A Path to Freedom:
A methodological study

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Introduction

"Theatetus: By the gods, Socrates, I am lost in wonder when I think of all these things, and sometimes when I regard them it really makes my head swim."[1]

Freedom is one of the central notions of the modern era, which also plays a fundamental role in contemporary political thought. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (probably one of the most important achievements of our time) has highlighted the notion of 'freedom' as a principal assumption upon which other human rights are grounded.[2] Likewise, 'freedom' is a word that is expressed in many languages ('Liberty', 'Freiheit', 'vrijheid', 'liberté', 'âzadi', 'jiyū', 'Horreyah', and so on) as a central notion. The exceptional political importance of this term gives rise to the following questions: What does the term 'freedom' signify? How are we to investigate the notion of freedom? This methodological study seeks to develop a complex method, whereby this notion could be adequately investigated.

Questions appear in our mind by virtue of received stimulus. The Greeks call this stimulus the experience of a simple admiring *wonder* [θαυμάζειν].[3] This experience expresses a fundamental disposition of human beings as a philosophical and poetic being. But we should bear in mind that questions are not neutral. Every question delineates the field of its possible answers and directs our attention and thought toward it. Consider the difference between the questions in relation to the theme of our investigation: Someone asks, "what is freedom?" In all likelihood, the inquirer expects a particular definition from the interlocutor; "How do human beings perceive freedom?" In this case, one is probably looking for a description of the human experience, his state of mind and so on. "Why is freedom such and such?" This question seeks clarification. In

[1] Plato. (1921). *Theatetus* (H. N. Fowler, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 155 C
[2] UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, 217. Preamble
[3] According to Aristotle, "it is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize." See: Aristotle *(1977). Metaphysics* (H. Tredennick, Trans.) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. I.ii. 982b 11-24.
Likewise, Plato's Socrates indicates: "For this feeling of wonder shows that you are a philosopher, since wonder is the only beginning of philosophy". See: Plato. (1921). *Op.cit.* 155D.

the same way, it is possible to formulate numerous questions with respect to freedom. Of course, each of these questions can be apprehended and approached differently. But it is evident that each question develops a singular path of inquiry. This entails that only certain dimensions of the addressed theme can be unfolded. For, the dimensions that are not touched upon by the same question remain concealed inescapably and need to be investigated through other questions. The trajectory in and through which a particular question is being articulated, developed and approached (by its possible answers) concerns the method of inquiry. The word 'method' derives from the Greek *methodos*[4] [μέθοδος], which originally means 'pursuit, following after, travelling'. In the same sense, method is, primarily, not a system or framework that can be utilized as an instrument to solve a problem. Rather, it is the path through which the inquirer prepares a response that is interwoven with a particular question. A philosophical investigation proceeds by *questioning (inquiring)*. Questioning is a linguistic activity. By the same token, a philosophical method relates to a problem that is articulated in language. In this context, a methodological investigation aims at reflecting upon the *path* along which the philosophical inquiry should be cultivated. This reflection is, in the first place, concerned with the potentialities, shortcomings and above all, appropriateness of the method. For this reason, a methodological investigation is both *critical* and *instructive*.

Freedom has, in most accounts, been articulated from the position of the Self (of the "I-will" or the "I-can"). This approach traces back to Aristotle, but can also be signaled in the works of modern political thinkers, including Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and our contemporaries. At the same time, my hypothesis is that the perspective of the *other* (concretized in the figure of the interlocutor, the ordinary man, the worker, the artist, the mystic, the disabled, the marginalized, the transgender, the prisoner, the soldier, the refugee, the child, the patient, and so on) has not been integrated into these accounts. I started to have face-to-face conversations with different people from different backgrounds on this topic. These conversations made me realize that the notion of 'freedom' has other dimensions that cannot be approached without paying attention to the singular experience of different human beings. This confronting experience stimulated me to develop my own path of inquiry. In this context, this study is an attempt to articulate a complex method, whereby one could rethink the notion of

[4] From μετά ("after") & ὀδός ("way, motion, journey")

'freedom' from the standpoint of the *other*. In particular, I shall interrogate the semantic field of this word, which is entwined with *human being*. This methodology will be elaborated through the exploration, examination and finally the composition of three different perspectives. The main structure of this study can be divided into three sections: firstly, an ontological reflection on the concept of freedom; secondly, considerations on the basis of ordinary language analysis and finally, a social-historical approach towards freedom.

To prepare these reflections, I shall initiate my investigation by introducing the predominant approach to freedom, which holds sway over the current legal, political, sociological, and philosophical debates. On the basis of this approach, the notion of freedom has, primarily, been conceived as an abstract and definite 'concept'. I call this way of thinking the *conceptual approach*. In the first reflection, I shall unfold my path of inquiry by exploring and examining Heidegger's (ontological) reflection on the transcendental condition of the conceptual approach. In turn, I shall endeavor to extract the essential methodological elements of the phenomenological method to rethink freedom. In addition, the next task of this investigation will be to interrogate and expose the limitations of the conceptual discourse in general and Heidegger's phenomenology in particular. This reflection will be undertaken on the basis of ordinary language analysis, which is echoed in Wittgenstein's later investigations. The purpose of this meditation is to reintroduce freedom as an everyday word. Because of the descriptive character of Wittgenstein's approach, it remains unclear how one should interpret the *extraordinary* significance of a particular word - such as freedom- in human experience and a particular society. A careful assessment of the *social-historical* significance of the word 'freedom' is, therefore, the final task of this methodological study. Castoriadis, with his social-historical approach, will be our guide through this last meditation. It should be noted that it is not my intention to draw a strict line between the aforementioned methods by playing them off against each other. Rather, my task is to initiate a new path of inquiry through the fundamental insights [*λόγοι*] of these ways of thinking. To my thinking, the dialogical composition of these three perspectives enables us to give birth to a new complex method. Accordingly, this method leads to a *dialogical way of questioning*, which serves for developing philosophy as an activity.[5] I hope that this

[5] Here, Socrates' philosophical disposition could be considered as my primary source of inspiration.

method paves the way to give voice to the hidden dimensions of the notion of ‘freedom’, and perhaps similar terms such as ‘justice’, ‘peace’, ‘equality’, ‘right’ and so on.

Chapter I: Conceptual Approach

I.I. Polar Concepts of Freedom

"*If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things*"[6] (Confucius)

Throughout history, Western philosophy has chiefly dealt with the "what is" query, by reflecting upon the *nature* (*substantia*, *essentia*, *ούσία*) of some words and things. Accordingly, questions such as "What is justice?," "What is beauty?," "What is goodness?," "what is knowledge?," "What is the essence of the human being as such?," "What is the meaning of life?," etc. have been considered as genuine philosophical questions. Different philosophers have examined these problems from different angles of attack. However, it can be said that, since Aristotle, the common aim of each study has been to formulate a proper 'concept' [*conceptum*, *Begriff*] of the issue at hand. A concept is a philosophical tool, used to establish a *definite* representation of the *identity* [*identitas*] of the addressed notion.[7] This operation rests on the assumption that it is possible to reduce the 'matter of thought' to a definite object that, in turn, can be put together into a concept.[8] As such, one endeavors, especially in present-day philosophical discussions, to conceptualize the theme of inquiry by providing a clear and distinct concept of the problem at hand. Conceptualization means to form a well-defined concept of something. It has become the prevailing approach in most disciplines (including philosophy) by means of which one attempts to capture the quiddity [*quidditas*] of the thing, albeit *genera*, *ούσία*, *substance*, *representation*, *idea*, and so on. In this context, 'concept' should be understood as an abstract (mental) entity/representation that displays the universal or general aspect of the notion (thing) in question.

Likewise, this approach has been applied to conceive the notion of 'freedom'. But

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[6] Confucius. (2010). *The Analects of Confucius.* (J. Legge, Trans.) Auckland, N.Z.: Floating Press. Book XIII. Chap. III

[7] According to Aristotle, Socrates is to be considered as the man who discovered the concept, in the sense of a philosophical *tool*. See also: Arendt, H. (1971). *The Life of the Mind.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. pp. 166-170

[8] The term 'concept' derives from Latin *concipere*; from *com,* 'together', & *capere* ,'take'.

how could freedom be addressed conceptually? In accordance with the inherited conceptual formulation, we can inquire: "what is freedom?" It is obvious that the word 'freedom' does not refer to a tangible object, but it is equally evident that this word plays a central role in the life of the modern man. To demonstrate the crucial significance of this term, it is enough to mention the struggles that have been fought for the sake of freedom throughout history.[9] Similarly, one could refer to many national and international juridico-political documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other socio-political writings that revolve around this word and aim at realizing it. 'Freedom' is, therefore, not just a word among other things. In the Western philosophical tradition, the notion of freedom has, been approached predominantly as a concept. Correspondingly, the conceptual approach to freedom has, in the modern era, led to the formulation of two polar concepts of freedom, i.e. 'positive' and 'negative' freedom.[10] On the one hand, freedom, in the negative sense, is associated with the concept of 'non-interference' and 'absence of constraints'. Freedom *from* constraints signifies the (political) space, in which the individual can pursue his desires unhindered by interference or coercion from others. On the other hand, the positive concept of freedom refers to an attribute or faculty (e.g. the *will*) by means of which an individual becomes "self-mastered" or "autonomous".[11]

Both contemporary conceptions can be traced back to the medieval era. For example, both negative and positive concepts of freedom can be found in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. In his *Summa Theologiae,* Aquinas denotes 'freedom from coercion' as

[9] This central role is, for example, highlighted in the tripartite motto of the French revolution ("*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*"), which was, later, institutionalized in the constitution of some countries and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Let us also refer to a contemporary example: In a remarkable speech George Bush - the former President of the US - describes the reason for the declared "War on Terror" as follows:
"Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom -- the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time -- now depends on us." Bush, G. W. (2001). Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People. Retrieved from http://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html

[10] See: Schmidtz, D., & Brennan, J. (2010). *A brief history of liberty*. Chichester, U.K: Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 1-30

[11] In this context, Isaiah Berlin could be regarded as a central figure, who recognizes the predominance of these concepts by taking them as his point of departure: "I propose to examine no more than two of these senses [i.e. negative and positive sense] - but they are central ones, with a great deal of human history behind them, and, I dare say, still to come". See: Berlin, I. (1958). Two Concepts of Liberty. In I. Berlin (1969), *Four essays on liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chap. I

natural liberty.[12] This liberty was, in the theological debates, associated with freedom *from* the dominion of corrupt desires or from the restraints and miseries of earthly frailty.[13] Although negative freedom was (unlike its modern variant) hardly defined as the right of individual citizens, it was not simply used as a theological term. In medieval Europe, negative freedom also had a juridico-political significance. *Libertas* or *franchise* was a privilege granted to landlords, which they could exercise in their territory. It was widely and primarily grasped as territorial immunity from *seigneurial justice* [*La justice seigneuriale*].[14] On the basis of this privilege, the public jurisdiction and judges were excluded from a particular territory. In addition, it should be noted that the early conception of the human being in the sense of a single human being as distinct from a group, i.e. an *individual*[15] and the conforming rights can be found in the documents and philosophical treatises of the medieval period, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[16] Unlike natural negative liberty, Aquinas denotes the individual's capacity for free choice and judgement, i.e. *liberum arbitrium*, in which one is master of oneself, as the freedom that is proper to human beings.[17] In this sense, one is free insofar as one is able to take one thing while rejecting another. It is on the basis of the act of choosing that one possesses freedom as an attribute.[18] This definition concurs with the positive concept of freedom. The source of this account lies in Aristotle's formulation of freedom.[19] According to Aristotle, a man is free who exists for himself and not for another.[20]

In the modern era, the aforementioned approach extends its scope into the political domain and characterizes the framework of the prevailing modern legal,

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[12] "…*ad libertatem naturalem, quae est a coactione*." See: Thomas. (1948). *Summa Theologiae*. Taurini: Marietti. Part I, Questio 83

[13] These debates revolve around the interpretation of biblical teachings and Aristotle's ethics: See e.g.: 2 Corinthians 3:17

[14] *La justice seigneuriale* was a medieval judicial system that arbitrated disputes between the farmers and the lord.

