part of a human but does not constitute them alone. Therefore, a human is composed of two substances, namely, body and finite spirit, the material and immaterial. The identity of their body does not differ from other living things but the identity of their immaterial being does. In Locke's words:

It is not the idea of a thinking or rational being alone that makes the idea of a man in most people's sense: but of a body, so and so shaped, joined to it: and if that be the idea of a man, the same successive body not shifted all at once, must, as well as the same immaterial spirit, go to the making of the same man.³⁹

The thinking rational being which belongs to immaterial substance, that which partly constitutes a human, is what Locke defines as a person. It is crucial to emphasise that this person is not to be confused with the idea of a human. A person, for Locke:

Is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it: it being impossible for any one to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive.⁴⁰

³⁸ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 265–66. §7 and §8

³⁹ Locke, 268. §8

⁴⁰ Locke, 268. §9

The person then, is necessary but not sufficient to constitute the idea of a human, nonetheless, it is in the identity of a person where the subject resides, that is, in the awareness of our own thinking. The subject for Locke, resides in our consciousness through which we are able to recollect and thus account for, previous actions and thoughts. ‘For, it being the same consciousness that makes a man be himself to himself, personal identity depends on that only, whether it be annexed solely to one individual substance, or can be continued in a succession of several substances’.⁴¹

Indeed, the Lockean subject is determined only by consciousness and not by substance. So much so, that Locke goes so far as to say that in the event that a finger was cut off our body but our consciousness remained in the finger, it would be the finger that would constitute a person and the ‘self would have nothing to do with the rest of the body’.⁴² This idea of the subject will then imply that so long as our consciousness remains intact, the self could as it were, inhabit a different substance and become another human altogether.⁴³

Immanuel Kant against the rational subject

Kant’s idea of the subject can be thought of as an extension if not formalisation of the Cartesian and perhaps Lockean subject. This is to say, the way in which Kant develops the idea of the thinking subject not only cements its validity within European philosophy but also provides a reworking of what it means to engage in apperception.

A detailed articulation of the subject for Kant is found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), in particular in book two of the Transcendental Dialectic. There, Kant endeavours to explicate the conjectures made by the rational psychologists such as Descartes, Leibniz and Wolff and, in doing so, put the cogito in its place. This is achieved by the way Kant accounts

⁴¹ Locke, 269. §10

⁴² Locke, 273–74. §17

⁴³ Locke, 273–76. §17 through to §22

for the formation of thoughts and their relation to inner and outer sense. Four paralogisms are thus thought through by Kant, namely, the substantiality of the subject, its simple quality, its existence as unity – personality – and its relation to objects in space.⁴⁴

First, Kant asserts that we are unable to ever know the subject's actual substantiality or otherwise. This is because we cannot have any knowledge of the subject in itself, what he terms the transcendental subject. The cogito takes us so far as to enunciate how representations can become thought, that is, through consciousness, but this assertion only provides a logical sequence – representations assorted in time, as opposed to the arrival at the self. The substantiality of the subject can only be accepted if we acknowledge that this concept 'signifies a substance only in the idea but not in reality'.⁴⁵

Furthermore, as to the simple substantiality of the subject, the rational psychologists argue that such a proposition is consistent with the way we form thoughts, this is to say, if representations are carried out by different subjects, by different souls, it becomes impossible for them to become one single thought. Kant instead signals a diametrically opposed process in the synthetic unity of thought in the opening parts of the *Critique*. The argument being that is it due to the plurality of representations which form a thought that its unity is collective, representations work as it were, as the various parts of a body whose movement is but the composite of its parts in motion.⁴⁶

However, Kant's assertion that the subject is not simple is not to assert its plurality, it only shows that when assessing the formations of thoughts, it appears implausible to think of a single substance as its synthetic unity, the subject however, is singular. In Kant's words: 'For although the whole of the thought could be divided and distributed among many

⁴⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 413–15. A344/B402–A348/B406

⁴⁵ Kant, 417. A351

⁴⁶ Kant, 417–18. A352–A353

subjects, the subjective **I** cannot be thus divided or distributed, and this **I** we presuppose in all thinking'.⁴⁷

We may then ask, why is it that we cannot have knowledge of the subject's substantiality nor its nature, be it simple or composite? This is because this 'I' that we call the self, or the soul, is a transcendental concept, and as such, it is not mediated by perception, thus, it neither can provide us with any knowledge of objects outside of us – Kant's transcendental object – nor point at the substratum that underlies the 'I' – transcendental subject. In other words, in order to assert the nature of the self, we must be able to think outside of it. There must be a set of external representations as it were, a third person that experiences the self and this, is implausible in transcendental dialectics.⁴⁸

Kant makes the above quite clear when he discusses the personality of the self, that is, its identity – unity – as self-consciousness.

The identity of person is therefore inevitably to be encountered in my own consciousness. But if I consider myself from the standpoint of another (as an object of his outer intuition), then it is this external observer who originally considers **me** as **in time**; for in apperception **time** is properly represented only **in me**. Thus from the I that accompanies – an indeed with complete identity – all representations at every time in **my** consciousness, although he admits this I, he will still not infer the objective persistence of my Self. For just at the time in which the observer posits me is not the time that is encountered in my sensibility but that which is encountered in his own, so the identity that is necessarily combined with my consciousness is not

⁴⁷ Kant, 419. A354

⁴⁸ Kant, 409–12. A339/B397–A343/B401

therefore combined with his consciousness, i.e., with the outer intuition of my subject.⁴⁹

In other words, when Kant talks about representations outside of us as implausible this is because, in order for the subject to access outer objects, the latter must be represented in space and their permanence in time, which he explains at great length in the first part of the *Critique*, namely the transcendental aesthetic.⁵⁰ ‘Reality in space, as a mere representation, is nothing other than perception itself’.⁵¹ Time, as mentioned above, can only be represented in me, thus, the subject can only have access to the ‘empirical object, which is called **external** object if it is **in space**, and an **inner** object if it is represented simply in the **relation of time**; but space and time are both to be encountered only **in us**’.⁵²

To sum up, the Kantian subject, much like objects outside of us, is an unknown. The cogito only serves as an instrument whose function is to organise, as it were, in time and space, our apperceptions which in turn helps us differentiate inner from outer sense.

Therefore, we cannot know the subject apart from pointing at this ‘I’ which accompanies all our representations. It is through this singular ‘I’ that we form thoughts and invariably identify in our self-consciousness. This ‘I’ however is but appearance which is as far as we can go in representation and this is the same for our relation to objects in space. The above then, implies that we cannot account for the material but in ideal terms and as such, both object and subject are not too dissimilar. For Kant,

I, represented through inner sense in time, and objects in space outside me [outer sense], are indeed specifically wholly distinct appearances, but they are not thereby

⁴⁹ Kant, 423. A363

⁵⁰ Kant, 153–92. A20/B34–A49/B73

⁵¹ Kant, 329. A376

⁵² Kant, 428. A373

thought of as different things. The **transcendental object** that grounds both outer appearances and inner intuition [transcendental subject] is neither matter nor a thinking being in itself, but rather an unknown ground of those appearances that supply us with our empirical concepts of the former as well as the latter.⁵³

The early modern subject

The above presentations of key authors provide important lineaments of what constitutes the early modern subject. I will argue that not only Descartes, Locke and Kant ponder the question of the subject in a more frontal manner, in comparison with other contemporary thinkers, but their ideas have cemented in Western thought so firmly, that they continue to provide the conceptual ground from which current notions of the subject are informed in political theory.

Therefore, I will first draw from the above sections to define the early modern subject and in the following chapter, I will use it to demonstrate how closely this idea is followed by thinkers concerned with political economy who, in turn, have contributed to the establishment of the liberal subject.

From what I have presented in the above sections, it is possible to depict a trajectory in which the idea of the subject has been transforming, redefining and, cementing itself. This trajectory is deeply marked by a constant urge, not only to understand but also to set apart the immaterial from the material, the subject from the object. The idea of the individual thus undergoes a process of dematerialisation leaving matter at best to a subordinate position and at worst to mere contingency.

From Descartes, we can evidence a move towards the subject's dematerialisation. The subject then, becomes nothing but a thought, intellect, reason, through which we understand

⁵³ Kant, 431. A380

ourselves and the world around us. This world whose truths Descartes longs to uncover is but what the Ego terms it. Thus, matter becomes the sub-order ground from which the Ego infers. In order to assert the existence or reality of ourselves and the things around us, the subject need only look inward and the rest will follow. To be sure, Descartes has to ponder the material in order to arrive at the conclusion that it is the subject's understanding that defines it. However, once Descartes arrives at such conclusion, we are left with a concept of matter that is devoid of any relation to its actual content.

In Locke's account, we go a step further. The subject, as in Descartes, is asserted in its primacy but further dematerialised. Locke's idea of the subject follows from the Cartesian cogito in the sense that the subject is a thing that thinks, namely, consciousness. However, the relation of subject to matter is fully fractured when Locke states that the subject's identity is not substance.

Substance, which in Locke's account, is the underlying element constituting the things around us is nothing but a vehicle for the realisation of the subject at a specific moment, that is, becoming human. The subject, found in the identity of person, needs nothing but the recollection of past and present thoughts, a unity within the trajectory of thought to assert its existence. Hence, it is perfectly possible for the Lockean subject to embody different living substances at different moments in history. In the subject's grounding, for Locke, the material suffers an even deeper subordination.

For Kant, even though he problematises the cogito and hints at a pseudo-material account of knowledge, he nonetheless privileges the subject in the way in which knowledge is acquired in transcendental terms. Knowledge is bound by space and time, and these are only found in us.⁵⁴ Therefore, Kant centres experience, that is, empirical apperception, but asserts that its reality can only be found in ideal terms, the real, he says, 'of outer appearances

⁵⁴ Kant, 254–56. B147–B149

is thus actual only in perception, and cannot be actual in any other way'.⁵⁵ In Kant, therefore, we are able to evidence a move towards a kind of relational dynamic between subject and object, but the subject remains in a privileged position in these sense that, due to his account of space and time, it is only through the subject that the permanence of matter is asserted.

The consequence of this that we are left with a conception of the subject which is radically divorced from its relational reciprocity with the object and other subjects. A dematerialisation of the subject. Instead, the early modern subject attains a prevalence of such a degree that it gains almost a teleological nature. It is the antecedent of any objective constructions we wish to ponder and thus a deeply singular – individualistic – mode of understanding both ourselves and the things around us. The early modern subject I argue, is cemented in Western thought to such a degree that it has become almost unquestioned, this idea has permeated not only the ways we theorise the subject but the way we live. In the next chapter, I will present the ideas of Locke and Smith in terms of property and sympathy in order to show how the early modern subject has informed the liberal standard. This will help demonstrate how the marked division between subject and object but also between subjects has become the bastion of moral, economic and political contemporary ideas.

⁵⁵ Kant, 429. A376

Chapter 2: The Liberal Subject

In the previous chapter I argued that the early modern subject is characterised by a deep division between subject and object but also among subjects. The result of such division hence evidencing the ideational primacy of the early modern subject and consequently, its marked individuality. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how this conception of the subject, in the process of dematerialisation, cannot achieve a complete interaction, a reciprocal relation with other subjects. The early modern subject becomes radically individualistic as it cannot account for the world around it but by its return to itself. This radical individualism, I argue, is the main characteristic of the liberal individual. The early modern subject as I have presented it then, becomes the conceptual ground from which liberal thought emerges.

Locke and the liberal standard

In chapter six of the first volume of *Capital* (1867) Marx identifies the capitalist market as the site of the rights of a liberal person, that is, the locus where the liberal tenets emanate. ‘The sphere of circulation or commodity exchange, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham’.⁵⁶ Here, Marx not only identifies the tenets from which the liberal tradition stem but also intimates, in the last tenet, how the liberal subject is construed.

Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, let us say of labour-power, are determined only by their own free will. They contract as free persons, who are equal before the law. Their contract is the final result in which their joint will find a

⁵⁶ Marx, *Capital*, 280.

common legal expression. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to his own advantage. The only force bringing them together, and putting them into relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each. Each pays heed to himself only, and no one worries about the others.⁵⁷

Freedom, equality and property are therefore what I take as the main principles of liberalism which will be analysed from Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (1689). These three tenets, I argue, are invariably intertwined, and they directly stem from the idea of the early modern subject. Let us start with the concept of freedom. For Locke, freedom entails self-government, to be governed by the will of no other except my own. This concept of freedom is underpinned by the use of reason, 'we are *born Free*, as we are born Rational'.⁵⁸ It is reason alone that guarantees our true freedom. Reason protects us from ongoing subjection, for we are subjected by the government of our parents until we reach an age when reason afford us the ability to govern ourselves.⁵⁹

Reason in turn, provides us with the boundaries within which our freedom is to be exercised. 'The *Freedom* then of Man and Liberty of acting according to his own Will, is *grounded on his having Reason*, which is able to instruct him in that Law he is to govern himself by, and make him know how far he is left to the freedom of his own will'.⁶⁰

Furthermore, reason instructs us in law which secures that we do not trespass on the freedom of the other. This facilitates a

⁵⁷ Marx, 280.

⁵⁸ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 308. §61

⁵⁹ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.

⁶⁰ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 309. §63

State also of Equality, wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another: there being nothing more evident, than that Creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties should all be equal one amongst another without Subordination or Subjection, unless the Lord and Master of them all, should by any manifest Declaration of his Will set one above another, and confer on him by an evident and clear appointment an undoubted Right to Dominion and Sovereignty.⁶¹

As presented here, having been ‘born rational’ guarantees both the freedom and equality among subjects, the early modern subject is then free and equal in relation with the other, provided of course, that the hand of God has not made by its touch a privileged subject capable of the subjection of others. This provides us with the substratum from where we can evidence the importance of property for the liberal subject.

Before analysing the concept of property, we need to remember what Locke means by reason and where it resides so to speak, when he thinks of the subject. As mentioned in the previous chapter, reason for Locke – as for Descartes – is the capacity of being conscious, of being a thing that thinks. This capacity, according to Locke, is to be found in the identity of the person and not of the human, for these are two different identities, the former being part of the immaterial and the latter of a combination of the former and living substance. ‘Self depends on consciousness, not on substance’.⁶² The person, for Locke,

the name for this self, is a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit; and so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness, and misery. This

⁶¹ Locke, 269. §4

⁶² Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 273. §17

personality extends itself beyond present existence to what is past, only by consciousness,— whereby it becomes concerned and accountable; owns and imputes to itself past actions, just upon the same ground and for the same reason as it does the present.⁶³

The person being endowed with consciousness, with reason, is therefore that which enables us to appropriate not only actions and their merit but all that can be imputed to that person, including land and everything on and under it.⁶⁴ In Locke's words,

Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any right to but himself. The *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his.

Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *Labour* with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *Property*. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, it hath by his *labour* something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other Men. For this *Labour* being the unquestionable Property of the Labourer, no Man but he can have a right to what that is once joyned to, at least whether there is enough, and as good left in common for others.⁶⁵

Locke intentionally states that no body can appropriate the labour of another but themselves. When he refers to a body he is referring to substance, living substance in this particular case, a body as previously mentioned is not a person and not yet a human. A body therefore cannot

⁶³ Locke, 278. §26

⁶⁴ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 290–91. §32 and 33

⁶⁵ Locke, 287–88. §27

have property since it is the person only that is capable of a law and therefore to own themselves. But a person can indeed appropriate the labour of a body, be that body theirs or another's, insofar as this body is not a human. In other words, in his separation of body and person, Locke successfully develops a theory in which appropriating the labour of another is perfectly possible so long as that body is not combined with personality, so long as this body was not born rational.

This logic of appropriation which is the cornerstone of the free and equal human therefore privileges the early modern subject.⁶⁶ A dematerialised subject that is able to combine with living substance and that which it produces, labour, in order to privatise what was given in common, and in doing so, strip other bodies of personality. This is clearly evidenced when Locke states,

thus the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servant has cut; and the Ore I have digg'd in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, become my *Property*, without the assignation or consent of any body. The *labour* that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath *fixed my Property* in them.⁶⁷

Some of this labour that is Locke's comes from the servant, but since the servant is not a person, Locke can then mix the servant's labour with his person. The servant then is but a body since it is not privileged with reason. Clearly, not everyone is born free and equal, and because 'I' own the servant, it is only the free and equal subject who is capable of property, those who have been given the world and the bodies that inhabit it in common by the lord and

⁶⁶ Balibar, *Identity and Difference*, 145–48.

⁶⁷ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 289. §28

master of all.⁶⁸ The liberal subject is not a servant, a non-European, a woman, nor a child but a mature male, these are but bodies that having not been endowed with reason, because these are ‘without estate’, can be subjected by the latter.⁶⁹ This in turn helps us elucidate what Locke meant by brutes in the previous chapter, it is clear that brutes for Locke are not only animals.

We can here take stock in Locke’s conception of the liberal subject, this is to say, what are the conditions which must obtain in order for the subject to be a liberal one. Freedom, equality and property are determined by the ability of the subject to be rational, to be a person which in itself, qualifies the human in a very particular sense, a mature man of reason capable of owning property. This idea of the liberal subject, as I have presented it, stems from my articulation of the early modern subject which is characterised by a process of dematerialisation. What may appear as a relation between the subject and object in Locke, is in fact the privileging of the subject over everything that is outside of it. The liberal subject is not in relation with the object, it is in fact free from every true relation and this in turn secures the subjects capacity to appropriate. This holds true when we see that for Locke it is perfectly possible to acquire property via a body that is not his own, so much so, that he need not exert the labour of his own body at all to have property over that which is common to all, to all liberal subjects.

This in turn can help to gesture at the radical individualism of the liberal subject. It will become more apparent in the following section but although there appears to be a degree of equality between liberal subjects and thus a relational dynamic between them, this only obtains in the negative. Natural law that deems subjects equal is only stated to secure that which belongs to a particular one. The freedom to appropriate thus makes subjects equal and

⁶⁸ Locke, 291. §34

⁶⁹ Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, 248.

nothing else appears to be required between them as bodies abound to mix labour with nature. To be sure, there has to be ‘enough and as good’ left in order for private property to obtain, but this proviso is surpassed once the concept of money is introduced.

Since Gold and Silver, being little useful to the Life of Man in proportion to Food, Rayment, and Carriage, has its *value* only from the consent of Men, whereof Labour yet makes, in great part, *the measure*, it is plain, that Men have agreed to disproportionate and unequal Possession of the Earth, they having by a tacit and voluntary consent found out a way, how a man may fairly possess more land than he himself can use the product of, by receiving in exchange for the overplus, Gold and Silver, which may be hoarded up without injury to any one, these metalls not spoiling or decaying in the hands of the possessor.⁷⁰

Gold and Silver in the form of money then afford liberal subjects with the capacity to hoard, to appropriate without leaving enough and as good available for others. Since these items do not decay, they are not constituted as waste thus the surplus created by the land and the bodies from which labour is extracted, insofar as it is converted into money, can legitimise inequalities. This, Locke reminds us, is a ‘tacit agreement’ among all men, among all liberal subjects.

To sum up, the early modern subject can be presented as the conceptual ground from which the three principles of liberalism stem. This in turn allow us to gesture at the liberal subject’s inability to truly enter into a dynamic relation with other subjects. In the above case, Locke’s conception of the liberal subject can only, at best, interact with other liberal subjects for the preservation of their property, this is to say, if the produce – surplus – of the land and

⁷⁰ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 301–2. §50

the labour of the bodies Locke commands cannot be exchanged for gold and silver, these become waste and therefore trigger a legitimate claim to diminish his property.⁷¹ At worst, liberal subjects enter into a fierce competitive relation where the sole purpose of producing surplus at a cost-effective, more efficient manner is that their exchanging of this surplus creates the production of waste by less efficient liberal subjects. Thereby leaving the doors open for expropriation of the former's property, and the expansion of the latter.⁷²

Furthermore, it is also clear that once money is introduced, the liberal subject is completely exempt of the requirement of creating labour by mixing its own body with nature. The 'overplus' as Locke calls it, created by the labour of bodies, the liberal subject extracts so that they can then be employed to acquire more bodies and through them create more property. The labour of the liberal subject becomes obsolete unless there is a new way to qualify this process of accumulation as labour. Namely, a division of labour into intellectual and physical.⁷³ To anticipate, when we present Marx's distancing from this first trajectory, it will become apparent that the separation of the body from property is one of the fundamental aspects for the preservation of the capitalist mode of production. That is to say, so long as labour has been alienated from the body that produced it, so long as it has been objectified into the commodity form, both in the sense of an object with and exchange value but also as labour power – the commoditisation of the body – this self-same substance devoid of personality becomes the defining commodity of the capitalist system.⁷⁴

The individualistic subject in Adam Smith

In the previous section I used the ideas Locke proposed in the *Two Treatises on Government* to present the three principles of the liberal subject, namely, freedom equality and property.

⁷¹ Locke, 292–302. §35 through to §47; Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, 203–20.

⁷² Moseley, 'Hostile Brothers'.

⁷³ Marx, *Capital*, 429–54.

⁷⁴ Marx, 677.

These, I argued, stem from the early modern subject as presented in chapter one, furthermore, I have gestured at its radically individualistic nature which, will be further explored in this section.

The individualistic nature of the liberal subject is markedly evident in the political philosophy of Smith. We need not look further, as Hill and Montag remind us, than the first two pages of chapter one of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) to see the influence of the early modern subject and, to use their term, to evidence liberalism's intra-individuality.⁷⁵ This radical individuality or intra-individuality will be contrasted in the next chapter with a concept much silenced by the liberal conception of the subject, namely, the concept of the transindividual.

Smith starts his theory of sympathy by exhorting readers about the ever-present sentiment of pity or compassion, an emotion that is to be found in all humanity, although differing in degree, regardless their virtuous behaviour or otherwise.⁷⁶ For Smith, sympathy is used 'to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever'.⁷⁷ Sympathy is then understood as the feeling generated by the exposure to the passions of the other.

At face value, sentiments may gesture at a clear relational dynamic between subjects, namely, we cannot truly feel for the other without situating and thus understanding their predicament. There must be a field where, the lived experiences of the other become part and parcel of our living. Otherwise, how can we account for such sentiments? Smith, however, tells us,

as we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving that we ourselves should

⁷⁵ Hill and Montag, *The Other Adam Smith*, 108–12.

⁷⁶ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 9. §2

⁷⁷ Smith, 10. §5

feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy.⁷⁸

We may ponder at this stage of Smith's application of sympathy, how then can a person form sympathetic feelings in relation to the other if we have only impressions of our own senses?

Smith answers as follows:

By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. For us to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dullness of the conception.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Smith, 9. §2

⁷⁹ Smith, 9. §2

This excerpt reminds us of what was analysed in the previous chapter, it is only our own understanding, namely, the subject representing that which is only in itself, that we can account for that which is outside of us. ‘Reason tells us that our own person is an absolute horizon’ Hill and Montag say.⁸⁰ And it is this horizon which obfuscates our relation with the other in such a concrete and irreconcilable manner that there appears to be no other way that we can account for them that in a negative sense, that is, it is only through the conscientious securing of ourselves that we can relate in ‘some degree’ with the situation of the other.

By a conscientious securing of ourselves I mean that we must be in a position of deep awareness of ourselves. There must have been a moment in time where the experiences of the other are experiences that we have lived. These need not be altogether similar but there must be a substantial degree of compatibility. If this is not the case, according to Smith, it would be very difficult, if not altogether impossible to sympathise with the other. ‘When we see a stroke aimed and just ready to fall upon the leg of or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back our own leg or our own arm; and when it does fall, we feel it in some measure, and are hurt by it as well as the sufferer’.⁸¹

Imagination in Smith’s sense, I argue, is best understood as representation in a Kantian sense. To recall, for Kant we can at best represent that which is outside of ourselves, that is, representation is but an approximation of the ‘real’ object or in this case subject we are pondering. As the above passage clarifies, it does not follow that it is due to the fact that we are able to form an idea *in vacuo* of how pain can be inflicted by a strike, it is by the very fact that we have felt such pain that we can represent it in the body of the other. In other words, if my experiences are not those of the other, they are not part of that which I am conscious, therefore I cannot truly relate, sympathise with them.

⁸⁰ Hill and Montag, *The Other Adam Smith*, 112.

⁸¹ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 10. §4

What appears as paradoxical is that on the one side, Smith seems to gesture at close connections between subject and object, and between subject and subject, when he mentions that we shudder by an action being performed on the other. It is not only the pain that the other feels that excites the same emotion but also the situation, the movement, the object approaching the limb and perhaps everything around it. ‘The mob’, the vulgar other as Smith alludes,⁸² ‘when they are gazing at a dancer on the slack rope, naturally writhe and twist and balance on their own bodies, as they see him do, and as they feel that they themselves must do if in his situation’.⁸³ On the other side, Smith tells us that such relations are not possible since representations never can carry us beyond our own person. Unless they are brought home to ourselves, unless we enter into their body we cannot then mimic those experiences.

In other words, even though these relations imply so much more in terms of what they in turn produce – and they will be explored in the next chapters – they in fact do not produce anything in themselves, it is the all-encompassing subject who determines it all. As Hill and Montag aptly put it: ‘Smith asks us to translate sympathy, previously understood as a “communication” or “transmission” of affect from one individual to another, and therefore a transindividual phenomenon, into one that is purely intra-individual, nothing more than an exercise of the imagination that finally neither depends upon others nor even requires their existence’.⁸⁴

Therefore, it is only through the subject returning to itself that any representation of the world around us and the other can obtain. Furthermore, this subject, as Smith depicts it, needs to be in a particular temperament and disposition in order to account for the other. If we are not in alignment with the temperament of the other, we cannot generate any sympathetic connection. ‘The furious behaviour of the angry man is more likely to exasperate

⁸² Hill and Montag, *The Other Adam Smith*, 142.

⁸³ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 10. §3

⁸⁴ Hill and Montag, *The Other Adam Smith*, 110.

us against himself'.⁸⁵ This in turn conditions the other to be in the right disposition in order to be accounted for. 'As we are unacquainted with his provocation, we cannot bring his case home to ourselves, nor conceive of any thing like the passions which it excites'.⁸⁶

This conditioning is of the utmost importance for Smith's moral theory since it appears as the only way the other can be made visible. To be sure, if the other causes the subject's exasperation, there must be a moment of recognition of the other's presence, but there is no true connection between the two since the subject cannot recognise such a passion within itself, it cannot inhabit the other's body in order to represent this passion. Therefore, the other has to be of the right disposition, otherwise, anything above or below the expectation of the privileged subject, what Smith calls the 'impartial spectator', will not guarantee a sympathetic connection.⁸⁷ In describing the right disposition of a person who has fallen into a dire situation, Smith tells us that,

we feel what an immense effort is requisite to silence those violent emotions which naturally agitate and distract those in his situation. We are amazed to find that he can command himself so entirely. His firmness, at the same time, perfectly coincides with our insensibility. He makes no demands upon us for that more exquisite degree of sensibility which we find, and which we are mortified to find, that we do not possess. There is the most perfect correspondence between his sentiments and ours, and on that account the most perfect propriety in his behaviour.⁸⁸

The other is therefore 'obliged, as much as possible, to turn away his eyes from whatever is either naturally terrible or disagreeable in his situation', for if the other surrenders to the

⁸⁵ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 11. §7

⁸⁶ Smith, 11. §7

⁸⁷ Smith, 70. Part II

⁸⁸ Smith, 48.

sorrows caused by the situation, ‘he could no longer keep within the bounds of moderation, or render himself the object of the complete sympathy and approbation of the spectators.’⁸⁹

Through this moderation of the other, Smith is not only attempting to conceive of the other through sympathy, to make it visible to the impartial spectator, but also to conceive of social relations whereby individuals are determined by a very specific conduct. A subject for Smith is one endowed with impeccable numbness and virtuous concealment of the excesses of sorrow, the taming of the passions in the interest of securing a society where intra-individual sympathy is possible.⁹⁰ In other words, it is in the interest of individuals to tame their passions in order to become part of society, an acceptance in society that is only asserted inwardly nonetheless as we can never truly relate with the other, what Smith aptly calls the man within. ‘The jurisdiction of the man within, is founded altogether in the desire of praiseworthiness, and in the aversion to blame-worthiness’.⁹¹ Sympathy as a socio-political project, can therefore be best presented as self-interest.

In describing this taming of the passions, Smith brings to light the vital role sympathy plays in his political economy and moral philosophy. For Smith, we want ‘to be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency, and approbation’.⁹² This may appear as though relationality is of great importance for the recipient of sympathy, however, it is self-interest again which motivates this longing. ‘It is the vanity, not the ease, or the pleasure, which interests us. But vanity is always founded upon that belief of our being the object of attention and approbation’.⁹³

This may appear as incoherent at best, or nonsensical at worst. How can someone obtain approbation of others while not accounting for them? If we cannot carry us beyond our

⁸⁹ Smith, 49.

⁹⁰ Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*.

⁹¹ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 131.

⁹² Smith, 50.

⁹³ Smith, 50.

own person, how then can we ever account for the approbation of the other? The intra-individuality of the liberal subject, as my argument elucidates, only permits us to represent a sympathetic relation with the other in the negative, in the inward. Nonetheless, Smith's articulation of sympathy is effectively fostering a normative code for regulating subjects within the constraints of the early modern subject. The systematic mimicking of a specific code of conduct therefore enables the potential connection among subjects. If any relation in actuality obtains, it does as a residue, namely, the subjection of every subject into the liberal ideal, the adoption of the impartial spectator, of the man within ready for civil society. What I mean by residue is that, even though subjects here relate only in the negative, other forms of relationality continue to obtain but are nonetheless obscured. However this will become more apparent in the next part, particularly in chapter four.

In other words, being the object of admiration which is invariably informed by self-interest, what Marx qualified as Bentham as we saw in the previous section, is the moral expression of intra-individuality and the clear political and economic project of Smith's liberalism.⁹⁴ In the locus of freedom, equality and property, namely the market, we encounter the liberal subject. As Smith reminds us in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), 'it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest'.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Paganelli, 'The Adam Smith Problem in Reverse'.

