Self-Orienting Individuals: Subjectivity and Contemporary Liberal Individualism

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Andrew Scerri
BA (Soc. Sci.) Hons (Comm.)

School of Global Studies, Social Science, and Planning
Design and Social Context Portfolio
RMIT University
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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

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Abstract

This thesis addresses both theories and practices of subjectivity in Anglo-American societies into the twenty-first century. The central argument is that one dominant subjectivity that has emerged in these societies centres on a deep-seated, almost irreconcilable tension. On the one hand, persons experience relatively heightened desires for unbounded lifestyles amidst relatively high levels of affluence and consumption. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the education, skills, and dispositions that persons assume in social worlds make desiring problematic. For example, high-level consumption or workplace flexibility are not necessarily seen as desirable things, yet appear to envelop contemporary lifestyles. Individuated desires form key aspects of an Anglo-American ‘way-of-life’, but a liberal individualism that emphasizes personal capacities and responsibilities, ‘self-improvement’ and ‘well-being’ has arisen, and this makes resolving ethical and existential dilemmas difficult. That is, many worldly dilemmas — concerns with material security, social justice, the environment, or nutrition, for example — seem irreconcilable to the liberal individualism that is ‘lived’ as subjectivity ‘on the ground’. The thesis synthesizes social anthropology and social theory to ground its claims about the empirical world that sees subjectivity as ‘being’ human for particular social worlds. The approach is designed to look at situations that call upon self-orienting individuals, in order to explain how these represent the form of life that an ‘immediate’ self-projecting and orienting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ dominant subjectivity takes in Anglo-American societies. The argument develops a number of examples in the context of a theory-based approach in two registers: normative and ontological. Inquiry over an ontological register discusses the social formation of subjectivity in relation to the ‘categories’ of spatiality, temporality, embodiment, and institutionality, and the social constitution of subjectivity over coeval somatic, practical-ethological, and reflexive ‘layers of affect’. Inquiry over a normative register discusses practical and discursive conditions, and relates the overall argument to a critique of normativity based in the claim that ‘being’ requires that norm-based and relational contexts can affectively ‘legitimate’ ongoing sociality. In summary, the thesis has two dimensions. It argues that this dominant subjectivity moves between sovereign desires for satisfactions and their atomized dissatisfactions, and turns on a sustained deferral of worldly dilemmas irreconcilable to the liberal individualism that is seen to both anchor and impel ongoing sociality. Secondly, it suggests that we need to rethink theories of subjectivity in order to understand better this new dominant form of life.
I: Introduction
1 Prologue

The central argument of this thesis is that conditions in Anglo-American societies\(^1\) enframe a dominant contemporary subjectivity that turns on an almost irreconcilable tension to sustain a deferral of worldly dilemmas raised by engagements within sociality. The thesis argues that this subjectivity moves between sovereign desires’ satisfactions and their atomized dissatisfactions, such that many ethical and existential dilemmas that social worlds raise for subject-agents — notably, concerns with material security, social justice, environmental, nutritional, or self-care, amongst other things — appear irreconcilable to the liberal individualism central to the Anglo-American ‘way of life’. Put more plainly, problems arise in the contemporary world, and one of the developments of Anglo-American late-modernity has been the emergence of a subjectivity that turns upon deferring the impact of those problems upon the self, and how selves should respond to them as life ‘goes on’ on the ground.

Contemporary Anglo-American social conditions are often described as risky or precarious and affluent or merely ‘wealthy’. Yet, as well as stressful and emotionally demanding, many occupations seen as precarious are also said to be exciting, engrossing, or creative. A strange kind of tension seems to link these as social conditions. Meanwhile, the mass-media circulate relatively complex and abstract, often ‘scientific’, information tying environmental problems to high levels