[15] medieval Latin *individualis*

[16] For example, article 39 of the Magna Carta (1215) indicates that "No free man [liber homo] shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land."

[17] Thomas. (1948). *Op.cit.* Part I, Questio 83

[18] "*proprium liberi arbitrii est electio".* Ibid.

[19] It is noteworthy that according to the Greek etymology, the root of the Greek word for freedom [ἐλευθερία] is 'to go as I wish' ('*eleuthein hopos ero'*). In this sense, a person is free who can move as he wishes. See: Arendt, H. (1971). *Op.cit.* II. p.19; and also: Ibid. p. 220 (note 27)

[20] Aristotle *(1977). Op.cit*. 982b

political and philosophical discussions in relation to negative and positive freedom. For example, Hobbes is one of the early modern thinkers who provides a clear definition of negative freedom. In his view, "Liberty, or freedom, signifieth properly the absence of opposition (by opposition, I mean external impediments of motion); and may be applied no less to irrational and inanimate creatures than to rational."[21] Similarly, both positive and negative accounts can be found in Rousseau's *Contrat Social*. Rousseau claims that freedom belongs to the nature of human beings. For, every human being is born free by nature. Since human beings can think for themselves, they are the sole judge of protecting themselves from harm or destruction. In this sense, freedom is the very condition of morality. Removing freedom implies renouncing one's status as a moral person.[22] For this reason, it is impossible to renounce or alienate freedom.[23] In addition, Rousseau makes a distinction between *natural liberty [la liberté naturelle]* and *civil liberty [la liberté civile]*. Natural liberty is limited only by the individual's powers. By contrast, civil liberty is the product of the general will *[volonté générale]* of the people.[24] Citizens of a civil state give up certain aspects of their natural liberty in order to obtain a more profound liberty. For, the obedience to a law, Rousseau goes on to say, makes citizens truly masters of themselves. In this manner, these concepts of freedom, gradually obtain a more decisive political character in the eighteenth century. This transformation manifests itself in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789). The drafters of the French Declaration, inspired by the writings of Rousseau, stipulate that every person is born free and equal in rights. Here, liberty consists in being able to do anything that does not harm others.[25] In the same way, both negative and positive conceptions are highlighted in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). As such, one conceives freedom as a *property* or *attribute* to which individual citizens are entitled, "without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."[26] By

[21] Hobbes, T. (1998). *Leviathan* (J. C. A. Gaskin, Ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. chap. XXI
[22] Rousseau, J. J. (2002). *Du contrat social, ou, Principes du droit politique*. Chicoutimi: J.-M. Tremblay. I. VIII.
[23] Ibid. I. IV.
[24] People are, according to Rousseau, a collective body who are associated by means of a social contract. Ibid. I. VI
[25] *The French Declaration of the Right of Man and the Citizen* [], 26 August 1789. art. 1 & 4.
[26] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has incorporated the notion of freedom at two levels: a) Freedom (or liberty) functions, like the notion of 'peace' and 'justice', as a principal assumption upon which other rights are grounded; b) freedom is considered as an inalienable

the same token, different individual liberties have been categorized, including freedom from fear, imprisonment or freedom of opinion, expression, of association, assembly and so on.[27] In this way, freedom appears on the scene as a preeminent political value. [28]

What does the historical development of the two predominant concepts of freedom bring to light? First, it tells us that the notion of freedom has been forged into concepts. Likewise, freedom is conceptualized and defined as a (natural) property or attribute that belongs to the individual subject. Second, this conceptual freedom is intertwined with a particular conception of human nature. Here, the human being has primarily been conceived as an *individuated* person. The individuated person is, for the sake of theoretical universal definition, abstracted from all his relations, either social, economic, sexual, political, cosmic, or ontological. This entails that human beings have been reduced to an abstract conceptual entity, i.e. the individual.[29] This abstraction relies on both the distinction and the separation between the individual and society. In effect, the individual is the primary *locus* of freedom. Third and subsequently, human freedom is located in the faculty of the *will*, either in the sense of free choice, free judgment or absence of arbitrary coercive interference. As such, the will functions as the very condition of the concept of freedom.[30] Finally, on the basis of this triple reduction, one classifies different types of individual freedom, such as freedom from imprisonment, servitude, freedom of speech, of religion, and so on. For this reason, it is not only the individual subject that is *individualized* but also his freedoms.[31] In particular, this last presupposition underlines the political significance of the notion of freedom. To my understanding, these characteristics unfold the cornerstones of the conceptual approach with respect to the notion of freedom, which, in turn, demarcates the scope of the present-day legal, social and political discourse on freedom.

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and inherent right to which every individual citizens are entitled. It is noteworthy that the Declaration considers the common understanding of the rights and freedoms as the very condition "for the full realization of the pledge". See: UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III). Preamble, Art 1 & 2

[27]Ibid, Preambule, art. 19 & 20

[28] See for an overview in relation to the historical dominance of the polar concepts: Schmidtz, D., & Brennan, J. (2010). *Op.cit*. pp. 1-30

[29] See also: Panikkar, R.(1982). Is the Notion of Human Rights a Western Concept?. *Diogenes, 30*, 120. p. 82

[30] Through a historical analysis, Arendt sets out how the notion of the will has, throughout centuries, played a decisive role in the metaphysical debates concerning freedom. See: Arendt, H. (1971). *Op.cit*. pp. 11-23

[31] See also: Panikkar, R.(1982). *Op.cit*. p. 83.

I.II. A Phenomenological Reflection

" Bloße Tatsachenwissenschaften machen bloße Tatsachenmenschen."[32] (Husserl)

The inherited formulations of freedom have been so influential and persuasive that one might think the last word has been said in relation to the theme of our investigation. Yet, does the fact that a particular account, answer or formulation appear to be very influential imply that it cannot be put into question? On the contrary, it is, as Socrates teaches us, our (philosophical) responsibility to raise questions when certain answers pretend to be ultimate and absolute. It is, in fact, the task of the inquirer to seek more refined and genuine questions. Martin Heidegger is one thinker who takes up this task and develops an original criticism of the predominant paradigm. Through an ontological reflection, he raises doubts concerning the metaphysical cornerstones of the modern concepts. According to Heidegger, freedom [*Freiheit*] - in its essence - does not represent an attribute or property of the individual. For "man does not "possess" freedom as a property".[33] Nor should human nature be sought in *individuality*. Similarly, he does not share the belief that human freedom stems from the will. The primacy of the category of the will must be revealed and dismantled. But how can these assertions be justified? Since the theme of our investigation is entangled with the method of inquiry, it is important to reflect upon Heidegger's methodological decision in the first place.

Philosophy is, on Heidegger's account, not a positive inquiry *about* entities. Nor is philosophy a science that posits specific assertions in relation to beings. Subsequently, philosophy is not a positive science. In the same way, philosophy goes against the so-called 'sound common sense' [*gesunden Menschenverstande*], which is, as Heidegger puts it, the local and temporary vision of some limited generation of human beings.[34] But what are the fundamental and genuine problems of philosophical inquiry? In other words, what is to be considered as the theme of philosophy? To approach this question,

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[32] Husserl, E. (2012). *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag. pp. 5-6

[33] "*Der Mensch "besitzt" die Freiheit nicht als Eigenschaft*" Heidegger, M. (1949). *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*. Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann. p. 17.

[34] Heidegger, M. (1975). *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*. Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann. p. 19

Heidegger contextualizes his own work in the tradition of Western philosophy. Correspondingly, his thinking proceeds as a respectful, critical discourse through the history of philosophy, from the pre-Socratics to his contemporaries. For (the early) Heidegger, philosophy is a theoretical-conceptual [*theoretisch-begriffliche*] investigation that is concentrated on the question of Being [*Seinsfrage*].[35] It is the *Seinsfrage* that has been neglected throughout the history of philosophy since Plato. This fundamental question investigates the sense of Being in general [*überhaupt*].[36] Correspondingly, "understanding" [*Verstehen*] the sense of Being is to be considered as the main theme and task of philosophy. The main concern of philosophy is to interpret that which makes the beings and our experience and understanding of beings possible. To put it another way, philosophy deals with that which is *not* but still is given, i.e. "it gives" *[es gibt]*. It is for philosophy, essential to understand Being. "Understanding of being" [*Seinsverständnis*] is earlier than every experience of entities, including the modern subject-object relationship.[37] For this reason, philosophy should be considered as the science of Being; philosophy is *ontology*. In this way, the first response with respect to the theme and the task of philosophy has been formulated. But along which path should the theme of philosophy be addressed?

We have already indicated that for Heidegger, philosophy is not a positive science. Heidegger contends that the essence of modern positive sciences consists in *research* [*Forschung*]. Scientific research initiates from the assumption of a "fixed ground plan" [*Grundriß*]. This ground plan is, among other things, concretized in the quantification of nature, the principle of universal determinism, whereby the world is *pro*jected as an identifiable coherence. As such, it directs the expert to look into the objective world, which is objectified as a *picture*. Here, scientific procedure [*Angriff*], (e.g. forming a hypothesis, testing on the basis of experiments, verifying data, prediction and so on) holds sway over the object of research.[38] Positive science, as research, enables the expert to *posit* specific claims about beings. However, since philosophy, as ontology, is not a positive science, its questions are cultivated by virtue of its own

[35] Ibid. p. 15.
[36] 'Frage nach dem *Sinn von Sein* überhaupt'
[37] Ibid. p. 14.
[38] See: Heidegger, M. (1950). Die Zeit des Weltbildes. In *Holzwege.* Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann. pp. 76-81

method. According to Heidegger, the proper method of ontology is *phenomenology*.[39] The basic problems of phenomenology are interwoven with the sole theme of philosophy. For this reason, the discussion [*Erörterung*] of phenomenology has to elucidate the possibility and necessity of ontology as the science of Being in the very process of inquiry [*Fragen*]. It is in this context that Heidegger considers philosophy as the theoretical-conceptual interpretation of Being, of its structure and possibilities. Consequently, Being is supposed to be understood and thematized conceptually by way of the phenomenological method. This gives rise to the next question: Along which path does the phenomenological way of questioning proceed?