⁹⁵ Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 119.

Part Two: The Collective Trajectory

Chapter 3: I am Affected, I Affect, Therefore I Exist

In chapter one I showed that from the work of the authors I have presented, there is a marked position towards representing the subject, the early modern subject, as devoid of any relation to objects. The subject becomes an idealised construct from where every conception of the world and others stem. The expression early modern subject has been used as the most pertinent term which encompasses this position. It signifies an idea of the individual as the centre of any possible understanding not only of the conditions that are necessary in order to account for ourselves, but also that from which any conception of the external world obtains.

In chapter two I demonstrated how the principles that constitute the liberal standard are invariably informed by the early modern subject. In thinking through the work of Locke and Smith, I have elucidated the radical individualistic nature of the liberal subject. For the liberal subject, it is only through the conscientious securing of myself, the appropriation of myself at the cost of the other, that freedom and equality are possible. The other can only be accounted or made visible, in a negative sense.

Before we continue, it is important to clarify the usage of the words individual, self, and subject at this point. In previous chapters, these have been used in an interchangeable manner, to the point of implying a synonymous relation among them. This is so because both the authors of the Enlightenment and precursors of the liberal subject I have explored in this thesis, do conceive the individual as the centre of any metaphysical, epistemological, moral and political position. Much like the origin in a Cartesian space, this is to say the coordinate (0,0,0) span of any object that is to be represented, these former conceptions of the subject make the individual the origin that spans all reality.⁹⁶ Additionally, every time I have referred

⁹⁶ Clapham and Nicholson, 'Cartesian Space'.

to the subject I have used the pronoun ‘it’. This is an intentional move to intimate at the almost sterile ways in which these authors construct it.

I have gestured at certain moments of uncertainty. Reading how these authors exemplify relations with the outer world and others, especially Descartes, Locke and Smith, has left us wondering: how is it possible not to think of all the actual interactions that are produced by and constantly reproduce these very relations? For instance, the moment when a hammer is being aimed to hit someone, and thus producing a moment of unrest in us, imply so much more than what they in turn produce for these representations of subject; or the case where being endowed with reason foments a theory of appropriation both of objects and subjects.

Therefore, in this chapter, I will present an idea of the subject that, not only presupposes a continual relation or perhaps a constant amalgamation of the subject and object, but also among subjects. In other words, if we are to soothe these anxieties, the subject has to be asserted in its most comprehensive dynamic, which implies taking those examples to task once more, and in doing so, to reveal all the relations that constantly obtain when we are to conceive of ourselves, the other and the world arounds us. The subject as a concept then becomes radically different from the individual and since this part articulated how the subject is conceptualised as a collective term, it will become ‘they’.

The next section will be focused on Spinoza, his treatment of Descartes’ thought and his rearticulation of the subject in the first three parts of the *Ethics*. This is of great importance for this project as it demonstrates that during the Enlightenment, there was a radical thinker who understood the problems a Cartesian theory of the subject was riddled with and sought to conceive of an alternative vision of the self. This is one that, although has been silenced from the moment of its conception, has provided the background from which modern thinkers could not only articulate subjective positions that truly reflect and situate us

in the world, but also provides a site of resistance against the implications of liberal representations of the subject.⁹⁷

In the first section, I will present Spinoza's treatment of Descartes' philosophical principles that deal with the latter's idea of the subject and argue that through this analysis Spinoza is discovering his own philosophical position. Spinoza then departs from the teachings of Descartes due to his treatment of extended, bodily substance as well as mind substance. Finally, I will present Spinoza's mature work on the subject which proposed a radical conception of substance and thus desubstantiation of the subject. This position in turn is what animates our second trajectory, this implies that the subject can no longer be conceived in isolation.

Spinoza with Descartes

Two decades after the publication of Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, a young Baruch Spinoza published his first work named *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy and Metaphysical Thoughts* (1663).⁹⁸ This work had the intention to rework some of Descartes' major contributions to science and philosophy so as to firmly place some of the arguments made, some of which were highly criticised for their lack of rigour amongst other reasons.⁹⁹ Spinoza's project follows a geometrical presentation, this is, reasoning by way of axioms, definitions, postulates and propositions. A mode of argumentation that for this particular work implied discovering the most fundamental conditions from which the contributions of Descartes could be demonstrated and thus corroborated.

In this work Spinoza develops several axioms from which the work of Descartes will be analysed, however some of these are not directly derived from the work of Descartes.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Montag and Stolze, *The New Spinoza*.

⁹⁸ Spinoza, *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*.

⁹⁹ Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 126–221.

¹⁰⁰ Spinoza, *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, 17. See Footnote 36

This in turn implies that Spinoza is attempting to formulate a logic of its own. As Barbone and Rice remind us, throughout both the introduction and notes of this work, that in working through the principles of Cartesian philosophy, Spinoza is discovering his own thought.¹⁰¹ This is to say that, by way of rearticulating in a geometrical manner the precepts that are so crucial for the thinkers of the Enlightenment, Spinoza formalises Descartes while at the same time encountering a number of inconsistencies in the latter's thought which will prove to be a fruitful endeavour for his own philosophical awakening.

There are two specific points that are of vital importance for his awakening in terms of the theory of the subject: first, that Spinoza, with Descartes, refers to substance as a plurality; and second, that there are certain parts of his argument, specifically in terms of his metaphysical definitions which will be presented in this section, that may presuppose a potential dislocation of the mind of the individual as the privileged site of the subject.

After the prolegomenon on Descartes' meditations, Spinoza introduces ten definitions which will serve as the background for his treatment of such work. In those definitions, Spinoza describes thought as that 'of which we are immediately conscious of'.¹⁰² And ideas as 'the specific form (*forma*) of a thought.'¹⁰³ Furthermore and perhaps more importantly, 'Every thing in which there is something that we perceive as immediately inhering in a subject, or through which there is something that we perceive (i.e., in some property, quality or attribute whose real idea is in us), is called *substance*.'¹⁰⁴

This substance that Spinoza develops through Descartes' thought is a plurality and there are three important substances in his work. In the definitions, they appear as:

Substance in which thought immediately inheres is called *Mind*.

¹⁰¹ Spinoza, xx–xxi.

¹⁰² Spinoza, 14. PPCI Def. 1

¹⁰³ Spinoza, 14. PPCI Def. 2

¹⁰⁴ Spinoza, 15. PPCI Def. 5

Substance that is the immediate subject of extension and of accidents that presuppose extension, such as figure, position, and local motion, is called *Body*.

Substance that we understand through itself to be supremely perfect, and in which we conceive nothing at all that involves any defect or limitation of perfection, is called *God*.¹⁰⁵

God then is defined as that substance that determines others because it is absolute. In other words, because there exists a substance that contains all the qualities from which things are inferred, including ourselves, we can perceive of extension and thought which even in their most comprehensiveness, are but approximations of that which is supremely perfect.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, Spinoza presents the body as a substance that cannot be known through itself but only as long as we are able to think, that is, insofar as the mind substance is asserted.¹⁰⁷

The mind therefore becomes antecedent to the body. However, according to these definitions, it does not appear that the mind is the privileged site of the subject since the body is also substance, extended substance, which we perceive and thus inheres in the subject.

In this presentation, it also appears as though knowing something and the existence of that something are not necessarily concomitant ideas. Spinoza clearly states that the body is substance, we can assume its existence. Body and mind are perceived as two ‘distinct substances in reality’ which by his tenth definition, one can exist without the other.¹⁰⁸

Whatever we clearly perceive can be brought about by God just as we perceive it. But we clearly perceive mind, that is a thinking substance, without body, that is, without any extended substance; and conversely we clearly perceive body without mind, as

¹⁰⁵ Spinoza, 16. PPCI Def. 6; Def. 7 and Def. 8 respectively

¹⁰⁶ Spinoza, 20–21. PPCI Ax. 4 through to Ax. 9

¹⁰⁷ Spinoza, 18. PPCI P3 and P4

¹⁰⁸ Spinoza, 16. PPCI Def. 10

everyone readily admits. Therefore, at least through divine power, mind can be without body and body without mind.¹⁰⁹

This may sound paradoxical. How can then extended substance exist on its own if it is not known through itself? We have to remind ourselves that Spinoza is attempting to formalise the thought of Descartes and this is not an easy endeavour. So far, by the definitions of substance and distinctness in reality, we can infer that God's substance is the only substance known through itself. Body substance requires mind substance to assert it, and mind substance is but a receptacle of thought and its modes. Therefore, we can say that at least through divine power, that is, by reference to that which contains all perfection, those substances can be said to exist.

This prompts Spinoza to redefine substance in the second part of this book as 'that which, in order to exist, needs only the concurrence of God.'¹¹⁰ This is a definition that is informed by Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*, in which substance is not only described as that which exist by itself and nothing else but it is not defined univocally, this is, substance is understood differently when thinking of created things such as mind and body and when thinking of God.¹¹¹ Knowing, at least by Spinoza's two definitions, can be understood as a function and not the substratum of the self.

The division between mind and body, their capacity to be distinct in reality, is taken from Descartes' sixth meditation. However, such a division has very different implications in terms of the subject, as was discussed in the first chapter of this project. In Descartes' words,

¹⁰⁹ Spinoza, 32. PPCI P8

¹¹⁰ Spinoza, 45. PPCII Def. 2

¹¹¹ Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, 22–23.

thus, simply by knowing that I exist and seeing at the same time that absolutely nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing, I can infer correctly that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing. It is true that I may have (or, to anticipate, that I certainly have) a body that is very closely joined to me. But nevertheless, on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it.¹¹²

The self can therefore exist without the body since, as thinking things, our body or extended substance is but a corpse that is worthless if not conjoined with the thinking self.¹¹³ For Descartes then, knowing, the understanding of any thing is what ensures its existence as well as the self.

In this formalisation of Descartes' *Meditations*, Spinoza signals a clear departure from Descartes' metaphysics, specifically in terms of substance and their implications regarding the subject. At this point, both authors conceive substance as a plurality and a potential division between body and mind. Nevertheless, while for Descartes the subject is thought, Spinoza's subject can be comprised at the very least of substances and not just thinking substance. Granted, the latter has to be asserted first, but this is because in order to utter I know my body, I need to have an idea of it which is not the locus of the subject but a form of thought, a mode to assert that which I perceive.

¹¹² Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 109.

¹¹³ Descartes, 35.

This disparity between mind and body in terms of substance as well as the potential rearticulation of the subject is a crucial moment for Spinoza's philosophical awakening and for the concept of the transindividual. What was merely signalled about the subject in the *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* becomes the force that motivates Spinoza's radically new concepts of God, the human, and the individual.

Before delving into these concepts, it is appropriate to pose a question that will help us understand Spinoza's problematisation of Descartes' idea of substance. If substance as a first principle intuitively refers to a thing that constitutes others but is not constituted by anything else but itself, how can we think of the body and mind as substances that are distinct in reality but also needing the concurrence of a higher substance? If things are understood through God, and God contains all elements of a problem, does not a subset become a subset by the sheer fact that it draws from the all-encompassing set? These are precisely the questions that can be posed when thinking through Spinoza's magnum opus and will help us present the base from which the transindividual is erected.

Spinoza against the early modern subject

In the *Ethics* (1677), published after his death, Spinoza further departs from Descartes' definition of God but also dismantles what is crucial for this project, namely, the division between subject and object as well as the subject's radical individuality. Additionally, Spinoza formulates a theory of the affects that will have invaluable implications for a more dynamic conception of the subject. To anticipate, contra Descartes we can say with Spinoza, *I am affected, I affect, therefore I exist.*

Spinoza defines substance as 'what is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be

formed'.¹¹⁴ And God as 'being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which expresses an eternal and infinite essence'.¹¹⁵ Additionally, the important notions of attribute, and mode are defined. The former refers to what 'the intellect perceives of a substance'.¹¹⁶ And the latter as 'the affections of substance'.¹¹⁷ That is, mode is that which is present in things that are not conceived in themselves but through substance.

Here Spinoza demonstrates that since substance cannot be conceived through another, two substances must be two entirely different things with entirely different attributes.¹¹⁸ However, a substance has to be necessarily infinite since finite things are 'limited by another of the same nature'.¹¹⁹ This would imply a relation between substances but since substance is infinite and possesses infinite attributes, we would have to conceive of two infinite things that are absolutely different and unrelated to each other. This is absurd so substance must be indivisible.¹²⁰ The chief endeavour of metaphysics is to arrive at a point where the object of inquiry is irreducible, and thus cannot be explained through any underlying phenomena. By definition, we know of one substance with such properties, which is God. Therefore, God is the unique substance that is conceived through itself and everything else has to be conceived through God.¹²¹

Substance, contra Descartes, is therefore indivisible and does not pertain to mind and body. Rather, this substance is God. This is a God that is entirely different from Descartes' as well as common Judeo-Christian conceptions, for the God of Spinoza is not a personified substance, or to articulate in the opposite, humans are not created in the image of a God. Nor can they ever assume to conceive all its attributes nor think of it as the director of the

¹¹⁴ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 1. EI Def. 3

¹¹⁵ Spinoza, 1. EI Def. 6

¹¹⁶ Spinoza, 1. EI Def. 4

¹¹⁷ Spinoza, 1. EI Def. 5

¹¹⁸ Spinoza, 2–3. EI P2 through to P5

¹¹⁹ Spinoza, 1. EI Def. 2

¹²⁰ Spinoza, 4–9. EI P8 through to P13

¹²¹ Spinoza, 10–13. EI P15

universe.¹²² God is nature, *natura naturans*. Everything else including ourselves is *natura naturata*. That is, ‘whatever follows from the necessity of God’s nature, *or* from any of God’s attributes, that is, all the modes of God’s attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God’.¹²³ God is substantialised, God is everything around us: all the phenomena we constantly strive to understand and that is constantly in interaction with us.

Of this substance we know of two attributes: extension and thought. Humans are thus conceived through those attributes. However, Spinoza reminds us that attributes can only pertain to substance and substance is not fragmented nor divided.¹²⁴ Our properties so to speak are not the two attributes themselves but their modes, namely, body and mind. From this, it clearly follows that we are not like God nor is God like us, we are not created by God but conceived through God. We follow from all the elements of nature we can understand, that comprise our body and mind.¹²⁵

Here then, Spinoza presents a comprehensive account of the nature of the mind and body. This is an account that will prove to radically break from the influence of Descartes. In terms of this thesis, this will help us understand why subject and individual are different concepts. For Spinoza body and mind are not two separate substances nor attributes. They are modes by which, in the case of the former we are affected, and by which we make sense of those affections in the case of the latter.¹²⁶

For Spinoza then, body and mind are united and the more we are able to make sense of the affections of the body, the more we are able to form adequate ideas from them and the closer we are to understanding ourselves and the world around us.