\(^1\) Discussing Anglo-American societies emphasizes contemporary social and cultural similarities across predominately Anglophone liberal-democracies, which include the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, and, New Zealand. Arguably, processes of individualization appear relatively similar across these societies as a condition of the many common social, cultural, political and economic practices and societal, communal and personal-life relations that are, in part, products of eighteenth and nineteenth century British colonization and imperialism. In contemporary contexts, such a relatively common historicity implies shared cultural discourses that seem to frame widely varying yet recognizably similar Anglo-American formations of individualism. These commonalities seem influences on the relatively similar liberal-democratic institutions and, to a lesser extent, juridico-legal and administrative apparatus that several commentators find these nation-states have in common. While as a republic, the United States may stand apart from the Commonwealth societies taken together these share a long history of cross-cultural exchanges. Numerous commentators discuss the decline of the British Empire and the rise of the United States after 1918 as a transfer of political-economic power and socio-cultural hegemony between “Anglophone” nation-states. Moreover, for numerous commentators, this shift from British to United States leadership in international affairs since the 1920s and, more markedly, since the 1940s is cast as an aspect of globalizing or hegemonic ‘Americanization’. While my argument emphasizes similarities between the Anglo-American societies that may include aspects of Americanization, the thesis is not a critique of Americanization as such. See, for example, D. Reynolds, "American Globalism: Mass, Motion and the Multiplier Effect," in \textit{Globalization in World History}, ed. A.G. Hopking (London: Pimlico Press, 2002), 243-60. G. Ritzer, \textit{Expressing America: A Critique of the Global Credit Card Society} (London: Pine Forge Press, 1995), 1-21.
of personal-use commodity consumption amidst largely well-educated and articulate milieux. Economic information is broadcast that suggests dependence upon such consumption is necessary for everyday existence. In these conditions, the vocabulary of private voluntarism is widely used to frame debates over an environmental crisis that is also seen as the collective achievement of several generations. Again, an odd sort of tension seems to lie beneath such representations. Where such issues can be said to raise dilemmas for ‘us’ — the socialized subjects and creative agents of a contemporary Anglo-American ‘way-of-life’ — the present thesis aims to bring into question some of the conditions that make this the case, in order to say something about the form of life that we currently live-out.

The ethical or existential dilemmas that might present themselves in, or be re-presented as information about, social or environmental conditions resonate with the cultural histories, forms of political power, and economic value criteria that, amongst other things, make them issues for people. Beginning to look at the problem, then, might involve bringing into question ways that such issues enter and circulate within sociality — seen as the ongoing job of creating and reproducing the conditions that frame societal and relational engagements — as actions, meanings, and things. Many issues that gain expression as public concerns and, as such, can be seen as raising ethical or existential dilemmas for persons seem (re-)presented in and through practices and discourses that, when considered from the abstract position afforded the social inquirer, appear the products of a perspective upon states of affairs that is simultaneously in-common and embodied-personal. It seems that, however, while the in-common aspect of this perspective assumes the mantle of humans’ common experiences as ‘beings’, its embodied-personal aspect, in effect, proceeds from the generalization of a presumption about personal perspectives.

While similar claims about such conditions have long been associated with ‘ideology’ critique, or a conservatism bewailing lost support for generalized presumptions, the ‘Third Way’ debates once seen by some as offering a way out of the tense atmosphere that Anglo-America’s liberal individualism creates appear to have faltered. Where precarity coincides with affluence, collectively-created problems with individuated solutions, or where an articulate culture coexists with deep marginalization, corporate sustainability with gross exploitation, and a new ‘spirituality’ with heightened material consumption, for example, conditions emerge that seem to engender a velveteen kind of envelopment of Anglo-American social life. Indeed, partial motivation for the present thesis arises from recognition that the Third Way’s theories and practices have, at least in some ways, contributed to the emergence of a sovereign ‘enlightened stakeholder’ liberal
individualism that seems bound-over to sustain a tense kind of deferral of many worldly dilemmas that contemporary sociality raises.