The phenomenological method has three *consistent* components.[40] Since being reveals itself through beings, as Heidegger maintains, it is necessary to direct oneself toward a particular being in a way that one is able to leave the being (or entity) [*das Seiende*] for the sake of approaching Being [*das Sein*], i.e. to be led away from the being and to be led back to Being itself. This leading back from the addressed being (entity) to its Being is called the *phenomenological reduction* [*Reduktion*].[41] In this way, the phenomenologist attempts to expose the Being of the being (entity) in question. But reduction is not the sole component of phenomenology. Reduction, as aversion from beings, represents the *negative* aspect of the method. The phenomenological method entails another component, which is termed *phenomenological construction* [*Konstruktion*]. Construction is the projection [*Entwerfen*] of antecedently given being upon its Being and its ontological structure.[42] In order to articulate the sense of Being in general, we should bring ourselves forward to Being itself. Reduction and construction are tied to the particular experience of beings through the possibilities of the experience

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[39] Heidegger, M. (1975). *Op.cit.* p. 27

[40] It is worth pointing out that Heidegger's method is akin to the founder of phenomenology in many respects. For Husserl, phenomenology is a reflective, intuitive and descriptive method. It is a science of the *a priori*, namely of the "essence". Husserl's phenomenology investigates phenomena, as a correlate to our consciousness i.e. "*noesis-noema*" relationship as act of consciousness. Although philosophy might begin by a concrete example drawn from experience, its ultimate goal is to articulate what is essential to things (e.g. how this knife, as a phenomenon, relate to my consciousness and becomes real!). This process is called "eidetic reduction". Another aspect of the method is to examine how consciousness constitutes beings as phenomena. This is called the "transcendental reduction", which, again, characterizes the primacy of consciousness in Husserl's method. Heidegger departs from this method, by upholding the primacy of Being. See: Crowell, S.G. (1993). Heidegger and Husserl: The Matter and Method of Philosophy, In H. L. Dreyfus, & M. A. Wrathall. (Ed.), *A Companion to Heidegger*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub. pp. 59-62

[41] Heidegger, M. (1975). *Op.cit.* pp. 28-29

[42] Ibid. p. 30

of the man, understood as *Dasein*. It should be noted that the experience of beings and their respective modes of being [*Weise-zu-sein*] are not the same for all times and for everyone. As such, beings are not accessible in the same manner recurrently. This fact characterizes the historical situation (temporality) of every philosophical investigation. Our thinking is rooted and accomplished in and through the philosophical tradition and its horizon. For this reason, the theoretical-conceptual interpretation of being requires *destruction* [*Destruktion*]. Destruction is a critical process through which the traditional concepts, which are at first introduced, are led down [*Abbau*] to the sources from which they were drawn. It is by means of destruction that philosophy, as ontology, can complete its task and reach a genuine concept of Being.[43] In his later works, Heidegger radicalizes this point of departure by concentrating on the truth of Being. To this end, Heidegger endeavors to pay attention to Being as the inherent *element* of thinking. Here, thinking [*Das Denken*] is conceived in the sense of an activity [*Handeln*]. Since the essence of every activity is accomplishment [*Vollbringen*], thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the essence [*Wesen*] of human beings.[44] Accomplishment, according to Heidegger, is to bring something to the fullness of its essence.[45] Thinking is "thinking *of* Being" [*Denken des Seins*] and as such, belongs to Being. For the same reason, thinking can, in my view, be construed as phenomenology with a new accent. It is an endeavor to articulate the simple ontological relationship within language. In the following fragment, I shall attempt to demonstrate how the phenomenological method is applied to rethink freedom ontologically.

I.III Co-belonging of Being & Freedom

Things have served their purpose: let them be.[46]

How can the notion of freedom be elucidated by way of phenomenology? Heidegger acknowledges that the question of the essence of human freedom belongs to one of the

[43] Ibid. p. 31
[44] Both German "Wesen" (from Old German *Wesan*, 'Being') and its English equivalent "Essence" (from Latin *esse*, 'to be') express different modes of Being.
[45] Heidegger, M. (1949). *Über den Humanismus*. Frankfurt am Main. p. 5
[46] Eliot, T.S. (2004). Four Quartets. In *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot.* London: Faber. p. 194.

fundamental questions of philosophy.[47] But ontological understanding of freedom is radically distinct from the predominant conception of freedom. In the context of *Seinsfrage*, phenomenology is in search of the transcendental condition of human freedom as such. Freedom is intertwined with the question of Being and in turn, pertains to the essence of human beings. As we have seen, freedom is, according to the traditional conceptual approach, a property of the individual, which, directly or indirectly stems from the faculty of the will. But if freedom is merely a property or an attribute, what is then the inner possibility of our choosing? Heidegger holds that freedom does not originate in our choosing or tendency toward different options. Nor is freedom mere absence of constraint with respect to what we can or cannot do. Prior to every negative or positive freedom, freedom reveals itself as *letting-be* [*Seinlassen*].[48]

The concept of freedom, as letting-be, corresponds to Heidegger's interpretation of Greek *alétheia* [*ἀλήθεια*], which is interpreted by way of an etymological analysis as 'disclosure' or 'unconcealment' [*Unverborgenheit*]. [49] The notion of letting-be is equivocal. On the one hand, it characterizes the open domain within the structure of Being. This open domain is also called the *Unverborgenheit* of Being. Being allows us to access the world as it is. In this sense, freedom is engagement in the historical disclosure of entities as such. On the other hand, the concept of letting-be expresses an authentic disposition [*Stimmung*] of human beings towards beings. However, this disposition does not refer to neglect and indifference. To let be is to engage oneself with beings. This engagement should not be understood solely as the management, preservation and planning of beings that are present at hand. Rather, it is to leave beings beforehand in their own nature, thereby engaging oneself with the open domain of Being. [50] In this sense, freedom is Dasein's authentic disposition within a world in which he is situated. For this reason, freedom [*Freiheit*] does not signify a human attribute.[51] It is, rather, the

[47] Thiele, L. P. (1994). Heidegger on Freedom: Political not Metaphysical. *The American Political Science Review*, *88* (2), p. 278

[48] Heiddegger, M. (1949). *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*. Op.cit. p. 15.

[49] 'alétheia' means that which is 'not hidden or forgotten'.

[50] Ibid. pp. 15-16

[51] Here, Heidegger abandons his early views, which are associated with Nazi ideology. During his rectorship, at the University of Freiburg, Heidegger favoured the positive liberty over negative freedom. For negative freedom, i.e. freedom from arbitrariness, concern, intentions, and inclinations was, in his view, not to be considered as genuine. By contrast, the highest freedom was to be found in obedience to a self-given law as a member of an organic whole (das Volk), which was, according to him manifest in the general will of the Nazi movement. See: Thiele, L. P. (1994). *Op.cit.* p. 281

transcendental condition of human being's existence as *Dasein.* As Heidegger puts is, *Der Mensch "besitzt" die Freiheit nicht als Eigenschaft [...]: die Freiheit, das ek-sistente, entbergende Da-sein besitzt den Menschen.*[52]

As we have seen, the inherited conception of freedom is entwined with a particular image of man, namely the *individual*. Nonetheless, is the human being, thought of as an individual, not simply an abstraction? How does the phenomenological approach pertain to this image? Heidegger observes that, throughout the history of metaphysics, the human being is conceived as an *animal rationale*. In effect, *anima* has been understood as *soul*, *spirit,* or *mind*. Correspondingly, the human being and his essence have been comprehended in terms of 'subject', 'individual' or 'spirit'. This implies that the human being has always been measured on the basis of his *animalitas* and never examined in the direction of his *humanitas*.[53] According to Heidegger, it is questionable whether *animality* and *individuality* characterize the primordial dimension of the human being at all. For, in order to inquire into *what* enables a being to be *human*, it is crucial to explicate the "nature" (essence) of this particular being. As Heidegger maintains, the human being should be apprehended in his relation, i.e. his *co-belonging* [*Zugehörigkeit*], to Being. This ontological relation precedes every process that leads to the construction of the individual subject, including individualization and subjectification. The modern subject-object relation itself, is a mode of being that is, historically, made possible by virtue of the open domain of Being. For this reason, the essence of the human being should not be sought in his individuality or subjectivity. The primordial mode of being is man as *being-in-the-world* [*In-der-Welt-sein*]. Yet this does not bring us back to the medieval understanding of human being as *animal sociale*, namely a member of an organic whole (Society, Nation, Volk, and so on.). Nor does it imply that the human being is a worldly creature, in the Christian sense, which has no access to *transcendence*. On the contrary, the ontological situation of the human being, as being-in-the-world, *is* transcendence. As *Dasein*, the human being is not an entity that appears among other entities. Rather, Dasein is that for which his own being and the Being of beings [*das Sein des Seienden*] comes into question. In this way, the human being *transcends* his own being. As Heidegger puts it, the essence of the human being is

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This aspect of Heidegger's thought is being reemphasized in recent debates after the publication of his *Schwarze Hefte*.

[52] Heiddegger, M. (1949). *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*. Op.cit. p. 17

[53] Heidegger, M. (1949). *Über den Humanismus*. Op.cit. p. 13

grounded in his "Ek-sistence" [*ek-sistenz*]. Here, Ek-sistence should not be identified with the medieval *existentia* (understood as actuality in contrast to *essentia,* as possibility). Ek-sistence means standing out in the truth, i.e. the open domain of Being. Human ek-sistence characterizes the very condition of his freedom.

The human being, underlines Heiddeger, has access to his essence (ek-sistence) by virtue of the *claim* [*Anspruch*] of Being.[54] It is through this claim that the human being resides in his dwelling place.[55] This dwelling place is language. The thinking activity is in need of language to think Being. For Heidegger however, language is not merely speech, consisting of phonemes, characters, melody, rhythm and meaning. Nor can language be essentially understood in terms of a tool by which a living being/organism expresses itself. For, the relationship between Being and the human being is articulated in language. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that the human being is not just a living being [*Lebewesen*] that possesses language as one of his capacities.[56] Through thinking, which is accomplished in language, Dasein listens and responds to the *call* of Being - thinking itself is historical [*geschichtlich*]. Human beings do not decide whether and how beings appear throughout history; it is the history of Being [*Seinsgeschichte*] working behind the actions of man, determining his horizon. It is the task of the human being to find what is fitting in his essence, which corresponds to the destiny of being. The history of Being comes to language in the words of essential thinkers.[57] Nonetheless, the human being cannot be at home (and therefore not free) as long as he reduces language to a means of communication. In this context, Heidegger contends that language is being devastated in ordinary use of language. For, language becomes an instrument of domination over beings, in terms of cause and effect. The decline of language stems from an ontological threat, i.e. *forgetting of Being*[58], that threatens humankind as a whole. This threat is inherent to our modern technological era. In this era, every being is supposed to be meaningful inasmuch as it can be reduced to a useful object. This object can, in turn, be utilized for an instrumental end. Water is reduced to a source of energy and means of transportation, every natural or fabricated entity transforms into commodity and the earth is indefinitely exploited as a source of supply

[54] Ibid. p. 5
[55] Heidegger justifies his claim by referring to the root of German *Wesen*, which derives from Sanskrit *Vasati*; "remain, live, dwell"
[56] Ibid. 21
[57] Ibid. p.23
[58] *Seinsvergessenheit*

from which benefit is produced. Heidegger calls the technological orientation that corresponds to this modern mode of being *Herausforderung* (challenging-forth). [59] This term characterizes the human orientation to the world by which the modern man challenges-forth (exhausts) the resources of the world into new functional forms (products, commodity). It is evident that this modern orientation of unremitting mastery does not represent human freedom. Rather, it reveals the symptoms of a historical period that, paradoxically enough, is at risk of imploding under the pressure of its own expansion.