¹²² Spinoza, 25–31. EI App

¹²³ Spinoza, 21. EI P29 Schol

¹²⁴ Spinoza, 9. EI P12

¹²⁵ Spinoza, 21. EI P31

¹²⁶ Spinoza, 47–48. EII P19

For if the object of the human mind were not the body, the ideas of the affections of the body would not be in God in so far as he constituted our mind, but in so far as he constituted the mind of another thing, that is, the ideas of the affections of the body would not be in our mind; but we have ideas of the affections of the body. Therefore, the object of the idea that constitutes the human mind is the body, and it actually exists.¹²⁷

By adequate ideas, Spinoza refers to the ability of understanding the causes of the affects of the body. We are constantly in relation to the world around us. If we are affected externally and do not understand why or how is it that we are affected, that is, if we understand the affect as a cause, our ideas are inadequate. We are but passive vessels in the world. On the other hand, if we are able to form clear ideas of the affections, we internalise them, and bring them into our bodies. We are active in the quest for knowledge.¹²⁸

This distinction between affections in terms of being able to form clear and distinct ideas or otherwise is the chief purpose of the third part of the *Ethics*. Adequate ideas of the affects become actions and inadequate ones are passions.¹²⁹ By framing our ability to grasp ourselves and the world around us, Spinoza is clearly signalling a constant and dynamic relation between subjects and objects. In this sense, Spinoza is formulating a theory of the subject where there is permanent interaction. Adequate and inadequate ideas are part and parcel of our lives, they serve as to situate us in a particular moment.

To be sure, humans are always striving towards knowledge of themselves and the world. However, the very fact that we always have to account for those affects that are

¹²⁷ Spinoza, 39–40. EII P13

¹²⁸ Spinoza, 69–70. EIII Def. 1 through to Def. 3

¹²⁹ Spinoza, 70–71. EIII P1

tumultuous or obscure, presupposes that at any point in time, if we are to make ourselves visible, we have to account first, for all that surround us. The otherness that is not me but is always part of me because it situates me. Furthermore, we can see that this particular manner of accounting for the subject clearly impedes any conception of them as radically individualistic. It is only through the securing of the other that I can account for myself. We have to inhabit the world. This means to be in touch with humans and the world if we are to account for our existence.

Spinoza makes this point very clear when he states: ‘By singular things I understand things that are finite and have a determinate existence. And if a number of individuals so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, I consider them all, to that extent, as one singular thing’.¹³⁰ This idea of individuation has remarkable implications for the theory of the subject. The individual is either plural or singular in terms its effects, the subject on the other hand, is always a multiple, a collective concept that encompasses individuals and objects. The subject is materialised or better, de-substantialised, so that it can then be seen as a relation, a constant point of motion, as opposed to a privileged site of representation, one that determines everything and every self by creating an irreconcilable fracture between them.

To sum up, in the *Ethics*, Spinoza turns the early modern subject on its head as he formulates a detailed geometric exposition of the way the subject is to be understood. This subject is no longer characterised by a break between subject and object, nor is it understood in terms of a radical individualism. It is a conception that is fully immersed in relationality, that is, any attempt to situate ourselves has to first pass through, interact with the exterior. *We are affected, we affect, therefore we exist*. The subject then, understood as relationality, cannot be conceived in the singular, hence Spinoza reminds us time and again throughout the

¹³⁰ Spinoza, 32. EII Def. 7

Ethics of the constant presence of passions and actions that constitute our very being at any point in time. This in turn dislocates the intra-individual nature of the liberal subject since, even in the singular, the individual is determined in terms of effects they are assumed to be a cause.

Chapter 4: Transindividuality

The previous chapter demonstrates that in the same period that Descartes developed an account that became the conception of the subject par excellence – a conception that can be clearly traced throughout the work of Locke and Kant – there was a brilliant theorist that not only sought to bring to light its shortcomings, but to construct a theory that will better explain the way in which we can account for ourselves. Moving away from the first trajectory, Spinoza's account of the subject grounds it in relationality, *we are affected, we affect, therefore we exist*. A collective trajectory of the subject is set in motion.

I believe that the work of Spinoza has motivated theorists to articulate a position that has a twofold effect: it demonstrates the flaws of previous conceptions of the subject while at the same time provides a conceptual field where they cannot operate. That is, because of Spinoza's emphasis on relationality via the affects, the early modern subject appears as a conception that fails to accurately account for the subject's continuous connection with both objects and other subjects which in turn constructs them. Furthermore, the subject's desubstantiation prevents further articulations from getting caught in the metaphysical operations whose inadequacies this project is evidencing.

In what follows I will present transindividuality or the transindividual as a conception of the subject that fulfils the above criteria. First, I will provide a brief account of how this concept came about, then I will clarify why Balibar is critical for the transindividual precisely because of his position regarding philosophical anthropology. Subsequently, I will show the importance of Marx in terms of the transindividual due to his clear conceptual overcoming of the early modern subject – and thus the liberal one – by his material accounts of individuals and his emphasis on the social conditions that determine them. Finally, I will show how Balibar and Read interpret transindividuality through Marx's critique of political economy

but also evidence how their positions differ, I will further suggest a transindividual position that favours Balibar's but goes one step further, namely, that transindividuality transforms depending on the epoch in which it is being analysed because of the malleability and potentiality this concept suggests.

Tracing the transindividual

Transindividuality is a term that sprang from the work of Simondon, specifically in his theory of individuation which had shed a new light into the work of Spinoza.¹³¹ And perhaps more importantly, it has motivated the resurgence of the subject in its dynamic nature.¹³² That is, following Simondon, how in the process of individuation, of accounting for the individual in culture, the individual is in constant transformation.¹³³ Furthermore, this idea of the individual ceases to be the centre of any conception of the self and the world. As Read points, Simondon's concept of 'the individual is situated with respect to the relations that constitute and individuate it: it has a reality, but is not all of reality'.¹³⁴

It is however the work of Balibar which will prove important for this project since Balibar focuses 'primarily on transindividuality as a way to conceptualise political and social reality'.¹³⁵ Balibar does not distance himself from Simondon a great length, but for Balibar transindividuality presents itself as a problem that the work of Simondon may not be able to pose. This refers to the second effect of the twofold nature of the position I previously mentioned. For Balibar, the fact that Simondon and the authors that have rearticulated his position begin their analysis from individuation, they risk 'running back into the metaphysical antithesis of the individual and the collective we had sought to escape'.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Combes, *Gilbert Simondon and the Philosophy of the Transindividual*, 101.

¹³² Simondon, 'On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects'.

¹³³ Combes, *Gilbert Simondon and the Philosophy of the Transindividual*, 100–108.

¹³⁴ Read, *The Politics of Transindividuality*, 6.

¹³⁵ Read, 103.

¹³⁶ Balibar, 'Philosophies of the Transindividual', 6.

This can also be seen as radically different mode of understanding humans. Balibar is engaged in a rearticulation of philosophical anthropology, which he claims Simondon's predecessors do not endorse.¹³⁷ Philosophical anthropology is generally defined as 'the attempt to delineate a universal human nature, nevertheless plastic enough to take on the different shape it appears to have in different cultures and at different times'.¹³⁸ However, for Balibar philosophical anthropology is not so much focused in the shape or form of appearance human nature takes in different times but on how it materialises in history, through praxis, which in turn complicates this definition.

That is, it may not be as important for philosophical anthropology to articulate a universal prescription of human nature than to delineate that it is in the very interaction of humans that this is constructed. The universality of a human nature can therefore be contested, universality is perhaps replaced by relationality which in its situated manifestation is never general. Consequently, it displaces the idea of a human as a centre of analysis but instead takes it a just part of it, what Balibar terms an ontology of relations. The subject is not One, it is not totality.¹³⁹

Therefore, the importance of philosophical anthropology as Balibar depicts it is that it takes into account the relations in which humans are inscribed in their situated manifestation.¹⁴⁰ That is, it considers relations as fundamentally social without falling into the pitfalls of a generalised prescription of humanity.¹⁴¹ It is due to this situatedness of social relations that we can see transindividuality as a problem – or a way of problematising – which evidences the different tensions that arise in different social formations.¹⁴² But perhaps more importantly, it also provides an opening for contestation of the almost dogmatic idea of

¹³⁷ Balibar, 6.

¹³⁸ Blackburn, 'Philosophical Anthropology'.

¹³⁹ Balibar, 'From Philosophical Anthropology to Social Ontology and Back', 12.

¹⁴⁰ Read, *The Politics of Transindividuality*, 83; Balibar, *Citizen Subject*.

¹⁴¹ Read, *The Politics of Transindividuality*, 84.

¹⁴² Read, 86.

the self at the centre of the universe and thus an opening for resistance.¹⁴³ If Spinoza activates the trajectory, like a in a vector providing its direction, transindividuality gives it its magnitude.

It is no surprise then, that in bringing to the fore the tensions present in different social formations as well as evidencing how these crystallise in different epochs the work of Marx becomes paramount for transindividuality. Both Balibar and Read rely on Marx's treatment of the spheres of circulation and production to articulate these tensions but before we deal with this specific aspect of transindividuality in Marx, it is important to illustrate first that in Marx's work there is a clear overcoming of the early modern subject and its liberal offspring. This is to say that even though my focus on Balibar and Read is predominantly to do with the alienating factors of the capitalist mode of production that transindividuality evidences, some of Marx's positions, particularly on the early work from 1845 to 1847 but also from the *Economic Manuscripts* starting from 1857, can also be read as a clear problematisation if not overcoming of the previous trajectory.

Although Marx's work was not directly engaged with formulating a theory of the subject, it is possible to articulate a position in terms of the subject through his immanent critique of political economy. Read identifies transindividuality in Marx's thought as early as *On the Jewish Question* (1843) which he summarises in two themes: a critique of the isolated individual and a critique of the state as an illusory communal construct.¹⁴⁴ These are not two different or independent themes but thematising them in such a way evidences the constant tension between an alienating society under the appearance of a communal polis and a civil society from which individuals are made visible. 'The path from the particular interests in

¹⁴³ Balibar, 'Subjection and Subjectification'.

¹⁴⁴ Read, *The Politics of Transindividuality*, 69.

civil society to the universal of collective belonging is always broken for Marx: it can only be traversed by a transformation of the entire social order, by a revolution'.¹⁴⁵

This transformation can be achieved by 'making species-being a collective and individual practice. The division can only be overcome by addressing it in terms of both thought and reality, the existing social order and the images and representation of that social order'.¹⁴⁶ This revolutionary transformation Read identifies as the third theme in Marx's transindividuality, that is, the point of change through evidencing previous untenable positions. For Read then, individuals are made visible, they are individuated, within the fissures of those tensions but what is most important is that in Marx, as Read eloquently points, we can constantly arrive at a transindividual critique through the ambiguities between thought and reality while at the same time providing an opening for a radically new construction of subjects. It is through the exposure of the fissures and moving beyond them that transindividuality can obtain.

If Marx's work is transindividual through and through – as Balibar and Read emphasise – then we can easily point at his departure, or better, overcoming of the early modern and liberal subject. This is to say, it is possible to point in Marx to an overcoming of the division or break between subject and objects as well as the liberal subject's radical individualism. The overcoming of the division between object and subject can be traced through all of Marx's work but it is quite salient in his *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845), especially where in Thesis two he grounds objective truth as a '*practical* question'.¹⁴⁷ For Marx, the idea of reality cannot exist unless it traverses the material world. Things cannot establish themselves 'as an independent realm in the clouds' where the early modern subject appears to reside.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Read, 70.

¹⁴⁶ Read, 70.

¹⁴⁷ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works Vol 5*, 3.

¹⁴⁸ Marx and Engels, 4.

This position is also present in Thesis six where Marx asserts the relationality inherent in individuals. ‘The essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations’.¹⁴⁹ Marx’s position then is one that overcomes a fracture between object and subject but also among subjects that is present in the early modern subject. For in his method, there is constant interaction with the material world, the otherness of which we are part of plays a vital role in our conception of ourselves. Thesis six is one that has merited substantial commentary, predominantly by Bloch and Althusser which Balibar explores in great depth, for Balibar, secularisation of the subject, as the early modern conception attempts, is not sufficient and one of the main aspects that Marx demonstrates in the *Theses* is the new materialisation of the abstract subject.

The full argument becomes explicit: “ancient Materialism” (to which Feuerbach still belongs) will not be able to overcome the alienation that it loudly denounces, because it is still a “bourgeois” philosophy assuming an individual “naturally” separated from others (or *separately* referred to the essence of the “human”), whereas a “new Materialism” – whose key categories are “social relations” constituting the human and *praxis*, or a practical transformation already at work in every form of society – is able to explain how *humanity* returned to its essence (or its authentic being) by *acknowledging* (no denying, repressing, or contradicting) its own “social” determination.¹⁵⁰

The overcoming of the individualistic subject is particularly salient from Marx’s *Economic Manuscripts* onwards. For instance, in the introduction of the *Grundrisse* (1939), Marx

¹⁴⁹ Marx and Engels, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Balibar, ‘From Philosophical Anthropology to Social Ontology and Back’, 9–10.

emphasises the conception of the individual as constantly immersed in society while evidencing the historical myopia the liberal subject generates.

Only in the eighteenth century, in ‘civil society’, do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes, as external necessity. But the epoch which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed social (from this standpoint, general) relations. The human being is in the most literal sense a ζῷον πολιτικόν [political animal], not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society. Production by an isolated individual outside society – a rare expression which may well occur when a civilized person in whom the social forces are already dynamically present is cast by accident into the wilderness – is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living together and talking to each other.¹⁵¹

The very nature of humans is therefore founded on the constant interaction with their exterior. We are deeply embedded in material relations which constructs us, and it is through understanding such relations, in the midst of society, that not only can we account for our singularities – whose ‘social forces are dynamically present’ – but we can evidence the isolating nature of liberal conceptions of the subject. Marx therefore departs from such position at once by his very treatment of the individual in capitalist production, this is to say, the articulation of an isolated individual is a product of a specific epoch and not a metaphysical given.¹⁵² Now that I have gestured at Marx’s clear overcoming of the

¹⁵¹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 84.

¹⁵² Marx, 162–63.

conceptions of the subject elaborated in the first two chapters of this thesis, I will present in the next section the transindividual in Marx's treatment of the spheres of circulation production through Read and Balibar.

Alienation of relations versus alienation as relations

Since Marx calls us to understand and challenge the material conditions which determine our lives, there is no better place to start – and thus assess transindividuality – than in the very relations which condition our reality, relations that upon scrutiny prove to be nothing more than apparatuses of division. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) Marx brings to the fore a transindividual critique through his critique of private property.

Just as *private property* is only the perceptible expression of the fact that man becomes *objective* for himself and at the same time becomes to himself a strange and inhuman object; just as it expresses the fact that the manifestation of his life is the alienation of his life, that his realisation is his loss of reality, is an *alien* reality: so, the positive transcendence of private property—i.e., the *perceptible* appropriation for and by man of the human essence and of human life, of objective man, of human *achievements*—should not be conceived merely in the sense of *immediate*, one-sided *enjoyment*, merely in the sense of *possessing*, of *having*.¹⁵³

Instead, much like Spinoza, Marx emphasises on the affects, on all the elements that constantly inform and transform our reality.