The present thesis uses the term ‘subjectivity’ to mean the form of life that humans create and act-out in social worlds — “the empirical subject, [the] indivisible sample of the human species” — it is the socialized condition that being human takes (in Anglo-American societies) in contemporary globalizing modernity. The terms ‘human-being’ and ‘being’ human, refer to the norm-based and relational condition that it is to ‘be’ embodied, in space, over time, and amongst others. The term ‘subject-agents’ signals a shift in focus, and is used to discuss the tasks for humans of creating and reproducing social-historical conditions and material-physical contexts as social worlds. The term ‘individualism’ is used to mean the situation-specific aspect(s) of a dominant subjectivity; that is, the ‘ideological’, or doxic form(s) that subjectivity takes amidst particular practical and discursive ‘normative’ conditions and material-physical ‘ontic’ contexts.

On these terms, the thesis discusses theory and method to develop a framework for analyses for inquiring into how particular practices and discourses, in certain material-physical contexts, may sustain a dominant form of life that is both subject and agent of a social world. My argument that conditions enframe a dominant subjectivity, one that turns on a sustained deferral of the consequences of worldly dilemmas irreconcilable to such a form of life, is a claim about how such a form of life can be said to predominate in the job of creating and reproducing of contemporary Anglo-American sociality. That is, the present thesis develops an approach to explaining how intertwining practical and discursive conditions and material-physical contexts enframe human-being in particular ways. The argument sees social-historical conditions in contemporary Anglo-American liberal-democracies as affecting possibilities for self-realization and relative freedom, for example, while in the same movement, circumscribing these in ways that make self-assertion and emending the self almost compulsory conditions for stakeholder-citizenship. Whether in occupations with socially responsible corporations, or in a polity shaped by

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Third Way politics, conditions have arisen that impel freedom and ‘self-creativity’, such that failure to be a ‘pro-active player’ can attract sanction and reprobation.

Therefore, where the present thesis argues that a dominant subjectivity ‘goes on’ under coeval orders of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, it describes affective conditions, rather than necessarily, states of self-consciousness. In this sense, references to heightened satisfactions and later in the thesis, to ‘jouissance’, imply conditions that impel the achieving of desire through active deployments of capacities for enjoyment; the ostensive satisfactions that personal-use commodities may call upon, or that ‘passionate’ workplaces may engender, for example. Use of the term jouissance draws on its French ‘dictionary’ meaning, and not that which it attains in Roland Barthes’ work, or Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory. For the present thesis, it describes an activation of planned, pre-emptive desiring as implied in the secondary meaning of the French word, the right of an owner, or holder of capital, to interest compounding the original account. Similarly, references to enervated dissatisfactions and later, to lassitude, imply a particular world-weariness, which draws on its Latin root lassus: weary. It points to the specious disinterest that seems central to ‘compassionate’ management practices, or the discourses of consumer ‘sovereignty’, for example. Enervated dissatisfaction points to conditions that frame a particular languor or jadedness. It entails the obverse of multiple ‘offers’ to satisfy. In contemporary Anglo-American conditions, sovereign desires’ satisfactions and dissatisfactions seem the key registers for contributing to sociality.

Throughout a series of illustrative examples, the present thesis looks at how structured and institutionalized conditions frame relatively unbounded and autonomous lifestyles yet also seem, simultaneously, to give rise to existential and ethical dilemmas. The examples help to suggest that, in the same conditions, a de-legitimating of possibilities has arisen for resolving such dilemmas on terms not conducive to sovereign ‘choices’ and atomistic desiring. The argument does not assert a claim to recognize or theorize the psychic impossibility of reconciling such dilemmas. Hence, it does not involve arguing that contemporary subject-agents ‘deny’ the actuality of particular phenomenal conditions. This aspect of the thesis’ argument requires twofold explanation. On the one hand, it involves theoretical claims that amount to recognizing the impossibility of interceding upon reality, which is described as the ‘immediacy’ of ‘being’ human in modernizing conditions.