I.IV The Dominion of the Concept

"History may be servitude,
History may be freedom."[60]

The phenomenological way of questioning encourages fundamental insights into the theme in question. As we have seen, Heidegger considers phenomenology as a theoretical-conceptual investigation that is concentrated on the question of Being. Guided by the phenomenological method, he initiates a critical reflection on the foundations of Western thought. In this context, he articulates the ontological (transcendental) condition of human freedom as letting-be. This equivocal concept of freedom precedes every type of willful mastery or control. Accordingly, this account of freedom calls attention to the fact that human freedom rests upon man's position in the world in correlation with other entities. By the same token, the human being can be free to the extent that he *lets* beings *be*. The ontological concept of freedom, particularly and historically, responds to our technological age, which is subjected to man-made threats, such as large-scale land and water pollution, world wars, weapons of mass destruction and other environmental threats. In this manner, the phenomenological reflection on freedom exposes the horizon of the inherited conceptual thought. Does this mean that phenomenology surpasses the limits of the conceptual approach? Despite the originality of this approach, it does not escape the boundaries of the inherited, conceptual thinking, as this thinking is, methodologically, a conceptual response to the inherited thought. For

[59]Heidegger, M. (1962). *Die Technik und die Kehre*. Pfullingen: Neske. pp. 14-16
[60] Eliot, T.S. (2004). *Op.cit*. p. 195.

Heidegger, philosophy is "die theoretisch-begriffliche Interpretation des Seins, seiner Struktur und seiner Möglichkeiten".[61] He carries, thereby, the scope of the conceptual approach to the extremes. One might argue that Heidegger modifies his orientation by criticizing the conceptual ontology and introducing thinking as the proper path of inquiry.[62] Indeed, this should be admitted. But it should be pointed out that thinking is, according to Heidegger, an activity that is granted to the essential thinkers who have retained the *Seinsfrage*. This implies that only exceptional individuals have endeavored to accomplish thinking; an activity that is originated by the destiny of Being.[63] It is, therefore, equally true that thinking is a solitary response to the claim of Being where there is no room for the voice of another interlocutor. In accordance with his elitist position, Heidegger is very critical of common sense and public opinion.[64] As a result, he identifies common sense with the traditional conception of freedom.[65] The question arises here whether ontology does justice to the experience of *ordinary* human beings with respect to freedom. For, to what extent is the experience and thoughts of human beings common? How do we measure this commonness? Thinking appears to be a *monological* discourse (which is inherent to the conceptual thought) with the history of (Western) philosophy and other *thinkers*.[66] If there is something that Heidegger decisively disregards, it is the opinion of the ordinary man.[67] For this reason, ontology and its method fail to address the *position* of the *other*.

To be sure, I believe, every philosophical inquiry needs to reflect upon how significant thinkers have pondered upon freedom. Still, it is of utmost importance to pay attention to the particular experience and thoughts of the *other* through dialogue. A philosophical dialogue is an event that we recognize in Socratic dialogues. Experiencing and understanding freedom is not something that is solely entrusted to thinkers and

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[61] Heidegger, M. (1975).*Op.cit.* p. 15.
[62] Heidegger, M. (1949). *Über den Humanismus*. Op.cit. p. 41
[63] "Dieses «es gibt» [Being] waltet als das Geschick des Seins. Dessen Geschichte kommt im Wort der wesentlichen Denker zur Sprache". Ibid. p. 23
[64] Heidegger, M. (1975).*Op.cit.* p. 19
[65] Heiddegger, M. (1949). *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*. Op.cit. pp. 16-17
[66] It should, however, be noted that Heidegger (despite his methodological choice) recognizes the value of the dialogical way of thinking. For example, in his letter to Jean Beaufret, he indicates: "Diese Fragen Ihres Briefes ließen sich wohl im unmittelbaren Gespräch eher klären. Im Schriftlichen büßt das Denken leicht seine Beweglichkeit ein. Vor allem aber kann es da nur schwer die ihm eigene Mehrdimensionalität seines Bereiches innehalten." Heidegger, M. (1949). *Über den Humanismus*. Op.cit. p. 6
[67] Heidegger, M. (1975).*Op.cit.* p. 19

intellectuals. Similarly, by reducing the notion of freedom to a concept, albeit an ontological one, an essential dimension of our theme remains untouched. It should be recalled that understanding a *word* in the sense of a concept is an invention of Western thought. But it is not manifest that a concept should be considered as something universal, as each concept is valid primarily where it was conceived. Different cultures and different ages have, in fact, different ways of expressing their central notions.[68] A particular culture may express its central notions through symbols (e.g. Indian culture), another through signs referring to rituals (e.g. Chinese culture), others through concepts (e.g. Western thought), and so on. [69]Apart from this cultural difference, it should be emphasized that freedom, as a central notion in many societies, is not just a technical term, which is used by a limited group of language-users (scientists, technicians, jurists, philosophers, politicians and so on). Subsequently, every single person may have a different understanding of freedom; an authentic understanding that springs from a singular experience. It is precisely this singular experience and perspective that is being neglected by the conceptual approach and its ontological variant. Here, I shall not detail the ethical aspects of this carelessness.[70] For now, I shall confine myself to the following observation: *the methodological insensitivity towards the position of the other stems from an inadequate understanding of the complex and heterogeneous role that meaning and language play in human life*. *To bring other dimensions of freedom into light, it is necessary to explore freedom as a word and not as a concept*. I shall endeavor to prepare this new approach by dwelling upon Wittgenstein's ordinary language analysis. In this way, the second task of our methodological interrogation has been articulated.

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[68] Of course, this does not mean that a formulated concept cannot be extrapolated to different fields and cultures.

[69] For example, Panikkar exposes the limitation of the conceptual approach with respect to the notion of 'right' by reflecting on the Indian symbol 'dharma'. He observes that dharma is a central notion (although not a concept!) in the Indian culture that is not identical to the Western concept of right. Nonetheless, *dharma* serves, perfectly, as its cross-cultural *homeomorphic equivalent*. Panikkar, R.(1982). *Op.cit*. p. 84

[70] Levinas criticizes his master by pointing out that ontology, which starts from and upholds the Self [*Le Même*], neglects the alterity of the other [*L'Autre*]. In the same way, the primacy of ontological relationship of letting-be is a one-sided relationship that subordinates the ethical relation to the concept of Being in general. For Levinas, the ethical relation is concretized in the *face-to-face* encounter. The other is, here, not an impersonal *Neuter*. Rather, the face of the other expresses itself and breaks into my thought and experience and conditions *me*. Thus, the other maintains a relation before every *letting-be*. See: Lévinas, E. (1961). *Totalité et infini: Essai sur l'extériorité*. La Haye: M. Nijhoff. Section I. C.

Chapter II: Freedom & Linguistic Activity

II.I Heterogeneity of Signification

Festbegrenzte Begriffe würden eine Gleichförmigkeit des Verhaltens fordern. Aber wo ich sicher bin, ist der Andere unsicher. Und das ist eine Naturtatsache.[71]

In the previous chapter, I laid bare the limitations of prevailing conceptions of freedom. In this respect, Heidegger's phenomenological method helps to reveal that the ontological dimension of freedom cannot be examined within the modern conceptual paradigm. This method also explains that the co-belonging of Being and freedom, understood as letting-be, characterizes the primordial dimension of *human* existence. To be sure, the ontological *sense* of 'freedom' has a crucial significance for our methodological study. However, this should not make us forget that phenomenology is still approaching freedom conceptually; albeit that the polar concepts of freedom are replaced by an ontological one. As aforementioned, this conceptual account disregards the standpoint of the *other*. But if conceptualization is not the proper method of inquiry, how are we to interrogate the notion of freedom? Since language is the only medium through which our theme of inquiry and (the communicative aspect of) our thinking activity manifests itself, it is a matter of utmost importance to elaborate on the notion of 'linguistic meaning'. This investigation is the second essential step towards developing our method of enquiry. I shall present this part of the method by examining Wittgenstein's account of language and meaning. Wittgenstein tackles the notion of 'linguistic meaning' by focusing on the overlooked role of language in philosophical discussions.[72] What stands out in his (later) philosophy is that he draws attention to the everyday *use* of language. According to Wittgenstein, language is to be considered as an essential and inseparable element of our human activities. It is an ability that is

[71] Wittgenstein, L. (1967). *Zettel* (G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, Ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press. Frag. 374

[72] Here, it is not my intention to give a clear-cut exegesis of different aspects of Wittgenstein's thought. I shall limit myself to addressing his account of linguistic meaning.

imbedded in our everyday (social) activities. One could compare linguistic activity with the ability of playing a game, which relies on techniques and often (but not always) on rules. Human beings master language by way of education and practice. The mastery of a particular language can be checked and tested by other language-users of the linguistic community.

From this point of departure, Wittgenstein attempts to demonstrate that language is not merely a system of referential relations, in which words and sentences (signs and combination of signs) stand in a one-to-one pictorial relation to objects and states of affairs.[73] Nor is the sole function of language to describe facts. Equally, linguistic meaning cannot be completely analyzed and described theoretically, (for example by constructing formal rules or logical meta-language).[74]Meaning is not an attribute or property that accompanies words and sentences as a *Dunstkreis*.[75] On the contrary, words and sentences have meaning when they are actually *used* in a particular situation for diverse purposes. Accordingly, it is a mistake to search for the *absolute* or *central* meaning of a word. This methodological position could be interpreted as a radical criticism of the conceptual approach. As Wittgenstein puts it, "Wenn die Philosophen ein Wort gebrauchen- "Wissen", "Sein", Gegenstand", "Ich", "Satz", "Name"- und das *Wesen* des Dings zu erfassen trachten, muß ich immer fragen: Wird denn dieses Wort in der Sprache, in der es seine Heimat hat, je tatsächlich so gebraucht?"[76] To clarify this standpoint, Wittgenstein compares language to a toolbox. Inside a toolbox there are different tools, such as: a hammer, a gluepot, a marking gauge, a plier, a square, etc., which are being used for different applications. Similarly, different linguistic expressions are used for diverse purposes in different situations.[77] It is, therefore, misguided to look for a monolithic, abstract theory of meaning.[78]

In view of this approach, Wittgenstein tirelessly elucidates possible and

[73] It is noteworthy that Wittgenstein puts his earlier way of thinking in the *Tractatus* into question. In this account, he presents a philosophical-logical model, in which names represent objects, sentences describe state of affairs (facts) [*Tatsachen*], and language, as a whole, depicts reality [*Wirklichkeit*]. See: Wittgenstein, L. (1961). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus: The German text Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung* (D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, Trans.). New York: Humanities Press. (Original work published 1921). 1-3

[74] Wittgenstein, L. (2001). *Philosophical investigations: The German text, with a revised English translation* (G. E. M. Anscombe, Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell. (Original work published 1953). I. 89

[75] Ibid. I. 117

[76] Ibid. I. 116

[77] Ibid. I. 11

[78] See for example: Ibid. I. 109

heterogeneous applications of linguistic expressions, which he calls *language-games* [*Sprachspiele*]. He introduces this term to show the flexibility of the way language functions in life. "Ich werde auch das Ganze: der Sprache und der Tätigkeiten, mit denen sie verwoben ist, das "Sprachspiel" nennen."[79] In this sense, language-games represent different modes of linguistic activity, by which we use the signs of our highly complicated language. As such, language is the world (context), in which sentences and words have sense. Here, Wittgenstein is not offering a 'use theory of meaning'. For, theorization is, on the one hand, far from Wittgenstein's non-theoretical stance. He admits on the other hand, that the notion of 'use' is not identical with 'meaning'.[80] Instead, what he wants to show is that the meaning of linguistic expressions cannot be separated from the contextual conditions by which we have learnt them, e.g. by giving names to different things: shapes, colors, moods, repeating signs, following different rules, and so on. To understand an element of language (e.g. 'freedom') rests upon understanding a particular language-game as a whole. Understanding a linguistic expression is analogous to "knowing" how to play a game like chess. Similarly, there are an indefinite number of activities and circumstances in which language-games occur: giving an order, obeying, telling a joke, lying, insulting, describing a state of affairs, solving a riddle, defining something by means of concepts, insulting, praying, debating, acting, naming, etc. It is evident that there is no common feature or property that is common to all these linguistic activities (games). Instead, the meaning of linguistic expressions should be sought in view of their actual use in language-games played by human beings.