¹⁵³ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works Vol 3*, 299.

Man appropriates his comprehensive essence in a comprehensive manner, that is to say, as a whole man. Each of his *human* relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, observing, experiencing, wanting, acting, loving—in short, all the organs of his individual being, like those organs which are directly social in their form, ||VII| are in their *objective* orientation, or in their *orientation to the object*, the appropriation of the object, the appropriation of *human* reality.¹⁵⁴

Marx understands all too well that in the process of primitive accumulation or original expropriation, which he demonstrates in great detail in the last chapters of the first volume of *Capital*, not only is there a fulcrum from which the capitalist mode of production is set in motion.¹⁵⁵ But that a deep transformation of the subject is at play, ‘nature does not produce on the one hand owners of money and commodities, and on the other hand men possessing nothing but their labour-power’.¹⁵⁶ It is through the appropriation of human reality that we can overcome the divisions that determine our lives, but it is in the expropriation of our very relationality where the work begins.

Thus, in our current epoch we can argue that we lead an atomising life where the only means of flourishing is to acquire enough surplus by selling our labour power; to go beyond the point of living from hand to mouth.¹⁵⁷ To accumulate private property so that we can appropriate the whole of ourselves, which may not happen at all or at best at the last stages of our lives. As Read points out with Marx, ‘the private individual, the individual with only her labour to sell and only her commodities to relate to the world, is not the zenith of freedom but the nadir of alienation, cut off from the species, from nature, and her own potential’.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Marx and Engels, 299–300.

¹⁵⁵ Marx, *Capital*, 873–931.

¹⁵⁶ Marx, 273.

¹⁵⁷ Marx, 274.

¹⁵⁸ Read, *The Politics of Transindividuality*, 71.

These divisions that obscure our very nature therefore appear in their most salient form in the capitalist mode of production, particularly, in the processes of commodity production and exchange. For Read – as for Balibar – these two spheres reflect the immanent tensions and ambiguities that the capitalist mode of production necessitates for its successful operation. This is to say, the isolated individual of exchange and the cooperative individual under production.¹⁵⁹

In the former, individuals apparently encounter each other on an equal footing, as free and isolated sellers and buyers, while on the latter, there is a constant cooperation among labourers which facilitates the smooth production of commodities. The tensions between these two spheres are part and parcel of relations of production and consumption. This guarantees that the capitalist mode of production is unencumbered while at the same time expropriating us of our true relationality, our transindividuality. This obtains because before individuals engage in production, they have been alienated from the means to produce. Their cooperation is premised on the fact that they have no other way of subsistence but to sell their labour power. This also holds in commodity exchange, where individuation obscures the cooperation of individuals under the form of objects for sale.¹⁶⁰ What Marx termed the fetishism of the commodity.¹⁶¹ The prevailing relation under the capitalist mode of production is between the labourer and their means of subsistence which in turn obscures the transindividual nature of production and exchange.

For the transformation of money to capital, therefore, the owner of money must find the free worker available on the commodity market; and this worker must be free in the double sense that as a free individual he can dispose of his labour-power as his

¹⁵⁹ Read, 72.

¹⁶⁰ Read, 74.

¹⁶¹ Marx, *Capital*, 165–66.

own commodity, and that, on the other hand, he has no other commodity for sale, i.e. he is rid of them, he is free of all the objects needed for the realization [*Verwirklichung*] of his labour-power.¹⁶²

This prompts Read to assert that ‘between the sphere of circulation, which is made up of isolated individuals, and the sphere of production, which represents their cooperative relations as the relations of capital, transindividuality, everything that exceeds the individual, cannot appear’.¹⁶³ That which these fissures evidence is the individuated individual. For Read, what can be made clear about those two spheres of the capitalist mode of production is that in both of them, another individuation is at play. It is fairly clear in the sphere of circulation but also demonstrable in the hidden abode of production. That is, the process of production which in its very instantiation is a relational process, serves to isolate individuals from the true cooperative nature of such an endeavour since their very presence in production presupposes competition: on the one hand, among labourers to secure their means of subsistence, and on the other hand, among owners of the means of production and labourers so that money can be turned into capital, so that surplus value can be extracted from labour.¹⁶⁴

The productive process, the labour of the social individual, is co-operative, but this co-operation cannot be considered communist in any prefigurative sense; it is not a glimpse of a ‘free association of producers’. This is because neither of these spheres, production or consumption, can be considered to be separate from the other. As much as production is a cooperative relation, it is still a cooperative relation subject to the

¹⁶² Marx, 272–73.

¹⁶³ Read, *The Politics of Transindividuality*, 77.

¹⁶⁴ Read, 77.

dictates of the extraction of surplus value to an immense disciplinary apparatus that guarantees that labour is conducted to maximum productivity. Capitalist society is split, not just between the isolated individual of consumption and the social individual but also between the anarchy of competition and the despotism of production.¹⁶⁵

We can therefore say that for Read, in his analysis of the spheres of circulation and production, to borrow from Balibar, there is an alienation of relations. The transindividual cannot appear or better still, their true form is never present under a capitalist mode of production because even in its cooperative sphere, alienation still obtains. Thus, we can confidently say that at least for the transindividual to appear, to be made visible, a transformation of the mode of production must take place, we must move beyond and create a mode of production where alienation cannot obtain.

Read bases a lot of his work in the writings of Balibar, so much so that a full excursus is dedicated to the former in *The Politics of Transindividuality*. Nonetheless, Balibar goes a step further in his latest work on transindividuality. For in this work as was briefly mentioned in the previous section, Balibar is engaged in formulating, through Marx, a position whereby the metaphysical inadequacies this project has revealed cannot function.

Marx makes the *relation* or the *relationship* (*Verhältnis*) both what ‘engenders’ or constitutes for each subject its own individuality, and what makes this individuality immediately ‘dependent’ on all the other individualities, following the way in which they have been instituted. It is in this double constitution that I have called ‘transindividuality’ and which, on the ruins of a certain philosophical anthropology, I proposed to consider as a point of departure for an ‘ontology of relations’ in a

¹⁶⁵ Read, 78.

materialist sense, so as to mark the irreversibility of the gesture of *double rejection* already mentioned: individuality is not ‘autonomous’, conceivable separately as a ‘first substance’ or an ‘originary subjectivity’; but neither it is reducible to the totality which encompasses it, whether this is conceived abstractly, as a generic essence, or in an apparently more concrete way, as a society or community the unity of which is hypostatized.¹⁶⁶

The double rejection that Balibar mentions here is salient throughout this thesis: on the one hand we have, the prevalence of the individual at the expense of society which is present in both the early modern subject and the liberal one; and on the other, society at the expense of the individual which this work is attempting to avoid by framing transindividuality as a way to problematise social formations. The social is not One and neither is the subject.

For Balibar then, the double rejection or double effect is a position that, as the previous section shows, runs throughout Marx’s body of work. Marx denounces the apparently isolated human whose social forces are obscured while at the same time activating individuality in its fullest, that is in its affective relationality. Returning to the *Theses*, Balibar argues that Marx ‘is careful not to assign to constituent “social relations” a precise social or institutional *sphere*: it is *indeterminacy* that affects the content and object of social relations and thus makes them “plastic” or susceptible to being realized in turn in a multiplicity of “interactional” situations’.¹⁶⁷ It is in the spirit of this position of indeterminacy, of the rearticulation of a malleable subject that circumvents the problems evident in the previous trajectory, that Balibar proposes a transindividual position as alienation as a relation. In other words, Balibar agrees with the reading of Read in the sense that he concurs with the

¹⁶⁶ Balibar, ‘Philosophies of the Transindividual’, 8.

¹⁶⁷ Balibar, 9.

alienating elements Read identifies in the mode of production. Nonetheless, Balibar proposes to articulate a second position whereby the transindividual is in fact visible through the process of alienation. The transindividual, contra Read, appears, is visible in the relations of production and circulation. For Balibar ‘this alternative seems to figure essentially in Marx's famous exposition on the ‘fetishism of the commodity’, on condition that it is read not only as a denunciation, but as the description of a structure historically active in the *actuality* of social relations’.¹⁶⁸

In *The Philosophy of Marx* Balibar situates the subject for Marx in praxis. The material conditions that obtain in different social formations are what constitute the subject, therefore transindividuality is always made visible, that is, it can always be analysed in the social practice of a specific epoch. ‘The only ‘subject’ Marx speaks of is one that is practical, multiple’.¹⁶⁹ Taking into account our specific epoch then, this implies that for Balibar, one of the ways individuals in our time account for themselves is mediated by or has to pass through, their objectified labour, that is, ‘they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work but rather as material [*dinglich*] relations between persons and social relations between things’.¹⁷⁰

Seeing commodity fetishism as the actual manifestation of our relations has very important consequences for his account of transindividuality since taking this position would frame the subject, early modern and liberal, as the determining factor for making relationality visible. As this thesis has sought to demonstrate, it is because the first trajectory has cemented itself in history so firmly that it has become almost teleological and unquestioned, nonetheless, it is by rearticulating their positions and thus revealing their shortcomings, that

¹⁶⁸ Balibar, 9–10.

¹⁶⁹ Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, 66–67.

¹⁷⁰ Marx, *Capital*, 166.

is, the break between subject and object and the radical individualism of the subject that the collective and dynamic nature of the subject can be elucidated.

We must not fall into the error of calling ‘social relations’ either a *real* that would be given independently of their *appearance* or an *ideal* situation in which ‘personal relations’ would also be ‘immediately social’, without needing to *express themselves* in the form of relations between ‘things’. Thus it is the system of things exchanged against each other, objectified in monetary expression, which not only *makes* individuals *see* the ‘society’ of which they are members, but also *establishes it*, since without this representation, individual producers *would not exist for one another*, nor would they form ‘society’.¹⁷¹

What is at stake, is not so much defining the way in which we are made visible through relations among things, how alienating processes establish current social formations, than bringing to the fore that these relations can only obtain if they are mediated among persons, that transindividuality is always at play regardless of the way society is made visible.

Transindividuality therefore, is at the core of the theories of the subject explored in the first two chapters. The point is to expose and stretch the very fabric from which this core is coated to the point of rupture, so that we can no longer account for ourselves without first being aware of the collective nature of the subject. We are not individuals in isolation but transindividual, that is, even under the form of appearance of the isolated subject, as Marx reminds us time and again, social forces are set in motion. To anticipate, this position, namely asserting the transindividual nature of individuals will be explored in chapters five and six.

¹⁷¹ Balibar, ‘Philosophies of the Transindividual’, 11.

Two important points need to be clarified before we move to Balibar's second stage of alienation as relation. First, transindividuality is always present, it can be identified in every epoch and this is achieved by complicating the social formation in which subjects are constructed, namely, the material conditions which in turn define us. And second, that due to its indeterminacy in terms of an institutionalised prescription of society, it presents itself in different forms in different epochs. That is, while in our time transindividuality presents itself as a problem, as alienation as relation, because of the capitalist mode of production, it can well present itself in a positive form under a different set of conditions. Transindividuality functions both as a critical method to understand the alienating factors in a social formation and the immanent standard from which a radically new society can form.

Now that these points have been clarified we can see that Balibar's analysis of both the spheres of production and circulation are similar to that of Read's. However, instead of being concerned about the aspects that alienate individuals, Balibar turns to these spheres in order to identify where transindividuality is at play. To remind, 'the constitution of objectivity and fetishism does not depend on the prior givenness of a subject, a consciousness or a reason, it does, by contrast, constitute subjects which are part of objectivity itself or which are, in other words, given in experience *alongside "things"*, alongside commodities, and *in a relation to them*'.¹⁷²

If we are in constant dynamic relations with our exterior, this exterior determines the way in which we account for ourselves. Therefore, there must be an instance where the relations among persons obscured as relations among things can be transposed or unfolded in order to evidence, in order to rediscover, the transindividual. In his reading of the sphere of exchange, Balibar argues, it is possible to arrive at a stage, or better, a sphere, namely the juridical sphere that is mediated through contracts and as such, presupposes a relation

¹⁷² Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, 67.

between two parties that is the mirror image of the economic relation in exchange which in fact determines the former.¹⁷³ Balibar emphasises – as Marx does – that in order for two commodities to stand in equal relation to each other in the market, there has to be ‘*legal equality*’ required between partners of a contract of sale and purchase, whatever that may be’.¹⁷⁴ This legal equality also presupposes the double freedom that Marx emphasises but also having property over what is to be exchanged.

Property as we have seen with Locke, appears as though it can only occur through labour and Marx understands that as a right although assumed as securing the labour of a person as theirs,

some such assumption was at least necessary, since the only commodity-owners with equal rights confronted each other, and the sole means of appropriating the commodities of others was the alienation of a man's own commodities, commodities which, however, could only be produced by labour. Now, however, property turns out to be the right, on the part of the capitalist, to appropriate the unpaid labour of others or its product, and the impossibility, on the part of the worker, of appropriating his own product. The separation of property from labour thus becomes the necessary consequences of a law that apparently originated in their identity.¹⁷⁵

For Balibar it is in this very sphere that we can realise the second rejection and thus bring the ‘*transindividual*’ character of productive activity’.¹⁷⁶ Labour as Marx reminds us, is a transindividual task because even in isolation ‘social forces are already dynamically

¹⁷³ Marx, *Capital*, 178–79.

¹⁷⁴ Balibar, ‘Philosophies of the Transindividual’, 11.

¹⁷⁵ Marx, *Capital*, 730.

¹⁷⁶ Balibar, ‘“Possessive Individualism’ Reversed’, 309.

present'.¹⁷⁷ Balibar draws on this and emphasises that these social forces are omnipresent in any productive activity in the form of the material instruments and knowledge utilised for labour to actualise.¹⁷⁸ 'The true "society of individuals" can consist only in the actual socialization of individuals. Individuals are "proprietors of themselves" (or "their own Person") only if they reappropriate their labor power and its complete use, and thus labor itself. But the only "subject" of this process is the collective social relationship.'¹⁷⁹

Therefore, in the process of alienation which occurs both in exchange and production, both spheres whose dynamic is activated by a second alienation in the sphere where private property reigns, is where transindividuality is constructed. That is, for Balibar – and contra Read – exploring, engaging in a deep analysis of the sites of alienation in the mode of production which also contains the juridical sphere renders visible the transindividual. This may appear as too reductive an assertion since seeing transindividuality through double alienation may imply that other modes that may not display alienation cannot exhibit transindividuality. But my position is that problematising transindividuality in such a way is not a reductive move but a way to ensure that its plasticity is always maintained. Understanding transindividuality from alienation as relation thus always pushes to the limit any social formation that fails to espouse the double effect, what Balibar calls the double rejection of individual at the expense of society and vice versa.

Alienation as relation as opposed to Read's position of alienation of relations is a conceptual position that dismantles the very concept of alienation. This is because, when the nature of any social process is made evident, what is thought to be an alienating factor will always present at the very least a transindividual residue, a fissure, what economists call an externality. This externality – and this will be explored further in chapter 6 – once placed

¹⁷⁷ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 84.