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4 Throughout the thesis, the terms ‘phenomena’ and ‘phenomenon’ are used in the everyday ‘dictionary’ sense and denote worldly things, cognizable by the (socialized) senses and perceptions.
For the argument of the present thesis, *reality* can only be such for single humans in the act of being. On the other hand, it involves methodological claims that facilitate inquiry into the shared and communicative, norm-based and relational condition that human-being always and already ‘is’. Hence, the thesis aims to contribute new knowledge to the fields of critical social theory, consumption studies, and globalization studies, insofar as these focus on social and cultural life in contemporary Anglo-American societies.

The thesis is divided into four main parts, and a fifth containing appendices. The chapters in Part I contextualize the overall thesis as a research project. Part II uses these contextualizing chapters to frame a series of discussions that focus upon relatively recent social conditions and public affairs in relation to social theories of subjectivity. Part III sets out the research problem and raising a number of theoretical and methodological issues, develops an analytic framework for the inquiry. The chapters in Part IV operationalize this framework through a series of illustrative examples. The examples help to explain what happens in practice, using the framework set out in Part III. Part V contains a series of appendices that offer primary and secondary sources to support Part IV’s claims.

Immediately following this Prologue, Chapter 2 sets out a contextualizing background for the thesis. The chapter discusses social and historical formation in modernizing Western conditions, with particular emphases upon modern materialism and Western individualism. The concern in Chapter 2 is not to develop a comprehensive picture of the matrix of modern subjectivities, but only to draw attention to conditions for a generalized transformation of conditions for Western human-being. Engaging with anthropological history and political theory, the discussion focuses upon how changing practices and discourses and altered material-physical contexts might have displaced conditions for a confessional and obeisant, past-oriented and traditional form of life. The chapter suggests that, with modernization, human-being became bound ‘here and now’ within a world of immediate experiences and ramifications. What might

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5 Throughout the thesis, and especially in the early chapters, the somewhat problematic terms ‘the West’ and ‘Western’ are used as authors like Mukerji and Dumont use them. Elsewhere, the terms are used as an empirical reference that draws attention to social-historical and, as such, cultural conditions most often but not exclusively linked to the particular geographic spaces of Western Europe, North America, and the Oceanic ‘settler societies’.

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once have been ‘given’ as the Natural order of things, becomes in modernizing conditions an untenable scenario.

Chapter 2 describes how looking at how expanding markets for material goods intertwined with Occidental Judaeeo-Christian cosmology might point, not only to the emergence of Western individualism, but also to a peculiar ‘modern artificialism’. The present thesis brings in this concept from Louis Dumont’s work, which describes how modernization can be seen to effect a generalization of the application, by persons, to worldly affairs of personal will-objectives that are, in effect, the concentration within an individual’s will of ‘objectively true’ reality. In the absence of a traditional cosmological sense of truth, modern persons act in the world in such ways that the world subjectively corresponds with and, as such, responds to individual’s wills. Discussing things in this way directs inquiry towards situations wherein humans might be seen to create and reproduce a worldly order that is effectively an abstract order of “misplaced concreteness” that, because enduring in space and over time, ‘passes’ as ‘objectively true’.

That is, the modern social universe is at once ‘objective’; it is the material-physical contextual reality that encompasses individual and collective ‘going on’. Yet, inasmuch as reality is manifest for humans, it is ‘subjective’; a ‘real’ world that resides in person’s bodies as they ‘go on’ in space, time, and amongst others as socialized subjects and creative agents. In this sense, reality subjectively becomes an artifice of ‘human-being’; it requires material-physical bodies, in space, and over time, all that philosophers call ontology and epistemology, as well as inter-relational institutionality and normativity. The concept of ‘modern artificialism’ helps the inquiry to grapple with the methodological problem raised by recognizing that the (social) world can be seen as an always and already material-physical contextuality; a reality that encompasses human-being, and in terms of the job of ‘being’ human in reality. The relation of subject-agents with and within reality requires socialized and embodied artifice: ‘being’ human in modernity is the art of making reality ‘real’.