[79] Ibid. I. 7

[80] See for example: "Man kann für eine *große* Klasse von Fällen der Benützung des Wortes "Bedeutung"- wenn auch nicht für *alle* Fälle seiner Benützung- dieses Wort so erklären: Die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch in der Sprache.
Und die *Bedeutung* eines Namens erklärt man manchmal dadurch, dass man auf seinen *Träger* zeigt." Ibid. I. 43

II.II An Everyday Word

Die Fragen beziehen sich auf Wörter; so muß ich von Wörtern reden.[81]

What is the contribution of Wittgenstein's account of meaning within the context of our study? From the negative point of view, this account allows us to clarify that many philosophers (including Heidegger) have overlooked the fact that the words they are concerned with originally spring from their everyday use, especially those words which are of interest to philosophy.[82] This fact becomes more apparent when one intends to elucidate the general, central or *proper* sense of those terms that almost every human being is concerned with.[83] And we know that 'freedom' is such a word. It is, therefore, misguided to provide a homogeneous account for explaining the common nature of 'freedom' in general or universal terms. In this sense, one could justify that conceptualization is a method of inquiry, which leads to a very restricted understanding of freedom. From the affirmative viewpoint, Wittgenstein's way of thinking could be applied as a guiding principle to address the notion of freedom on the basis of heterogeneous language-games; and investigating 'freedom' in the context of language-games is radically different from the traditional (conceptual) approach. In order to understand what the word 'freedom' signifies, one should look at how it is actually used by different human beings in different language-games.

Since language is interwoven with all activities in our social and private life, every language-game expresses certain aspects of human experience. Here, it should be noted that the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that speaking a language is part of a *form of life* [*Lebensform*].[84] The term 'form of life' is a central but ambiguous term in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. This term signifies, in the first place,

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[81] Ibid. I. 120

[82] In this respect, it is interesting to investigate how everyday words have, throughout the history of Western metaphysics, been introduced into philosophical language. Consider e.g. the use of everyday words, such as 'eidos/idea' [the shape of something] and 'psyche' [breath of life], in Plato's an Aristotle's thought and their transformation (erosion) into *termini technici*, i.e. concepts. For an insightful interpretation see: Arendt, H. (1971). *Op.cit.* pp. 98-110

[83] Although Socrates might be considered as the discoverer of the *concept*, he was fully aware of the fact that the words he was interrogating were part of Greek language before he tried to give an account of them. This can, clearly, be signaled in his dialogical way of thinking. See in this regard: Ibid. p. 170-171

[84] Wittgenstein, L. (2001). *Op.cit*. I. 23

the linguistic community, in which human beings share a common world. As Wittgenstein maintains, "Und eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen".[85] In other words, to say that human beings agree in the language they use entails that they agree in a particular form of life.[86] To underline the entanglement of language and the corresponding form of life, one could compare human language with an ancient city: with different types of buildings, old and new houses, buildings and streets with additions from various periods, different kinds of squares, regular modern streets and irregular old ones, and so on.[87] This metaphor shows that language is an institution that has been formed in the course of history as a product of human collective action. It is impossible to provide a fixed classification of different dimensions of a language or a form of life. Although there is no common property to be given for all language-games, one can analyze them as individual cases and search for similarities (but also dissimilarities), relationships, kinships [*Verwandtschaften*], and family resemblances [*Familienähnlichkeiten*] between language-games.[88] In this way, one could touch upon a complicated network of family resemblances and similarities between possible uses of the word 'freedom'.

It should be recalled that every linguistic expression has meaning only within the region of a particular form of life. Subsequently, if we want to know what the word 'freedom' means, we need to inquire under what special circumstances this word has been used by different human beings. To demonstrate how this task could be realized, I have collected different (possible and real) forms of expressions, in which 'freedom' appears as a central theme: A friend told me during a conversation: "When I learnt how to resolve the struggle between my patriarchal *self* and my sexual orientation, I could, gradually, accept myself as who I really am. At that moment, I deeply experienced freedom". A foreigner has recently traveled to a new country and says to himself, "If I could speak the language of this people, I would be freer. I would be able to share my personal experience with them." Sartre states, "We will freedom for freedom's sake, in and through particular circumstances. And in thus willing freedom, we discover that it depends entirely upon the freedom of others and that the freedom of others depends

[85] Ibid. I. 19
[86] Ibid. I. 241
[87] Ibid. I. 18
[88] Ibid. I. 67

upon our own."[89] This is a fragment from a lecture, in which freedom has been used to prescribe a political project. "Do you think that freedom is important in your life?" is a question that has been expressed during an interview. It seems that the inquirer expects an answer about the *place* of freedom in the interlocutor's life. The interlocutor replies, "For years I have struggled and sacrificed my own personal freedom for the sake of collective freedom." An Islamic cleric boldly states, "Freedom is an idol, which has been fabricated by the United States to be worshiped. This idol has been made to replace God. We have, therefore, the duty to resist and demolish this idol".[90] An asylum-seeker expresses his thought during a conversation, that "Even if this state recognizes me as a refugee; still, I would not feel that I am a free citizen." When I asked a lady to tell me how she experiences freedom, she replied: "Feeling deeply that one is able to desire death is a genuine experience of freedom." The reason I mention these concrete examples is not to give an overview of (or indefinite number of) possible uses of the word 'freedom'. Rather, I intend to underline the communicative aspect of the singular experience of human beings with respect to the notion of 'freedom'. Also, my aim is to show that freedom cannot be simply conceptualized without doing injustice to the singular (linguistic) experience of the *other*. In fact, there are significant voices being neglected by the prevailing conceptual approach. In this context, Wittgenstein's method can be applied to surpass this fundamental methodological shortcoming by bringing other important *senses* of the notion of freedom into light.

II.III The Standpoint of the Other

A life that cannot be separated from its form is a life for which what is at stake in its way of living is living itself.[91] (Agamben)

Wittgenstein's 'ordinary language analysis' opens up the rigid realm of the concept in order to enter the vast domain of language-games. As such, this approach provides

[89] Sartre, J.P. (1989). Existentialism is a humanism. In W. Kaufman (Ed.), *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*. Meridian Publishing Company, (Originally presented in 1946)
[90] A fragment from a lecture given by Misbah Yazdi (a well-known conservative Islamic cleric). Retrieved and translated from: http://www.rahesabz.net/story/82572/
[91] Agamben, G. (2000). *Means without end: Notes on politics* (V. Binetti and C. Casavino Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 4

enough grounds to justify the importance of investigating freedom as an ordinary word in view of the world (context) in which it occurs. Since freedom is a word that is used by different language-users, it is obvious that this notion cannot be restricted to a singular and static philosophical definition. Instead, we need to examine carefully how this word is used, experienced and understood by different human beings. Without incorporating the voice of other human beings into our investigation, our inquiry with respect to freedom could not approach other essential dimensions (meanings) of this notion.[92] Subsequently, the following methodological claim with respect to the theme of our investigation could be articulated: *To provide a (more) comprehensive understanding of the notion of freedom, we need to rely not only on our own insights (how valuable and consistent it may sound) but also on the standpoint of the 'other'. To put it another way, the notion of freedom should be approached from the standpoint of the 'other'.* In this manner, the second task of this methodological study has been accomplished. Still, one could raise two major points of criticism against Wittgenstein's way of thinking. The first point is very essential and pertains to the task of philosophy as such. According to Wittgenstein, the sole task of philosophy is to analyze language-games in order to distinguish between sense and *metaphysical* nonsense. Here, he draws a sharp line between the everyday use and metaphysical use of language.[93] Philosophy, as language analysis, elucidates that metaphysical questions arise as soon as one fails to discover the proper use of words and signs in particular language-games. In this respect, philosophy functions as a therapy.[94] The results of philosophy, Wittgenstein goes on to conclude, consist in uncovering a piece of plain nonsense that occurs by running against the limits of language.[95] Metaphysical and ontological questions arise when a word is used in a language-game that is not appropriate to it.[96] This entails that there are no genuine philosophical questions.

Paradoxically enough, Wittgenstein's own account leans on an ambiguous (metaphysical) limit-term, i.e. 'form of life'. As we have seen, this term refers to the linguistic community in which human beings share a common world. Still, Wittgenstein does not elucidate in what way language relates to the conforming form of life. There is

[92] From ethical point of view, this methodological carelessness may lead to domination, silencing normalization, and objectification in relation to other human beings and cultures.
[93] Wittgenstein, L. (2001). *Op.cit*. I. 117
[94] Ibid. I. 225
[95] Ibid. I. 119
[96] Kenny, A. (1973). *Wittgenstein*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. p. 130

an important passage in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations*, which directs us to unravel a substantial tension in Wittgenstein's thought. "Das Hinzunehmende, Gegebene- könnte man sagen- seien *Lebensformen*".[97] This sentence could, in itself, be interpreted as an affirmative ontological statement in relation to the primordial significance of forms of life.[98] This becomes manifest in light of the Tractarian ontological idea that 'Die Welt und das Leben sind Eins'; and that the limits of language show the limits of our world.[99] In this context, considering a form of life as *Gegebene* reminds us of Heidegger's interpretation of Being in the sense of *es gibt*. This implies that Wittgenstein, although against his predominant tendency, has to encounter the ontological question: Why does a particular form of life present itself as such?[100] To put it in Tractarian (but also Heideggerian) terms: Why does our world reveal itself as a *common* world? The form of life (i.e. the common world) is, according to Wittgenstein, that which should be presupposed. This answer does not seem to be convincing. In the previous chapter, I underscored the methodological and historical relevance of the ontological question with respect to freedom. Here, it should be added that it is also of equal importance to inquire how the original differences between forms of life (society) throughout history can be clarified. This gives rise to a chain of questions: Why are the forms of life, socially and historically, *different*? Why does, for example, the modern man conceive a river as a source of energy and an ancient community as a god? How does a thing (e.g. an apple) become a commodity? What is the role of language and meaning in this respect? Above all, why do some words: 'God', 'capital', 'money', 'soul', 'right', 'nation' and 'freedom' etc., play a central and decisive role in different forms of life? (Compare the sense of these terms with the use of words: 'chair', 'stone', 'dog', and so

[97] Wittgenstein, L. (2001). *Op.cit*. II. 192

[98] Another version of this ontological presupposition can be found in the *Tractatus*. In this work, Wittgenstein introduces another ambiguous limit-term, i.e. the 'substance', which has to be presupposed to justify his logic: "Hätte die Welt keine Substanz, so würde, ob ein Satz Sinn hat, davon abhängen, ob ein anderer Satz wahr ist*."* (2.0211). And, "Die Substanz der Welt *kann* nur eine Form und keine materiellen Eigenschaften bestimmen." (2.0231). See also: "Die Substanz ist das, was unabhängig von dem was der Fall ist, besteht*."*(2.024)
For a critical examination of this ontological claim see:
Badiou, A. (2011). *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy* (B. Bosteels, Trans.) London: Verso. (Original work published 1994) pp. 97-101

[99] Wittgenstein, L. (1961). *Op.cit.* 5.62-5.621

[100] I take this question as a modified version of the *Seinsfrage*.

on)[101] In this way, a second point of criticism comes into light: In Wittgenstein's account, it remains unclear how one should interpret the central role and extraordinary significance of a particular word (in our case 'freedom') in view of human private and collective experience.