¹⁷⁸ Balibar, 'Possessive Individualism' Reversed', 309.

¹⁷⁹ Balibar, 310.

under a thorough scrutiny will open more and more in order to bring to light the very relationality that constitute it.

This is in my view the importance of alienation as relations. However, I would suggest this position goes a step further that Balibar may not concede to as he seems to suggest alienation as relation may be the only way of asserting transindividuality in his last paper on the matter.¹⁸⁰ But drawing from his previous work and his reading of the *Theses* I can clearly see that, as mentioned in the points I emphasised before touching on this aspect, it is indeterminacy, malleability which helps us understand that social formations may present completely different conditions as those of alienation in the mode of production. Therefore, my position is that, in fact alienation as relation serves as a theoretical tool which prevents social formations to stagnate, or better, fall into the inadequacies of the previous trajectory. Alienation as relation functions as a conceptual mesh from which we filter any conception of the subject we wish to ponder; it provides a standard from which we must commence analysis from. Therefore, a radical subject must therefore be conceived under conditions which always will bring to the fore the alienating potentialities that constrain its actualisation and thus always ensuring that its transindividual nature is never obscured.

¹⁸⁰ Balibar, 'Philosophies of the Transindividual', 12.

Part three: The *Topos* of Intersection

Chapter 5: A Theoretical Intersection

Now that two very clear and opposing positions have been delineated throughout the last four chapters, we can put the seemingly naïve hypothesis I advanced in the introduction to this thesis to the test. To recall, I suggested that it may be because of individualism that local and global issues are so difficult or perhaps impossible to be solved. The two latter moments in each trajectory, namely, the liberal subject and the transindividual, can be compared in terms of their ability to respond to current social, political and economic issues both at the state and global levels. That is, we can project these two trajectories into a theoretical field where these issues are thought through, a theoretical *topos* of intersection. Therefore, in order to put this hypothesis to the test, we need to ask: how do issues of inequality are addressed by these trajectories at the local and global levels?

In order to do this, I will first scrutinise the work on distributive justice of Rawls, namely, justice as fairness as the paradigm for the local and Sen's and Nussbaum's capabilities approach for the global level. These will be briefly explained in order to evidence that both are informed by the liberal subject and by transitivity, the early modern one. I will further present a transindividual interpretation of both positions that emphasises on relations. Lastly, I will intimate to what these approaches miss, that is, a frontal challenge to the capitalist mode of production.

The liberal subject, Rawls, and the local

Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* is one of the most celebrated and widely taught books in Western political theory.¹⁸¹ In this book, Rawls proposes a liberal conception of the way principles of

¹⁸¹ Porter, 'The Legacy of John Rawls'.

justice should be deduced and implemented in a political system. In the first part of this work, Rawls sets out to formulate a conception of justice as fairness. This conception is defined as:

principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association. These principles are to regulate all further agreements; they specify the kinds of social cooperation that can be entered into and the forms of government that can be established.¹⁸²

In order to arrive at such principles, Rawls proposes a hypothetical experiment where participants enter into a social contract under a particular set of conditions.¹⁸³ Here Rawls relies on the work of Locke, Rousseau and Kant in terms of their articulations of a social contract.¹⁸⁴ In the original position, as Rawls calls it, they decide the justice principles which would govern them under the condition of mutual equality. Another condition is that each person is not to know where they are placed in terms of their socio-economic circumstances nor their natural advantages so that they can arrive at impartial principles of justice.

For example, if a man knew that he was wealthy, he might find it rational to advance the principle that various taxes for welfare measures be counted unjust; if he knew that he was poor, he would most likely propose the contrary principle. To represent the desired restrictions one imagines a situation in which everyone is deprived of this sort of information.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 10.

¹⁸³ Rawls, 10.

¹⁸⁴ Rawls, 10. See footnote 4.

¹⁸⁵ Rawls, 17.

This is what Rawls calls the ‘veil of ignorance’, a position whereby participants take a neutral ground in terms of their socio-economic advantages and their natural capacities.¹⁸⁶ In the original position, under the veil of ignorance, they go back and forward arguing for principles they deem just until they arrive at a position which he calls reflective equilibrium, that is, a position whereby every member can reasonably agree to the reached principles.¹⁸⁷ This equilibrium does not imply that members will fully agree with each other but that among their differences there will be an overlapping consensus among their views.¹⁸⁸ Under these conditions, these members arrive at two main principles:

First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others.

Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.¹⁸⁹

These two conditions in the second principle are the focus of a better part of the book which by analysing them, Rawls redefines them as (a) designed ‘to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged’ and (b) ‘under conditions of fair equality of opportunity’.¹⁹⁰ What this second principle guarantees then is that there is a pull effect of sorts in which the social and economic situations of the least advantaged are not left unattended while also ensuring that there is no structural impediment for these to improve their current situations. This position

¹⁸⁶ Rawls, 118–23.

¹⁸⁷ Rawls, 18.

¹⁸⁸ Rawls, 340.

¹⁸⁹ Rawls, 53.

¹⁹⁰ Rawls, 266.

appears to imply that while the inequality gap should not widen, it may not necessarily reduce.

Rawls designs a conception of justice where individuals in the liberal sense are engaged in order to decide principles from which they can cooperate while at the same time further their own interests. These are codes that guarantee every member's liberties as well as allowing for socio-economic inequalities. These inequalities on the other hand stem from the different capacities and social positions of every member but because neither of them knows them in advance, they will choose to set the means to exploit these in a manner that is open to everyone. That is, every member has equal opportunity to access the means from which they can exploit their capacities and social positions according to their own interests so long as they also benefit the least advantaged.

It is clear that the idea of the liberal subject permeates Rawls' conception of justice as fairness. This is due to the emphasis on the individual and the seemingly isolated capacities and social positions participants will find themselves in after the veil of ignorance is lifted. It is because of this that inequalities are not contested. Rather, they are articulated into the theory in a way that would minimise the impact of the less favoured. Because every member has an interest in furthering their own position and cannot see anyone else's real position, much like in the theory of sympathy of Smith, they can only imagine what they would likely endorse as a justice principle that would be apt for most positions. On the one side, because they perhaps hope to be in the most advantageous position, they would allow for social and economic inequalities that will benefit them. And on the other, they will devise a social floor, a welfare system that would sustain them in case that they find themselves in the worst position in comparison with other members.

This general system ends up being one in which every member care for themselves and the other is secured only by fear of being one of the least advantaged once the veil of

ignorance is lifted. Like in Smith's sympathy, there is no genuine concern for the other, the liberal subject always returns to itself in order to account for an invisible other. Cooperation is then presented as a sterile interaction among members of a political system. I choose to call it sterile because this cooperation only obtains to secure the lot of individuals, the only motivation for cooperation is self-preservation.

How can then the transindividual position shed light on this set-up?

Transindividuality places great emphasis on the relations that obtain in every social formation. Therefore, if we think the transindividual through Rawls' experiment, we will be able to conjecture that a whole set of different principles may be reached. Take the preconditions for establishing justice principles, there is equality presupposed among members and ignorance of information about their advantages being natural or socio-economic. These preconditions can in fact be kept under a transindividual experiment, there is no apparent need for every member to know their overall position nor that of others.

However, if every member takes a transindividual position, they will clearly understand that most of the advantages they can imagine possessing are derived from the very interaction with both the external world and their participants. Even the ones that can be thought as deeply individual, such as a high level of intelligence, are premised on other members for both its recognition and utilisation. For instance, if a participant wants to teach, they will need others willing to learn and the knowledge they wish to impart is likely to be the amalgamation of many knowledges of others; or if they want to produce a particular item, they will need other members to help executing all the steps necessary for its production. This in turn dislocates the conception of a member as an individual. Being a member of any social formation, of any political experiment presupposes not only the existence but the vital importance of both the other and the objects necessary for their interaction and cooperation.

Thus, a transindividual original position under a veil of ignorance would yield principles of justice that will emphasise and foster the relational nature of their participants. Choosing a set of principles that accept inequalities will not be possible. This is because every participant is well aware of their dependence on others. If a considerable part of what determines a participant in a system is dependent on others, they will perhaps agree on terms that foster equality both of access and outcome. To be sure, under Rawls' theory of justice as fairness there is dependence, after all the second principle is aimed at devising a social floor to aid the least advantaged, but it is a form of dependence that is considered as parasitic and unproductive.¹⁹¹ That is, there is a one-sided dependence of the least advantaged on the fortunate or, to be precise, dependence of the least advantaged on the system maintained by the fortunate, not a transindividual co-dependence that is constantly present in any social formation. It is because of this co-dependence that there should not be any need for a social formation of this kind to disadvantage any member because the focus of this experiment is not centred on self-preservation but transindividual-preservation.

A counter argument from the liberal position may be that some members in a transindividual experiment may have an incentive to not contribute if their position is being secured by others, that is, some members may choose to become free riders under the transindividual experiment. However, this is a position that stems precisely from the radical individualism of the liberal subject. Each individual is concerned with their self-preservation and this in turn motivates members to understand the securing of the other as parasitic dependence. A transindividual position on the other hand may not leave room for a member to prioritise themselves, membership itself as mentioned above is redefined, dislocated. Dependence is seen as the constant reliance on others and others on me that secures the very system we collectively devise. Thus, it may well be possible, or better, more probable than in

¹⁹¹ Cockburn, *The Politics of Dependence*.

Rawls' experiment, that members will always be willing to uphold the principles they chose while contributing to transindividual-preservation.

Sen, Nussbaum and the global

In his seminal book, *Development as Freedom* Sen develops a critical analysis of global measurements of development which are propounded by international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation.¹⁹²

These measurements are mainly focused on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and GDP per capita. As is well known, these are statistical tools that only measure the total goods and services produced by local corporations and the per capita variation is but a division by the population of the particular nation and not an actual redistribution of the monetary value reflected in the GDP to them. The main critique of these approaches to development is that they are based on analysing development as the monetary growth of nations as opposed to individuals.¹⁹³ Sen emphasises that these do not take into account the actual social and economic position of the citizens of so called under-developed nations let alone their level of well-being.¹⁹⁴ Instead he proposes an analysis of development that

treats the freedoms of individuals as the basic building blocks. Attention is thus paid particularly to the expansion of the “capabilities” of persons to lead the kind of lives they value—and have reason to value. These capabilities can be enhanced by public policy, but also, on the other side, the direction of public policy can be influenced by the effective use of participatory capabilities by the public.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Peet, *Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank, and WTO*.

¹⁹³ Lepenies, *The Power of a Single Number*.

¹⁹⁴ Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 47–52.

¹⁹⁵ Sen, 18.

The capabilities approach can be best described as an approach whereby the main focus is placed on individuals – again, in the liberal sense – and the conditions that will lead them to pursue a life that they value which Sen terms a person’s functionings. What a member chooses as their lifestyle, career and the like are their particular functionings, and a theory of distributive justice that has ‘development as freedom’ at its core will guarantee that whatever is necessary for that member to achieve the particular functionings they favour are provided by the nation they belong to. That is, a general and equal provision for the capabilities necessary to pursue a chosen lifestyle. For instance, access to food, shelter, education, and cultural goods to name a few.

The purpose of this approach is to shift focus from monetary distribution to the least advantaged as the Rawlsian position endorses and instead, secure the necessary conditions, the capabilities, that every member requires in order to pursue whatever goals in life they choose. In Sen’s words,

a person’s “capability” refers to the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve. Capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or, less formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles). For example, an affluent person who fasts may have the same functioning achievement in terms of eating or nourishment as a destitute person who is forced to starve, but the first person does have a different “capability set” than the second (the first can choose to eat well and be well nourished in a way the second cannot).¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Sen, 75.

Nussbaum takes this approach to the global stage. Her position is that this approach provides a way of attaining a ‘minimum threshold level’ for global justice.¹⁹⁷ That is, the capabilities approach provides a set of guidelines from which every nation should base their constitutions in order to secure the freedom of individuals to choose different functionings.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, Nussbaum suggest that it is possible to device an open-ended list that will suit every nation state as they are the basis for every human to attain a decent level of life.¹⁹⁹

This approach is one that emphasises equality of capabilities and inequality of functionings. The focus on individuals in this approach implies that each member is entitled to pursue the lifestyle that they please so long as this of course does not interfere with the lifestyle of others because of the emphasis on freedom and equality. That is, each member is in equal footing in terms of their ability to pursue a lifestyle which can be obtained by guaranteeing that the necessary elements to pursue them are available to them, capabilities are equally available to all but differentially chosen so that different functionings are achieved. Even though this approach may well benefit and improve the lives of the majority of the people in so-called ‘under-developed’ nations, it does not address in a clear and frontal manner the issues that stem from global inequality. This is because the focus on isolated individuals does not permit to bring to light the very relations that constantly leave these nations at a disadvantage and therefore most of their inhabitants.

Assuming that this approach is successfully implemented at the global level, the result may be that every disadvantaged member in the globe is in a better position than they were before its implementation. However, this new position continues to ignore the interconnection among members and the exploitative dynamics that continue to obtain within and between nations. The fact that there can be a global constitutional guarantee so that every

¹⁹⁷ Nussbaum, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble but Flawed Ideal*, 240.

¹⁹⁸ See also Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development the Capabilities Approach*.

¹⁹⁹ Nussbaum, 70–80; Nussbaum, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble but Flawed Ideal*, 241–43.

member has access to the basic capabilities to pursue their selected functionings does not mean that global exploitation and inequalities cease to obtain. Companies in developed nations that rely on the differential in wages and labour laws in so-called under-developed nations but also the strength of their currency will continue to exploit them. Granted that exploitation cannot be continued at the current level due to the institution of capabilities, however this position does not eliminate exploitative dynamics, in fact, it normalises them by guaranteeing a relatively better state of affairs.

Because this approach is purely focused on individuals it clearly leaves aside the relations of exploitation that obtain both at the local and global levels. The liberal subject informs the capability approach in the sense that every member is focused on their own advancement, their functioning enhancement, while obscuring the very relations that continue to disadvantage them. Members are better off than in the Rawlsian position but the dynamics of exploitation that constantly obtain because of the liberal subject position remain.

Conversely, a transindividual interpretation of the capabilities approach would continue to endorse the constitutional institution of elements that secure every global member the ability to pursue their preferred way of living. Here again the idea of membership is dislocated even further, as it will then have to traverse across nations as clearly exploitative dynamics are globalised, only a liberal approach has membership as something that comes after the individual. A transindividual approach to capabilities will emphasise the relationality that makes transindividual functioning possible. The emphasis is then placed on the side of the functionings on account of understanding two specific aspects: first, the dependent nature of functionings in terms of everyone's interaction, and second, the exploitative nature of certain functionings which disadvantage members of so called under-

developed nations.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, a hypothetical transindividual list of capabilities will not appear as a homogenous prescription of the necessary conditions of functioning enhancement as these are clearly determined by relationality. What may appear as the capabilities for a certain nation may differ from another without neglecting the very basic capabilities every community needs to strive such as shelter, education and food.

An instrument unfit for purpose

So far I have demonstrated that the above theories of distributive justice, namely, justice as fairness and the capabilities approach, are deeply informed by the liberal subject and because of this, they are not able to adequately address inequality. I also briefly described how thinking through these approaches in terms of transindividuality not only evidences the inability of these theories to assess the relations that obtain in their approaches but also that the outcomes they arrive at may differ under a transindividual position.

The transindividual then, not only complicates any social formation but provides a distinct position from which social issues can be addressed and perhaps solved in a local sphere. That is, at the level of a society, where we agree on the conditions from which it is to operate but it also elucidates how in our current epoch, we are so deeply connected with the rest of the world that even thinking of social issues at a national level becomes questionable. What can be thought as a distributive justice paradigm in political theory, will have to traverse the collective to the singular as opposed to liberal conceptions of justice.

Thus, a transindividual theory of justice, that is radical and not liberal, will at the very least propose an exercise where a thoroughgoing emphasis is placed on alienating relations that constantly obtain under the current mode of production and these invariably transcend

²⁰⁰ For a critical perspective of development see Escobar, *Encountering Development*; Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

individual boundaries and those of a nation. As such, trying to devise principles of justice that benefit the individual would have to pass through so many transindividual operations that these very principles may not deflate but certainly lose import. Distributive justice may well be stripped from its liberal baggage and function as a way of understanding transnational relationality as well the different capacities and necessities global participants have. The principles underlying global justice may well be in the most developed societies, 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs'.²⁰¹

Nonetheless, what this interpretation of such approaches reveal is that their very focus on individuals steers their theoretical gaze away from the alienating and exploitative relations from which local and global issues emerge. For liberalism, membership and dependence are seen as positions that take place after the individual. Membership is taken as equilibrium through self-preservation and the securing of the other by fear or being disadvantaged; dependence is seen as unproductive at best and parasitic at worst. These approaches can be illustrated as a failure to fulfil an objective due to the inadequacy of the instrument being utilised. Like an attempt to repair an old clay receptacle that is continuously taken to a well to draw water to provide nourishment to a community. Once this container starts showing cracks another potter comes along to propose better ways of preserving it, these ways may work but with time the cracks reach the surface once again. The problem is not the ways in which different potters attempt to repair the receptacle, the problem is that the receptacle in itself is a tool bound to break because is unfit for the task. The solution then, is to devise a way in which water can be drawn not via a clay bucket but perhaps a bamboo pipe that can reach each and every dependant.

What the liberal subject achieves, is leaving theoretically and practically untouched the conditions which perpetuate inequality and other global issues, that is, the capitalist mode

²⁰¹ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works Vol 24*, 87.

of production. This is the very clay from which the receptacle is made, a compound that is fragile and bound to crack with time. What transindividuality on the other hand achieves is to point at the very cracks of the receptacle, to evidence the inability of this compound to successfully perform the task at hand while proposing an alternative material that was always there.

Chapter 6: A Practical Intersection

In the previous chapter I argued that liberal positions at the local and global level fail to theoretically address the issue of inequality. Additionally, I provided a transindividual reading of these approaches and an interpretation that evidences how their conclusions differ when put under the transindividual lens. To recall, my position is that transindividuality is always present, it can be identified in every epoch, and this is achieved by complicating the social and material conditions which in turn define collective subjects. This in turn necessitates not only a theoretical critique of liberal interpretations of the theory of the subject but also an interpretation of the transindividual dynamics that continuously obtain in practice, in our everyday transindividual lives. In this chapter, these issues will be brought to light via an analysis of the environment, how its appropriation and exploitation affects us but also how these processes exacerbate the current environmental crisis, that is, how we affect it.

Thus, in order to provide a transindividual interpretation about global issues we also need to take as the base of our analysis what the above liberal conceptions fail to directly address, namely, the capitalist mode of production. As the transindividual account of Balibar remind us, it is due to the alienating spheres of the mode of production that individuals appear as isolated even in cooperative spheres. It can therefore be inferred that inequalities of access and outcome can and do derive from the separation of workers from the means of production and the obfuscation of relations among persons in the form of commodities for sale but also that these have caused the environmental crisis.

Thus, taking relationality at the core of any serious proposition to address these issues has to invariably challenge the current mode of production. In order to do this, I argue that we can use the collective trajectory to evidence the transindividual nature of our everyday lives and therefore bring to light the constant relationality that obtains in our current epoch. I

believe that the issues of global inequality and the climate crisis can only be overcome by challenging the capitalist mode of production and liberalism and the liberal theory of the subject seeks to render this impossible. This is because every inhabitant of the planet is unavoidably entangled in it, that is to say, in our current epoch almost every inhabitant of the world is immersed in relations of production and consumption. Relations which, if anything this project has constantly emphasised, define the way we reproduce ourselves, how we devote time to ourselves and others, and the ability we have to achieve personal – as transindividual – goals.

Unequal environment, hybrid subsumption and so-called externalities

Although almost every inhabitant in the world is immersed in capitalist relations of production and consumption, there are still communities that do not partake in this mode of production. Nonetheless, – and this is the power of transindividuality put in practice – some of them are unwillingly in relation to it. For instance, the enclosure of land and the spread of diseases due deforestation of the Amazon rain forest by colonial landlords in consortium with the Brazilian government in the state of Rondônia. This has caused a drastic impact to indigenous communities of that region and although these peoples do not partake in the mode of production, their very lives are constantly threatened by it²⁰²

These communities are subsumed by the mode of production but in a way that is not formal. The mode of production does not appropriate their production processes nor is it real subsumption, namely, it does not directly do away with their social relations that obtain in this process.²⁰³ This is what Marx termed ‘hybrid forms, in which although surplus labour is not extorted by direct compulsion from the producer, the producer has not yet become

²⁰² Santos, ‘Socioenvironmental Impacts on Indigenous Lands in the South of the Brazilian Amazon’.

²⁰³ Marx, *Capital*, 643–44.

formally subordinate to capital. In these forms, capital has not yet acquired a direct control over the labour process'.²⁰⁴ These forms are mainly characterised, as Massimiliano Tomba clearly identifies, by exercising direct coercion.²⁰⁵ Communities are then constantly displaced, or their commons further enclosed due to the ever expansion of capital. Because of cattle ranchers and agricultural businesses in the Rondônia region need to expand in order to accumulate more surplus value, they end up affecting communities that have been reproducing themselves in an entirely different and antithetical manner to capitalist production.²⁰⁶

This is what economists term externalities, that is, positive or negative consequences attributable to the mode of production that according to them are unintended, they are not part of planned capitalist production.²⁰⁷ A transindividual position on externalities however makes quite clear that these so-called externalities are part and parcel of mechanisms of capitalist production. To recall, Marx demonstrates that this process, that is the encroachment of new resources, is paramount for capitalist production in both its establishment and continuous survival.²⁰⁸ Therefore, is it no surprise that even a-capitalist communities are touched by it, thus, externalities can be thought of as hybrid forms of subsumption and inherently transindividual. This is because externalities are in direct coercion with the commons and its inhabitants who are outside the firm, capital has not yet acquired a direct control over these. Externalities are inherently transindividual due to the constant affect the firm produces on its surroundings and vice versa.

This in turn can provide a segue into the rest of the people that are immersed in capitalist relations. That is, if there is a case that a person in Brazil consumes meat or

²⁰⁴ Marx, 645.

²⁰⁵ Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, 149.

²⁰⁶ Santos, 'Socioenvironmental Impacts on Indigenous Lands in the South of the Brazilian Amazon', 118.

²⁰⁷ Cuff, 'Externalities'.

²⁰⁸ Marx, *Capital*, 873–931.

products that contain raw materials which come from that region, then in a transindividual way they are closely connected with the dire situation of these indigenous peoples. This holds true for both local and global cases, what transindividuality put in practice achieves is evidencing such relations because in this current epoch, we are in constant relation with others both within the nation and the rest of the world. For instance, the very fact that I can buy a \$15 tee-shirt at a retail store in New Zealand is because the Australian group who owns it exploits the labour and resources from Kenya, China, Bangladesh and India. Regardless of the fairness or otherwise of their dealings, this implies that we cannot simply pretend we are only in connection with our close neighbours.

The issue here is clear; inequality due to trans-national production, that is, the capacity of businesses to exploit the less expensive labour and resources of countries in very dire and sometimes unstable economic and political conditions. A liberal counter argument may propose that every individual is to make sure they buy from sellers that ensure that there is a fair trading and treatment of every aspect of the production process and thereby driving exploitative firms out of the market, individuals change market conditions in isolation with their wallets.²⁰⁹ However, if I buy a garment from a shop that sources locally or from a multinational corporation that ensures every worker has a capabilities approach type of working conditions the issue is not fully overcome. This is because, as long as we reproduce ourselves under the current mode of production regardless of how ethical it can become, workers will work above their socially necessary labour-time, surplus-value will be captured by the owners of the means of production, someone in the line of production is being robbed of their very transindividuality and someone who is not part of it is being alienated from the very means that make them part of this world. These alienating exploitative relations are

²⁰⁹ Gulbrandsen, 'Creating Markets for Eco-Labeling'.

present in every production and exchange of commodities, thus is necessary to move beyond them.²¹⁰

Therefore, the issue does not only pertain to relations of severe exploitation under the mode of production, namely, the encroachment of indigenous commons, sweatshops and child labour are not the only sites where alienation obtains. As Marx reminds us time and again, surplus-value is that which is continuously sought after and maximised under any commodity production.²¹¹ The only motive for companies to shift their production facilities to other countries or appropriate land affecting indigenous communities is because they can substantially increase the surplus-value of their products.

To be sure, there are regulatory measures within governments that ensure extreme exploitation does not occur such as labour laws, the institution of indigenous reserves and conservation areas. However, these are often circumvented by the firms with help of policymakers especially in the global south, for instance, the use of highly harmful techniques such as fracking, the extraction of ‘oil or gas from shale rocks deep underground by injecting liquids under high pressure in order to fracture the rock’.²¹² This technique destroys the surrounding water reserves and causes irreversible damage to the surrounding ecosystem, ecosystems that often are protected as ecological reserves.²¹³ As Bonilla Montenegro puts it, ‘*el ecocidio es superior a la proteccion. Todo siendo amparado por la lógica del capital*’.²¹⁴ (Ecocide is superior to protection. All being incorporated by the logic of capital)

The firm in the global sphere acts in the same manner as the liberal subject, namely, the only motive of its expansion to other places is its self-preservation at their most

²¹⁰ Marx, *Capital*, 125–38.

²¹¹ Marx, 283–93.

²¹² Manley, Foot, and Davis, ‘Fracking’.

²¹³ Finewood and Stroup, ‘Fracking and the Neoliberalization of the Hydro-Social Cycle in Pennsylvania’s Marcellus Shale’.

²¹⁴ Bonilla Montenegro, ‘Hydrocarbon extraction policy in Colombia and Ecuador’, 42.

achievable surplus-value capture under their current economic limitations. There is no surprise that a firm under the current mode of production is considered a legal entity, a legal person. Marx saw this clearly, so much so that he called value, surplus-value, an independent acting agent, a subject due to its self-valorising ability.²¹⁵ Much like the early modern subject determines itself in isolation, so value valorises itself. Value is the subject of capital, Marx says.²¹⁶

To sum up, we can clearly see that in our current epoch we are severed by the current mode of production. When transindividuality is put in practice it clearly evidences that such severing disperses us through the globe. Most people in the world are connected through production and consumption of commodities and some of those who are not are also drastically affected by it. What is considered as unintended consequences of capitalist expansion is in fact a hybrid form of subsumption and thus inherently transindividual. As such, the only way to overcome the climate crisis, global inequality and exploitation is by challenging the current mode of production and affirming transindividual processes at a global scale.

Transindividual environment

In terms of the climate crisis it is possible to take a pure Spinozist approach in order to bring out the transindividual. Remember that for Spinoza it is the effect from which participants are part of that defines individuality.²¹⁷ Therefore, we need to analyse the climate crisis in terms of the effects in order to assert its cause. The transindividual effect is very clear, the constant deterioration of the planet which has sped up the environmental crisis we find ourselves in.

²¹⁵ Marx, *Capital*, 253–54.

²¹⁶ Marx, 255.

²¹⁷ Spinoza, *Ethics*, 32. EII Def. 7

As such, the individual are every single inhabitant of the planet that is a participant in its deterioration.

Now that the effect is clear and makes an individual the world of participants in the deterioration of the planet, we need to understand the cause. This deterioration is clearly the result of industrial practices such as deforestation, fossil fuel consumption, the cattle industry and so forth. The cause however does not fall on each of us – as liberalism would put it – but the way we reproduce ourselves which if anything, this project has emphasised time and again. To reiterate, we are who we are because we are determined by the current relations of production, these in turn have caused the global crisis we are under from the production of fossil fuels, the rapid global deforestation, to dairy and cattle industries.

Consequently, any positions that attempt to revert the current problem cannot fall on nations whose only purpose is to decide what to do to minimise the effect nor can it be atomised to the level of individuality where buying KeepCups and electric cars is the solution.²¹⁸ The point is very blunt but not simple at all. To move beyond this current mode and construct one where our transindividual nature is at the fore front which in turn will inform the way we reproduce ourselves. Because the issue is global and the concern is of scale, moving beyond the current mode of production to ways that take into account relationality with others and the environment will invariably provide a drastic and perhaps rapid change to current climatic conditions.

Transindividuality then, always brings to the fore the interdependence among persons but also the external world, the material conditions necessary for social reproduction. The very fact that we first have to take into account the exterior which in turn defines us: the land, the animals, the plants, the waters, the air, and their dire state. That is, the ways we affect

²¹⁸ Gulbrandsen, 'Creating Markets for Eco-Labeling', 479.

them and how they affect us. We cannot but start from articulating a way of reproduction whereby the restoration of these takes precedence.

This in turn will limit the ways a mode of production can function. Transindividuality put in practice therefore allows us to understand that the effect on our planet is caused by all but this is in turn greatly determined by the way we reproduce and as such a drastic change involves us all in struggling towards both a reformulation of the ways we reproduce, and the constant battle to push for its instantiation. Multilateral agreements among nations such as the Paris Agreement where the main focus is the reduction of carbon emissions can be seen as practical steps that only ameliorate the issue but do not seriously attempt to solve it since they leave capitalist production untouched.²¹⁹ These issues can and should be addressed in a manner that truly incorporates every party involved in climate deterioration which will make clear – as I hope this section has – that by moving beyond the current mode of production they will find a more stable and long-lasting change.

Activating transindividuality

To sum up, what a practical transindividual assessment achieves in terms of inequality and climate issues is to displace the theoretical gaze from the reductive and atomistic assessments liberal conceptions propose. Instead, transindividuality will remind us time and again about the deep relationality and interdependence from both the world and their inhabitants. As such, the way to propose serious alternatives start from challenging the current mode of production. Evidencing both its alienating relations and the deleterious consequences for the environment that constantly obtain and this mode of production perpetuates. This is by no means an easy solution to the current issues but is nonetheless a strong conceptual and practical position that will either impede nor reduce in terms of importance the alienating individualistic

²¹⁹ Falkner, 'The Paris Agreement and the New Logic of International Climate Politics'.

dematerialised prescriptions to global challenges that stem from the early modern and liberal subject.