Unlike Wittgenstein, I do not claim that the metaphysical conceptions of 'freedom' lack sense. On the contrary, the theoretical-conceptual use of language, among other possible uses, belongs to a particular form of life. And, as noted before, the polar concepts of freedom have been very influential in the formation of modern political thought.[102] In this regard, my main concern is that these concepts should not be taken as central or absolute. To rethink the notion of freedom, it is important to incorporate the singular experience of the other into our method of inquiry. To this end, the inquirer needs to initiate a dialogue not only with the philosopher but also with the ordinary man, the sex-worker, the artist, the storyteller, the mystic, the disabled, the marginalized, the old lady, the cleric, the transgender, the prisoner, the soldier, the refugee, the child, the patient and so on. Here, Heidegger's phenomenology leads us to examine the ontological dimension of this experience. Still, to complete this methodological study, we need to elaborate on the following question: *Why do some words (in our case 'freedom') play a central role in a particular form of life?* In the next chapter, I shall elaborate on this question and its possible answers by reflecting upon Castoriadis's *social-historical* approach. This undertaking carries us forward to the final task of this study. For now then, let us provide the following provisional answer: Since the linguistic activity of a human being is intertwined with his form of life, it could be argued that *human* life, as such, is inseparable from its 'form'. This *form* signifies the *singular world* of a politico-linguistic being, which is being shaped *social-historically*. In this context, freedom functions as a central *social imaginary signification*, by which a particular social-historical human world presents and represents itself.

[101] Compare, e.g., the use (function) of the notion of 'capital' in our society with that of a "primitive" or medieval society.
[102] This has been discussed in Chapter I (I.I)

Chapter III: Social-historical Approach

III.III. The social-historical

Human history is creation. It is, first and foremost, wholesale self-creation, the separation of humanity from sheer animality, a separation at once never complete and abyssal.[103] (Castoriadis)

For centuries, God was the central theme of generations and cultures. Laws, wars, interpersonal relations, personal beliefs, representations, among other things, could be based on it. However, there are limitless understandings of God, such as the god of philosophers, mystics, ordinary people, religious leaders, different religions, and so on. Today, terms such as 'equality', 'freedom', 'human rights', and 'democracy' seem to have a similar role in modern societies. As stated earlier, Wittgenstein's account of meaning does not allow us to explore the extraordinary role/sense of freedom within the realm of modern societies. It is, of course, possible to address the notion of 'freedom' as an everyday word, in the context of language-games. At the same time however, it is evident that this word has an extraordinary role in the modern forms of life, as God has (and used to have) in others. In fact, the presence of these central notions highlights the fundamental *difference* between two *forms* of life.[104] There are other essential differences to be signaled between different forms of society, including differences in realities, needs, temporality, spatiality, instituted rules, things, tools, organization of relations, and even *types* of human beings.[105] These differences give rise to two important questions: how can we explain the differences between forms of life? In particular, what is the locality of a word like 'freedom' in this respect? By providing an answer to the former question, I believe we can pave the way to unfold the latter. In this

[103] Castoriadis, C. (2005) Heritages and revolution. In Anonymous (Ed.), *Figures of the unthinkable.* (Original work published 1996) Retrieved from http://agorainternational.org/. p. 177

[104] In this section, I use the terms 'form of life', 'human world', and 'society' interchangeably.

[105] Consider, for example, the differences between being-citizen, being-cybercitizen, being-Dutch, being-nomad, being-father, being-Christian, being-Muslim, and so on.

chapter, I shall endeavor to tackle both questions on the basis of Castoriadis's social-historical approach.

According to Castoriadis, the fundamental differences between forms of life disclose the fact that the human world is not *the* world *as such*. All societies proceed from a movement whereby institutions and significations are created.[106] To put it differently, every form of life exists in view of historical self-alteration. For this reason, a form of life should not be taken as *Gegebene*. On the contrary, our human world should be approached as a *social-historical institution.* These statements characterize Castoriadis's philosophical point of departure. Philosophy, as he points out, is a 'thoughtful doing' that calls the nature and the co-belonging of history, society, and the human being into question. To this end, one needs to examine three interrelated questions: a) how does a particular society, i.e. a particular form of life, present itself as such? b) What is the sense of temporal alteration of society in this regard? c) How should the human being be understood within the domain of the social-historical field? Castoriadis examines these questions by developing a fundamental criticism of the traditional logic-ontology, which he calls the "inherited *identitary-ensemblist* thought".

The inherited thought, as Castoriadis maintains, has conceived being primarily from the viewpoint of the *same* (identity or substance). This conception is based upon the notion of "being qua determinacy".[107] As such, being has been defined as "being determined". In other words, the "being of" an entity consists in its "determinacy". To say that an entity exists means that it remains the *same,* and preserves its identity (substance), always, everywhere and in every situation. Conversely, that which does not have a determinate identity is not a genuine being. The indeterminate is always secondary, contingent and reducible to the universality of the same. In this way, the inherited thought rejects every form of radical change, i.e. *creation*. Reducing being to "determinacy" leads to the conception of history as causal succession. "For, once being has been thought of as determinacy, it has also, necessarily, been thought of as atemporality."[108] In this sense, history is a causal system, which takes place in accordance with logical sequence. Historical events could be divided into distinct

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[106] Castoriadis, C. (2010). *Democracy and relativism: Discussion with the MAUSS group* (Anonymous, Trans.). Retrieved from http://agorainternational.org/ p. 13

[107] Castoriadis, C. (2005). Psyche and Society Revisited. In *Op.cit*. p. 362

[108] Castoriadis, C. (1987). *The imaginary institution of society* (K. Blamey, Trans.). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. (Original work published 1975). p. 192

historical elements and studied in terms of chains of causes and effects, or, means and ends. As such, history belongs to the *same* set of causes and logical premises, in which a cause produces an effect sequentially in view of a timeless *always*. Historical change is being conceived as the *modal* reproduction of the same. Likewise, society has been thought of as a collection of distinct and definite institutions, systems, subjects, social relations, classes, and so on. The society represents, in this regard, the unity of pluralities. It is worth pointing out that the conceptual approach is also rooted in this identitary-ensemblist logic-ontology. According to this approach, the object of knowledge must be something determined; otherwise, conceptualization would, by definition, be impossible.

For Castoriadis, what characterizes being is not determinacy or chaos, but rather the social-historical creation of new determinations. This creation is the continuous *self-alteration* of society. The human world is always an instituted world, which has been created through the institution of the society and its *social imaginary significations*.[109] The inherited logic-ontology disguises the fact that there exists no *point of view* outside of society and history, which is "logically prior" to them.[110] Neither society nor history can be understood without taking the other into account. The institution of the social-historical has two interwoven dimensions: a) society as already *instituted*, which concords with the *social* aspect of the social-historical; and b) society as *instituting*, which represents the *historical* dimension of the social-historical field. In this sense, society, as instituted, represents the transitory stability of the instituted forms/figures, significations, classes, laws, time, space and so on. From this point of view, every form of life (society) institutes the world as its world, or its world as *the* world. It is only this aspect of human form of life that can be addressed by way of the inherited logic-ontology. Nevertheless, society is not simply the totality of established institutions, subjects or inter-subjective network. The *being-society* of society, as Castoriadis puts it, consists in creating institutions and a world of significations, including social imaginary significations.[111] For, each society fabricates and relies on its own world of significations and institutions. History here, as the instituting element of the social-historical, comes

[109] Ibid. p. 235
[110] Ibid. p. 3
[111] Castoriadis, C. (2003). Democracy as Procedure and Democracy as Regime. In Anonymous (Ed.), *The rising tide of insignificancy: The big sleep*. (pp. 329-359) Retrieved from http://agorainternational.org/ p. 331

into play. For Castoriadis, the question of history is the question of radical otherness and self-alteration; history as radical *otherness* cannot be produced or logically deduced.[112] History characterizes the dimension whereby the human world is being instituted and self-altered. This *self-alteration* is the very beginning of positing, creating, figuring, and fabricating, which is inherent to every society. This entails that every society *is* by virtue of the possibility of being *other*. This *otherness* is concretized in the emergence and transformation of different forms of life. However, this does not mean that there are no relations or similarities between forms of life. To be sure, there is no society that is formed in geographical or historical isolation.

The *social-historical* dimension is not a secondary result of a causal or modal change, but rather ontological genesis that takes place in and through human being's doing and representing/saying.[113] Society is, therefore, not the reproduction of variations or copies of the same essence or substance. On the contrary, the social-historical world comes into being by the *creation* of significations and institutions. Creation means, in this regard, both positing new determinations and the emergence of new forms.[114] As such, every society constitutes and organizes its own 'reality', 'things', 'institutions of time and space', 'language', and so on. The social-historical *form* of society is being constituted by way of two fundamental operations: a) social doing [*Teukhein*] and b) social saying/representing [*Legein*]. These operations mutually imply one another. The first operation – *Teukhein* – characterizes what we typically associate with technique. Teukhein consists of the operative schemata of assembling-adjusting-making-constructing.[115] This complex operation makes something be *as* (e.g. as a calculator), starting from, (e.g. from wires, chips, etc.), in a manner appropriate *to* (e.g. to calculate) and in view *of* (e.g. of a mathematical tool). As such, a thing is instituted as a social thing within the context of a particular society. From the viewpoint of the operation of social doing, this process also holds true of the constitution of social institutions. Still, it should be noted that every social entity exists inasmuch as they figure or represent (directly or indirectly) significations. In other words, an entity

[112] Castoriadis, C. (1987). *Op.cit*. p. 195
[113] Ibid. p. 331
[114] According to Castoriadis, Being is not absolute indetermination (chaos). Nor is it absolute determinacy. Every entity is a quiddity (a being-this and being thus), which can be distinguished from another being without thereby being determined. See: Castoriadis, C. (1987). *Op.cit*. p. 341
[115] Ibid. p. 261

without *significance* is useless or senseless.[116] As a result, things/institutions are not to be considered as neutral entities, but rather as social things/institutions with a certain meaning within the social-historical world (Compare, in this regard, the *sense* of a Raman spectrometer to an obelisk!).[117] To this end, the operation of legein comes into play. Legein consists of the operative schemata of distinguish-choose-posit-assemble-count-speak.[118] To put it simply, this complex operation is what we call language. As Wittgenstein shows, language is an essential ability whereby human forms of life are being expressed. Here, it must be added that through language human beings make things *be,* by making them *stand for* something *(e.g. for a mathematical tool), serve for* such and such a use/end, *with respect to* a network of other significations.[119] In this way, the institution of a particular social-historical form of life stems from social doing and social saying/representing.[120] These operations posit what is worth and what is not, what exists and what does not, what is central and what is marginal and so on.

Thus far, we have tried to shed light upon the two interwoven dimensions of a social-historical form of life. These dimensions present the institution of a form of life both *as* instituted (i.e. social) and *as* instituting (i.e. historical). How should the human being be understood in view of the social-historical approach? For Castoriadis, the nucleus of every singular human being is the *human psyche*.[121] Psyche is that which is irreducible to the domain of the social-historical but is 'susceptible to almost limitless shaping by it'.[122] Castoriadis, like Heidegger, points out that it is mistaken to seek the locus of human nature in his individuality. A pre-social or abstract human being is an absurdity. For the human being as such, cannot exist apart from in a form of life. As Castoriadis puts it, "outside society, however, the human being is neither beast nor God […] but quite simply is not and cannot exist either physically or, what is more,

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[116] Consider, for example, the meaning of a cell phone or an online-store in our society!
[117] Ibid. p. 355
[118] Ibid. p. 223
[119] Ibid. pp. 256-257
[120] In my view, Castoriadis's account of social saying/doing is not far from Heidegger's reading of the Greek *teukhein* and *legein*. Heidegger interprets teukhein and legein, resprectively, as 'Bringing-forth [*her-vor-bringen*] and 'to bring forward into appearance'.
See: Heidegger, M. (1962). *Die Technik und die Kehre*. Pfullingen: Neske.
[121] Castoriadis borrows the term 'psyche' from the Freudian psychoanalysis. See for Castoriadis's critical assessment of Freud in this regard: Castoriadis, C. (1987). *Op.cit*. Chapter 6. See also: Castoriadis, C. (2005). *Op.cit.* pp. 353-377.
[122] This entails that the psyche of each singular human being can never be completely socialized. See: Castoriadis, C. (1991). *Philosophy, politics, autonomy* (D. A. Curtis, Trans.). New York: Oxford University Press. p. 144

psychically. Radically unfit for life, the "hopeful and dreadful monster" that is the newborn human baby must be humanized; and this process of humanization is its socialization, […]".[123] The relationship between the human being and his form of life is complex. On the one hand, human being's social doing, social saying and radical imagination play a decisive role in constituting and reconstituting a particular society. This entails that a form of life can never be instituted without *leaning on* the presence and actions of human beings; their presence is the condition for the creation of the social-historical world, without which the fabrication of a society would be impossible. On the other hand, society transforms the human psyche into a socialized being and in turn, fabricates the *type* of human being that is appropriate to it (e.g. Athenian, lord, serf, nomad, worker, communist, cybercitizen and so on).[124] This transformation occurs in the process of human being's socialization throughout one's life, including: education imposition of social institutions and internalizations of imaginary signification.[125] In this way, the social-historical world and its significations become meaningful for the human being; the psyche becomes socialized. In this sense, the socialized psyche is to be considered as a linguistic, a technical and above all, a political being. As a result, the very condition of human social doing, saying and representing, stems from the instituted organization of the society at issue. "Society is the work of the *instituting* imaginary. The individuals are made by the *instituted* society, at the same time as they make and remake it."[126] For this reason, the ontological mode of being a human being should not, simply, be sought in the Heideggerian being-in-the-world. What Heidegger tries to expose with respect to the history of Being and in turn, historicity of Dasein, must be concretized: the human being is a social-historical being.

[123] Castoriadis, C. (2003). *Op.cit.* p. 331
[124] Ibid. p. 332
[125] Castoriadis, C. (1991). *Op.cit*. p. 148
[126] Ibid. p. 146

III. II The Imaginary Element

What makes the psyche capable of producing representations, phantasms, that don't result from perceptions? It's the radical imagination.[127] (Castoriadis)

Let us recall the question that was formulated in the previous chapter: "why do some words, like 'God', 'capital', 'money', 'soul', 'right', 'nation' and 'freedom', play a central and decisive role in different forms of life?" I believe that this question can be examined by way of the social-historical approach. To this end, the linguistic aspect of human experience should be integrated into his political life. In our context, we need to investigate how the operation of social saying, i.e. language, contributes to the institution of a form of life.

As Wittgenstein rightfully states, a form of life is being presented and represented in and through language. In Castoriadis's terminology, presentation and representation is the work of social saying. The operation of social saying, i.e. language, has an identitary dimension that is reflected in the codes and set of rules by which referential relations are connected. Yet, it is evident that there is nothing *in* the code (or rule) that can posit a form of life and in turn, can decide *what* this form of life must be. As Castoriadis maintains, the act of signifying enables us to express symbols, words, signs that stand for something *else*. In this context, he points out that significations of social saying in general and linguistic activity in particular, are indefinitely determin*able* without thereby being determin*ed*.[128] As far as the referential aspect of linguistic activity is concerned, it is not very difficult to give an account of the real-rational component of signification. (For example, one could call a thing or person by its/his name.)[129] However, the trouble arises as soon as we start to seek a real or rational *signified* [*Signifié; Bedeutung*] for terms, which have a central role, function or significance within the realm of a particular society. This problem occurs, for example, by addressing the words such as, 'God', 'objectivity', 'rationality', 'progress', '*dharma*', '*li*', 'justice', 'capital', 'money', 'soul', 'right', 'nation', and 'freedom'. According to Castoriadis, the centrality of

[127] Castoriadis, C. (2005). *Op.cit.* p. 353
[128] Ibid. Castoriadis, C. (1987). *Op.cit.* p. 346
[129] As indicated before, linguistic activity should not be reduced to a system of referential relations.

these terms should be sought in the *imaginary component* of social saying.

The institution of a society, as Castoriadis maintains, takes place through the articulation of *social imaginary significations*.[130] The *imaginary* is, in this context, the *instituting* dimension of social saying. It expresses the historical aspect of a social-historical world, its modes of organization and representation, its singular manner of living, seeing, conducting its existence - its world and its relation with it - its structuring component, central notions, affective and intellectual investments and so on. As such, the institution of society correlates with a universe of *imaginary significations*.[131] This dimension of social saying has been neglected and suppressed in the history of Western thought.[132] Social imaginary significations are irreducible to real-rational categories or rule-governed practices. An imaginary signification does not denote something real. Nor is it a symbol by which one signifies something rational. This does not imply that the *imaginary* is something trivial. On the contrary, human beings and societies bring *social imaginary significations* into being whereby they present and represent themselves. On the level of the human being, the imaginary stems "from the original faculty of positing or presenting oneself with things and relations that do not exist, in the form of representation (things and relations that are not or have never been given in perception)".[133] Yet, a social imaginary signification is not something that a singular human being represents to himself. By contrast, human beings as socialized beings, are being instituted through previously established imaginary significations, which, in turn, make them capable of (a particular form of) social doing and social saying. On the level of society, we encounter the imaginary component as a universe of meaning. This component is the unceasing and the essentially undetermined social-historical creation of figures/forms/images, on the basis of which alone there can ever be a question of something.[134] Through social imaginary significations, human beings give *answers* to the fundamental *question*s, which belong to their own existence in a particular social-historical community. The complex mode of being of social imaginary significations

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[130] *Significations imaginaires sociales*
[131] Ibid. p. 354
[132] According to Castoriadis, Aristotle was the first philosopher who recognized, although insufficiently, the importance of imagination by saying that the soul cannot think without phantasm. In the twentieth century, Heidegger tried to touch upon the imaginary element, but never explored it. See: Castoriadis, C. (2005). Imaginary and imagination at the crossroads, In. *Op.cit.* pp. 123-124
[133] Ibid. p. 127
[134] Ibid. p. 3

shows that they are not, solely, reducible to subject's intention, representation or imagination. Nor should they be confused with sociological concepts such as: "group consciousness", "collective unconscious", "common sense", "social representation" and so on.[135] Social imaginary significations are the condition for rational thought, speech, social doing, political action, labor and singular needs of a form of life. By the same token, every form of life fabricates its own institution of space, i.e. spatiality, (infinite, heliocentric, etc.), time, i.e. temporality, (e.g., rectilinear, circular, infinite, etc.), classification of (supernatural) entities, things (object, totem, commodity, virtual entities, etc.), types of human being (citizen, individual, son of God, nomad, Roman, proletariat, etc.), relations and means of production, laws, religions and so on. In this manner, society organizes and represents itself *as* a particular form of life; the *form* of a society comes into being. The main characteristics of social imaginary significations that appear in language could be elucidated as follows: first, they play a central role in the organization of other institutions. From this point of view, one could, for example, address the role of 'rationality', 'functionality' and 'capital' in modern societies. Second, they are relatively *independent* from the signs and symbols that carry them. As such, these significations denote nothing at all and connote about almost everything.[136] Third and finally, although we could not signal a common referent for social imaginary significations, one could demonstrate that almost every human being has a direct or indirect experience or representation of these significations. To put it another way, human beings *live* these significations.

III. III. Freedom as Social Imaginary Signification

The human psyche is characterized by the autonomy of the imagination, by a radical imagination: it's not just a matter of seeing—or of seeing oneself—in a mirror, but of the capacity to formulate what is not there, to see in anything what isn't there.[137](Castoriadis)

In accordance with Castoriadis's social-historical account, freedom could be understood as a (central) social imaginary signification. Freedom, as a social imaginary signification,

[135] Ibid. p. 366
[136] Ibid. p. 143
[137] Castoriadis, C. (2005). Psyche and Society Revisited. In. *Op.cit.* p. 353.

plays a central and extraordinary role in instituting human experience (and thought) within the context of the modern form of life. The centrality of freedom within the network of significations can, simply, be shown by referring to innumerable legal, political, sociological, philosophical and political documents and writings, whereby this notion is highlighted. But, let us also consider the notion of freedom through the prism of the aforementioned characteristics of social imaginary significations. First, it is evident that freedom does not denote something real or rational.[138] Second, although it is possible to symbolize freedom (e.g. by means of figures, images, statues, etc.), this notion could not be identified with its symbolic function. There is no doubt that a notion, for the sake of which human beings are inclined to struggle and even to die, must be more than a verbal definition or represented image. Third, freedom plays a central role in the context of the modern form of life, as it is aspired, experienced and lived by human beings and communities. In this sense, to say that certain human beings are free citizens indicates something essential about the manner they are treated in a social-historical form of life and about the disposition of this *type* of human being. As a result, freedom could be understood as a social imaginary signification, which directs (political) action and contributes to the institution of human life and social relations.