Thus, transindividuality materialises itself as a call to move beyond the current relations that constantly perpetuate inequality and climate deterioration. This in turn necessitates the constant mobilisation of collective subjects from grassroots and beyond towards challenging liberal paradigms. It does not suffice to demonstrate that practical issues can well be associated with the latter. Complicating these relations so that a space for change can be constructed is not a solution, as Marx tells us in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, the point is to change the world.²²⁰ Therefore, solutions are only encountered in the flux of change, in the collective effort to dismantle current relations while at the same time encountering new ones or perhaps re-encountering the very ways that maintain the communities that have remained a-capitalistic. The experience of indigenous social formations where transindividuality is at the core of their reproduction can provide a way to collectively change the current state of affairs. These are avenues that remain open and that I hope to develop further in my future work.

²²⁰ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works Vol 5*, 5.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to trace key elements of the theory of the subject from the Enlightenment thorough to contemporary articulations. The authors that were explored in order to depict the two trajectories serve as points within the vectors so that a path can be conceptually drawn, as such, this project is not focused on presenting a comprehensive account of the subject for that would not be possible within the constraints of a Masters thesis. Nonetheless, this thesis focuses on key and important figures of the Enlightenment and is an effort to present two clear paths, one from which contemporary moral, economic, and political theories derive and another that provides alternatives to overcome the issues these contemporary theories encounter.

This thesis started with two main hypotheses in mind: first, whether the ideas that inform a theory of the subject from the Enlightenment are what inform individualism today. This hypothesis slowly became more specific, that is, how the relations among subject and objects but also between subjects appear – if at all – when analysing the authors I scrutinised in the first two chapters of this thesis. Having understood the work of Descartes, Locke and Kant helped me recognise that relationality is much more than mere proximity. In their theorisation of the subject, these authors depict the subject as one detached from these relations and therefore the early modern subject becomes an ideational entity, a figure created not only in isolation but as the privileged site where all that is exterior to it is formed.

Once this point of detachment of relations was found, I traced it to the work of Locke and Smith. Two important points were encountered: first, by identifying the three tenets of liberalism through Marx's assessment of the sphere of exchange, namely the market, this thesis evidenced that these are not only invariably informed by the early modern subject but that the detachment from body and mind that Locke presents in *An Essay on Human*

Understanding serves as a political, moral and economic project towards the appropriation of that which is exterior to the liberal subject. And second, that the moral project of Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* ratifies the insular nature of the early modern subject and thus the liberal one. This position also elucidated how Smith's construction of liberal subjects, of the man within, can be seen as the standard necessary for subjects to be made visible to others. This in turns helped to gesture at the way subjects encounter in the site of freedom, equality and property, namely, the market. In this site is only self-preservation, self-interest, what animates any attempt to relate with the other.

The second hypothesis was concerned with whether there were any conceptions which stem from the same period that challenge the former trajectory but can also rearticulate a different position, an alternative conception of subjects. The second trajectory shows that this is the case. Through the work of Spinoza, I encountered a conceptual field so rich, so full of radically new ideas that it was possible to clearly present the shortcomings of the early modern subject only through his work. More importantly however, the *Ethics* provided a conceptual and practical opening from which radically new conceptions of subjects could be explored.

The subject for Spinoza can be thought of as a nomadic plural entity, one that is in constant motion via their continuous immersion in adequate and inadequate ideas. This has also helped me to understand that the subject and the individual are not necessarily concomitant ideas, while the individual can be both singular and plural depending on the effects from which they are the cause, the subject is always collective. Much like the subject however, the individual is always immersed in a vast set of relations therefore it can never be thought through in isolation. To reiterate with Spinoza – and contra the early modern subject – we can say, *I am affected, I affect, therefore I exist*.

Once a challenge and an alternative vision of the subject from those presented in the first part of this thesis was articulated, I sought to trace this idea to current theorists in order to understand how they interpret it. Here the transindividual is encountered, a concept that finds its heightened expression through the teachings of Spinoza and that Balibar and Read explore in great detail. Three main points were found: first, that through Marx it is possible to demonstrate the constant relationality in which subjects are immersed. This in turn provided a way of demonstrating Marx's clear overcoming of the conceptions of the first trajectory.

Second, that this position also implies that in order to understand transindividuality it is necessary to look into the ways subjects are produced and reproduce each other. Here, I was able to intimate the role alienation plays in determining the formation of subjects in the capitalist mode of production. While Read sees alienation in the spheres of circulation and production as a barrier to transindividuality, Balibar sees these as part of what relations are in our current epoch. As such, the importance lies in bringing to the fore the relations that constantly obtain in the current mode of production but that alienation persistently obscures.

And third, even though I defend the position of Balibar, I attempted to go one step further in his analysis via his interpretation of Marx. Indeterminacy and malleability are constitutive of the social, therefore my conclusion is that transindividuality is dynamic, it presents itself in different forms under different sets of conditions that are constrained by the current epoch in which it is analysed. As such, while transindividuality presents itself in the form of alienation as relation, it can nevertheless have the potential to present itself in a form devoid of alienation. This has to be at the core of any new and radical ways of reproducing each other.

Because the main concern of this thesis was to understand why individualism is so prevalent today, two questions were posed: first, how does the first trajectory present itself in political theory and in practice today? And second, can the second trajectory evidence

contemporary shortcomings and provide an opening for change? The *topos* of intersection served as a theoretical and practical field where these positions could be interpreted and thus tested. Through this analysis I was able to intimate that current theories of distributive justice derive from the key lineaments of the first trajectory. Crucially, this also helped in articulating the importance to understand the vital role the environment plays as a space for social reproduction but also to emphasise on the crucial need to devise ways to solve the environmental crisis. These solutions have to start from a direct challenge to the ways we reproduce each other.

In analysing justice as fairness of Rawls and the capabilities approach as presented by Sen and Nussbaum, I sought to demonstrate that these cannot successfully accomplish their objective due to their marked emphasis on the individual and their exclusion of other subjects and objects. Furthermore, I intimated the different conclusions a transindividual interpretation of these theories can propose, but moreover, the main impasse that these theories encounter is that they leave untouched that which perpetuates the issues they try to solve, namely, the capitalist mode of production. This is because the liberal conception of the subject succeeds in displacing the theoretical gaze from the site of freedom, equality and property.

Once these trajectories were intersected in a theoretical field in chapter five, I sought to put them in practice in chapter six. By analysing the climate crisis and global inequality I sought to demonstrate that transindividuality helps to understand the multiple ways in which we are connected with the rest of the world. Because we are invariably severed from each other and the object world by the capitalist mode of production, this disperses us throughout the globe in such a way that even thinking of collective subjects at a national level becomes difficult. More importantly this helps in supporting the view that in order to find serious long-lasting solutions to current global issues, we have to start from moving beyond the current

mode of production but also in devising alternative forms of social reproduction that have the environment at their core. This is because transindividuality helps us understand that the environment places a vital part in the ways subjects are constructed since we affect the environment as well as we are affected by it.

This thesis has also been an effort to think through crucial elements of the theory of the subject in order to have the grounding knowledge necessary to engage with contemporary debates. That is, in order to engage with attempts to a solution it is necessary to truly understand the source of problem. As such, thinking through the potentialities of a transindividual account of subjects, particularly the role the unconscious plays in collective subject formations, how decolonial understandings of the subject help in evidencing the transindividual nature that permeates us, but also through its potential shortcomings, for instance, how in the focus of alienation by Balibar and Read the transindividual leaves unexplored the role household subjects play in the wage relation. These are important questions that need to be pondered in order to truly present a comprehensive account of the way we relate as collective subjects and that I hope to explore in future projects.

Therefore, if this thesis succeeds in achieving anything, is in making clear where the individualistic interpretation of subjects comes from and also in creating an opening, a collective basis from which alternative solutions to current issues can be spanned in a way that can never be thought through in isolation.

Works cited

- Balibar, Étienne. *Citizen Subject: Foundations for Philosophical Anthropology*. Translated by Steven Miller. New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.
- . ‘From Philosophical Anthropology to Social Ontology and Back: What to Do with Marx’s Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach?’ *Postmodern Culture* 22, no. 3 (2012).
<https://doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2012.0014>.
- . *Identity and Difference: John Locke and the Invention of Consciousness*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2013.
- . ‘Philosophies of the Transindividual: Spinoza, Marx, Freud’. *Australasian Philosophical Review* 2, no. 1 (2018): 5–25.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/24740500.2018.1514958>.
- . ‘“Possessive Individualism” Reversed: From Locke to Derrida’. *Constellations* 9, no. 3 (2002): 299–317. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.00284>.
- . ‘Subjection and Subjectification’. In *Supposing the Subject*, edited by Joan Copjec, 1–15. London: Verso, 1994.
- . *The Philosophy of Marx*. Translated by Chris Turner. London: Verso, 2007.
- Blackburn, Simon. ‘Philosophical Anthropology’. In *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2016.
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198735304.001.0001/acref-9780198735304-e-2390>.
- Bonilla Montenegro, Julián Darío. ‘Hydrocarbon extraction policy in Colombia and Ecuador: criticism from postdevelopment analysis’. *Análisis Político* 28, no. 83 (2015): 32–43.
<https://doi.org/10.15446/anpol.v28n83.51643>.

- Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Brittan, Samuel. *Capitalism with a Human Face*. Aldershot, England: EElgar, 1995.
- . ‘Thatcher Was Right – There Is No “Society”’. *Financial Times*, 18 April 2013.
<https://www.ft.com/content/d1387b70-a5d5-11e2-9b77-00144feabdc0>.
- Clapham, Christopher, and James Nicholson. ‘Cartesian Space’. In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Mathematics*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199679591.001.0001/acref-9780199679591-e-380>.
- . ‘Vector’. In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Mathematics*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199679591.001.0001/acref-9780199679591-e-2954>.
- Cockburn, Patrick J. L. *The Politics of Dependence: Economic Parasites and Vulnerable Lives*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- Combes, Muriel. *Gilbert Simondon and the Philosophy of the Transindividual*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013.
- Cottingham, John. ‘The Inaugural Address: The Cartesian Legacy’. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 66 (1992): 1–21.
- Cuff, David J. ‘Externalities’. In *The Oxford Companion to Global Change*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195324884.001.0001/acref-9780195324884-e-90>.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Spivak. Corrected ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

- Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method, Optics, Geometry, and Meteorology*. Revised. Cambridge, MA: Hackett Pub, 2001.
- . *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Edited by John Cottingham. Latin-English ed. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- . *Principles of Philosophy*. Edited by N. Kretzmann and Reese P. Miller. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983.
- . *The Passions of the Soul*. Translated by Stephen Voss. Indianapolis: Hackett PubCo, 1989.
- Escobar, Arturo. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Falkner, Robert. ‘The Paris Agreement and the New Logic of International Climate Politics’. *International Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2016): 1107–25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12708>.
- Finewood, Michael H., and Laura J. Stroup. ‘Fracking and the Neoliberalization of the Hydro-Social Cycle in Pennsylvania’s Marcellus Shale’. *Journal of Contemporary Water Research & Education* 147, no. 1 (2012): 72–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1936-704X.2012.03104.x>.
- Gulbrandsen, Lars H. ‘Creating Markets for Eco-Labeling: Are Consumers Insignificant?’ *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 30, no. 5 (2006): 477–89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2006.00534.x>.
- Hill, Mike, and Warren Montag. *The Other Adam Smith*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014.
- Hirschman, Albert O. *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977.

- Jones, Campbell. 'Collective Subjects'. In *Routledge Handbook of Psychoanalytic Political Theory*, 233–47. Routledge, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315524771>.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Kennedy, J. F. 'Ask Not What Your Country Can Do for You...' JFK Library. Accessed 24 October 2020. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/education/teachers/curricular-resources/elementary-school-curricular-resources/ask-not-what-your-country-can-do-for-you>.
- Lepenies, Philipp. *The Power of a Single Number: A Political History of GDP*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2000. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/auckland/detail.action?docID=3117747>.
- . *Two Treatises of Government*. Edited by Peter Laslett. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Macpherson, C.B. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Manley, Will, Katharine Foot, and Andrew Davis. 'Fracking'. In *A Dictionary of Agriculture and Land Management*. Oxford University Press, 2019. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199654406.001.0001/acref-9780199654406-e-974>.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume I*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin Books, 1990.
- . *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by Martin Nicolaus. London: Penguin Books, 1993.

- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. *Marx & Engels Collected Works Vol 3: Karl Marx: March 1846–August 1844*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976a.
- . *Marx & Engels Collected Works Vol 5: Marx and Engels: 1846–1847*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976b.
- . *Marx & Engels Collected Works Vol 24: Marx and Engels: 1874–1883*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976c.
- Montag, Warren, and Ted Stolze. *The New Spinoza*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Moseley, Fred. ‘Hostile Brothers’. In *The Culmination of Capital: Essays on Volume III of Marx’s Capital*, edited by Martha Campbell and Geert Reuten, 65–101. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230597099_4.
- Moten, Fred. *Black and Blur*. Vol 1 of *Consent Not to Be a Single Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.
- Nussbaum, Martha. *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble but Flawed Ideal*. Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019.
- . *Women and Human Development the Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Paganelli, Maria Pia. ‘The Adam Smith Problem in Reverse: Self-Interest in The Wealth of Nations and The Theory of Moral Sentiments’. *History of Political Economy* 40, no. 2 (2008): 365–82. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00182702-2008-006>.
- Peet, Richard. *Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank, and WTO*. 2nd ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Porter, Thomas. ‘The Legacy of John Rawls’. *Contemporary Political Theory* 8, no. 2 (2009): 237–39. <https://doi.org/10.1057/cpt.2008.52>.

- Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Revised ed. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Read, Jason. *The Politics of Transindividuality*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1972.
- Santos, Alex Mota dos. 'Socioenvironmental Impacts on Indigenous Lands in the South of the Brazilian Amazon'. *Amazonia Investiga* 7, no. 12 (2018): 123–35.
- Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Knopf, 2000.
- Simondon, Gilbert. 'On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects'. *Deleuze Studies* 5, no. 3 (2011): 407–24. <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2011.0029>.
- Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- . *The Wealth of Nations: Books I-III*. Edited by Andrew Skinner. London: Penguin, 1999.
- Spinoza, Benedictus de. *Ethics*. Translated by Edwin Curley. London: Penguin, 1996.
- . *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy with Metaphysical Thoughts*. Translated by Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub, 1998.
- Thatcher, Margaret. No such thing as society. Interview by Douglas Keay, 13 September 1987. <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689>.
- Thiel, Udo. *The Early Modern Subject: Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity from Descartes to Hume*. *The Early Modern Subject*. Oxford University Press. Accessed 6 April 2020. <https://www-oxfordscholarship-com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199542499.001.0001/acprof-9780199542499>.
- Tomba, Massimiliano. *Marx's Temporalities*. Translated by Peter D. Thomas and Sara R. Farris. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 217 A § (1948).