It is noteworthy that Castoriadis places the notion of freedom at the center of his political philosophy. He contends that freedom should be apprehended as *autonomy*. This imaginary signification can be best described in light of its counterpart, namely, *heteronomy*. Heteronomy emerges by masking the *instituting* dimension of society. In this respect, a heteronomous form of life is a society, in which the validation and justification of the institutions stems from an extra-social source of law (*nomos*).[139] The project of heteronomy leads to a "true-to-form" individual whose thought and life is governed by repetition. In contrast to heteronomy, autonomy comes into play when interrogation and inquiry emerges as an active human disposition, which enables human beings to interrogate the established significations and institutions of a society and their possible grounding. Autonomy derives from *auto-nomos* [αύτόνομος], which means 'to give to oneself one's laws'. However, autonomy should not be identified with

[138] Of course, one could try to provide a concept of freedom. But we have already discussed the inadequateness of this approach.

[139] Castoriadis, C. (1991). *Op.cit.* p. 162

the rational discovery of universal and timeless law once and for all.[140] By contrast, it is the capacity to *make,* to do, to *institute* and to *say*; it is the unlimited self-questioning with respect to the established laws, institutions and their presuppositions. To make one's own laws (nomos) and knowing that one is doing so is a mode of being that reflectively gives to itself the laws of its social-historical being.[141] *Autonomization* is, in this regard, the process in and through which individual thoughtful doing (i.e. philosophy) and collective action (i.e. politics) intersects. As a result, autonomy, in the sense of *effective* freedom, is a project that aims to realize a particular form of life, i.e. *democracy*. For Castoriadis, establishing an autonomous society relies on different conditions: a) One must have the actual possibility to participate in the formation of law, i.e. its self-institution. In other words, one must be able to admit that the established law belongs to him; b) the autonomy of all should be pursued by all; c) one's freedom is in its realization, a function of the actual freedom of others.[142]

The emergence of autonomy as a political project is, itself, a social-historical creation. This idea traces back to ancient Greece, in which *isonomy* and *autonomy* functioned as two interdepended conditions for the institution of the Greek *polis*. This implies that the notion of 'equality', in the Greek sense, was interwoven with the very essence of freedom. To be free meant to be free from the inequality present in the governance of the household. It meant neither to rule nor to be ruled.[143] In particular, Castoriadis (as a Greek thinker) brings these social-historical origins into prominence. I must admit that I am very sympathetic towards this understanding of freedom. Yet, this should not make us forget that there is no justification to assign priority to the perspective of the philosopher. Moreover, to say that freedom is an *instituting* element in a particular form of life does not entail that it should have the same role in all societies. To investigate whether that is (or should be) the case, one needs to dwell on

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[140] For this reason, Castoriadis's account of autonomy should not be conflated with Kantian conception of autonomy. According to Kant, autonomy is bound up by universal principle of morality [*allgemeine Prinzip der Sittlichkeit*]. He claims that this universal principle is homologous to natural law [*Naturgesetz*]. See: Kant, I. (1965). *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Hamburg: F. Meiner. Dritter Abschnitt
As Castoriadis maintains, "it [the end of politics] cannot *solely* be autonomy, for then one would lapse into Kantian formalism [...],we want freedom both for itself and in order to make something of it, in order to be able to do things." See: Castoriadis, C. (2003). *Op.cit.* pp. 353-354

[141] Ibid. p. 164

[142] Castoriadis, C. (2003). *Op.cit.* pp. 337-339

[143] See for an interesting analysis: Arendt, H. (1958). *The human condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 32-33

the standpoint of the other. Here, the *other* symbolizes the heterogeneous perspectives of human beings in view of their singular form of life. We have, therefore, another reason to incorporate the perspective of the *other* (i.e. his experience and understanding) into our method of inquiry.

Let us once more emphasize that it is, in fact, the standpoint of the *other*, which has been approached inadequately throughout the history of metaphysics. To surpass this methodological shortcoming, the first step was undertaken by way of Wittgenstein's account of meaning. In accordance with this approach, we can investigate how freedom is used in different language-games and forms of life. Still, to locate the extraordinary role of freedom, we need to integrate another element into our method of inquiry. In this context, the social-historical approach allows us to continue our path of inquiry at the crossroad where Wittgenstein's thinking activity ceases. By way of Castoriadis's approach, one could explicate that the operation of social saying (i.e. language) is not only responsible for representing a form of life, but also for its institution; the imaginary aspect of language plays, in this respect, an essential role. In this way, Castoriadis succeeds to elucidate how some words, i.e. social imaginary significations, are actively at work in the institution of a form of life. From this point of view, the social-historical approach directs us to reintroduce freedom not only as an everyday word, but also as a (central) social imaginary signification. As a result, the final achievement of this methodological study could be articulated: *Freedom plays a central role in constituting the experience of human beings and the institutions of a social-historical form of life. To rethink the notion of freedom, it is important to investigate the ways in which this social imaginary signification contributes to the constitution of human experience in the context of his form of life.*

Conclusion

You and I only talk this side of the veil;
When the veil falls, neither you nor I will be here. (Omar Khayyam)

"[...] The ideal of free human beings enjoying civil and political freedom and freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his civil and political rights, as well as his economic, social and cultural rights".[144] This passage is excerpted from The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This example highlights the exceptional importance of the notion of freedom in our modern form of life. This extraordinary role gives rise to the following question: What does the term 'freedom' signify? As previously stated, the conceptual approach holds sway over the current sociological, political, legal, and philosophical debates on freedom.[145] Our method of inquiry departs radically from this predominant approach. Accordingly, the primary aim of this study was not to offer a new concept of freedom, but rather to examine how a philosophical investigation with respect to the notion of freedom should be prepared. To this end, I attempted to give shape to a complex method of inquiry, through the exploration and examination of Heidegger's phenomenological method, Wittgenstein's account of linguistic meaning and Castoriadis's social-historical approach.

In the first chapter, it was mainly argued that the conceptual approach has led to the formulation of two polar concepts of freedom, i.e. negative and positive freedom. In this context, we showed that these conceptions are based on four essential presuppositions: first, the notion of 'freedom' is reduced to concepts. Second, human freedom is conceived as an *attribute* that stems from the faculty of the *will*. Third, the *individual* has been thought of as the primary *locus* of freedom. Finally, on the basis of this triple reduction, one classifies different types of individual freedom. Subsequently, our first methodological task was undertaken by calling these presuppositions into question. This undertaking was, partly, accomplished by way of Heidegger's

[144] UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 16 December 1966, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 999. Preamble
[145] This has been discussed in chapter I (I.I); see also note 27

phenomenological method. This method consists of three interrelated components, namely: reduction, construction and destruction. In accordance with this method, every philosophical question should be addressed in view of the sole theme of philosophy, i.e. Being. In a like manner, Heidegger interrogates the notion of freedom by investigating the ontological condition of human freedom. From this point of departure, the notion of freedom has been conceived as *letting-be*. This ontological concept is equivocal and pertains both to Being and the human being. On the one hand, letting-be stands for the open domain of Being, which delineates the world of human beings. On the other hand, it characterizes the ontological disposition of the human being, namely his ek-sistence. As such, the human being is free insofar as he stands out in the open domain of Being and to the extent that he leaves beings in their own nature. This implies that human freedom rests upon man's position in the world and his attitude towards other entities. The ontological conception of freedom as letting-be could be read as a response to our technological era, which is being directed, dominated and threatened by the principle of limitless willful mastery. For this reason, there is much to be said for the epochal relevance of Heidegger's concept of freedom. In this way, the first element of our method of inquiry could be articulated: *The phenomenological way of questioning sheds light upon the primordial dimension of human existence. Moreover, the ontological sense of freedom has an epochal significance for every philosophical inquiry on this topic. As a result, both aspects contribute to the fecundation of our method of inquiry.*

Since Heidegger considers phenomenology as a theoretical-conceptual investigation, his account of freedom remains, paradoxically enough, a *conceptual* criticism of the prevailing approach. As we have seen, the heterogeneous experience and understanding of different human beings with respect to freedom could not, simply, be reduced to concepts. The main point of criticism was, in this regard, that the conceptual approach (including Heidegger's account) disregards the standpoint of the *other*. To surpass this methodological shortcoming, it was necessary to extend our method to the field of philosophy of language. Here, Wittgenstein's account of linguistic meaning comes into play. Wittgenstein's ordinary language analysis reveals that the meaning of words should, primarily, be sought in language-games, whereby different human beings use them. As a result, it is misguided to examine our theme of inquiry, solely, from the perspective of the philosopher; freedom is not just a technical term. Rather, it is an everyday word that is being used, understood, experienced and aspired to, by different

human beings. To understand what the notion of 'freedom' means we need to incorporate the heterogeneous perspective of the other into our method of inquiry. As such, we endeavored to prepare a new path to investigate the notion of freedom on the basis of this account: *in order to know what the notion of 'freedom' means, we need to investigate how this word is used in language-games, in the context of a form of life*. *To this end, it is necessary to cultivate our philosophical interrogation by way of dialogue. As such, our investigation must rely on the linguistic experience of the interlocutor.*

Yet, it should be reiterated that freedom is a word that plays an *extra*ordinary role within the domain of a form of life. Here, another methodological maneuver was required to locate the extraordinary sense of freedom. This maneuver was guided by Castoriadis's social-historical approach. This approach confronts inherited logic-ontology and as such, dismantles the dominion of the concept. Here, the overarching claim is that freedom contributes to the institution of human social saying and social doing. In this context, freedom was reintroduced as a social imaginary signification. As a social imaginary signification, freedom plays a central role in directing (instituting) the human experience and the modern form of life. This finding characterizes the last element of our method: *Freedom should not only be addressed as an everyday word, but also in view of its instituting role in the context of a particular form of life.*

The composition of these methodological elements enables us to articulate a new complex method of inquiry, whereby the notion of freedom can be approached from the standpoint of the other. This philosophical activity comes into being by way of dialogue. In this way, this method allows us to examine the political and ontological significance of the notion of 'freedom' based on the singular experience of human beings.[146] Here, I do not intend to offer a system by which one can measure every philosophical activity as such. Rather, this method of inquiry presents a way of thinking, which allows us to do

[146] The notion of 'human experience' was mentioned several times throughout this work. Nonetheless, I was unable to shed light upon this important notion. Here I wish to refer briefly to Walter Benjamin's account of experience, which has inspired me the most. According to Benjamin, human experience [*Erfahrung*] is not to be reduced to a psychological process or cognitive information processing, which is based on external stimuli. For, every experience has a linguistic and historical dimension, which transcends these processes. See: Benjamin, W. (1963). *Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie*. Frankfurt am Main (Original work published 1917)

justice to the neglected standpoint of the *other*. To be sure, there are different figures that lie behind the mask of the other, such as the ordinary man, the worker, the freedom fighter, the journalist, the artist, the mystic, the disabled, the marginalized, the transgender, the prisoner, the soldier, the tortured, the child, the patient and so on. The perspective of these figures could be considered as a window, which both gives us a better picture of reality and reminds us of the shortcomings of our own view.

To conclude, it should be emphasized that the scope of this study is limited to this preparatory, methodological work. However, this complex method of inquiry could be applied to develop an anthropological field of research. By incorporating field research into our philosophical activity, I believe one could obtain a deeper understanding of the fundamental needs, problems and differences of different human beings. This is precisely the philosophical path I wish to cultivate in future investigations. For now, let us stipulate our future task: *What does the 'notion of freedom' signify in view of the existential, social-historical and singular experience of the other?*

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