Materialism and individualism, modern artificialism and subjectivity imply an unstable and risky (always and already social) world, which ‘is’ what humans create it to be. Around these

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8 The concept of ‘going on’, or to ‘go on’ is taken from Wittgenstein’s philosophy. Throughout the thesis, to ‘go on’ or ‘going on’ are used when the discussion looks at sociality in practice. Following Wittgenstein, to discuss the job of ‘being’ human is to look at bodies amongst others, in space and time, which implies sensing, “empirically feeling”, perceiving, “having language”, and imagining, using these as the tools and techniques for or of ‘going on’. See, L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G.E.N. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (London: Blackwell Books, 2001 [1953]), 160c, 78c, 92c, §99, §397.
engagements, the chapter develops a provisional concept of a self-orienting and projecting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ dominant subjectivity. This move frames the political dimension of the argument. It helps to suggest that the secularization associated with the emergence of materialism prompted relatively new patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses, as well as new ways of engaging within and interpreting the material-physical world. It allows an approach to societal and relational dynamics that recognizes these as always being at risk of working to legitimate forms of authority or value criteria that arise as consequences of the social ordaining of an ‘objective’ order of things. The discussion uses Jürgen Habermas’ early work on the ‘the public sphere’ and Nicholas Abercrombie, Bryan Turner, and Stephen Hill’s discussion of ‘sovereign individuals’ and ‘dominant ideologies’. These two theses are linked to suggest an approach that sees sociality in terms of situations for the formation of liberal individualism, in and through which subject-agents can be said to create and reproduce conditions for a dominant subjectivity.

Chapter 3 takes up this discussion and looks briefly at early-modern reflections upon human-being in Western philosophy and Marxist theory. Discussing the provisional account of a dominant subjectivity alongside aspects of early-modern philosophy helps to clarify the thesis’ overall trajectory, while discussing Marxist theory allows the link between theory and practice to be developed. The early-modern Western philosophers are said to reflect upon modernizing conditions in ways that meant human-being was seen to be lived ‘here and now’, yet with the benefit of hindsight, in relation to immaterial, transcendental, or metaphysical concepts. This said, the chapter uses recent interpretations of two parts in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* and Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia* that suggest both philosopher’s ‘systems’ leave open an alternate route for thinking about modernization and subjectivity.

The chapter then discusses Karl Marx’s approach to human-being as the secular historical ‘subject’ of material productive forces. My concerns here are the relationship between Marx’s theory of the social and material world — that is, of an industrializing and capitalistic modernity that unleashes a potentially emancipatory species-being — and the way it opens to critique of its own relationship to modernity. By rejecting cosmology and beliefs as ‘false’ — that is, as ideology perpetuated in practice by milieux monopolizing political power and economic wealth — Marx de-legitimated the hitherto unquestionable authority of religion, and undermined idealism and positivism. However, as the chapter moves to look at Marxism in the light of social-historical conditions, it becomes clear that while materialism remains an important theoretical move, the conceptual motif of emancipatory species-being central to Marxism does not fare so well. That is,
problems arise when theory reaches into metaphysics for critical and explanatory force. Arguably, on the one hand, Marxists recognize human-being in Western modernity as an immediate self-orienting condition. Yet, on the other hand, Marxism reaches beyond the immediacy of material-physical reality for explanatory force. By stretching beyond the world it aims to critique as a nonetheless over-arching totality, Marxist theory seems bound to totalize the concept of species-being before ‘hitting the ground’ as a way of dealing with actions, meanings, and things.

Chapter 4 discusses aspects of Emile Durkheim’s and Max Weber’s sociology. My aim here is not to develop a Durkheimian or a Weberian approach to subjectivity, but to link discussion of materialism, Western individualism, and modern artificialism to distinctly modern sociological concepts. Durkheim’s work on individuation and individualism are used to describe how the relative societal complexity of modernization across the West might include structured and institutionalized conditions that mean a self-orienting and projecting subjectivity engages within sociality on idiosyncratic terms. The interest in Weber centres on his analyses of ‘vocation’. Weber helps to describe how modernizing conditions said to enframe subjectivity — that include, amongst other things, large-scale bureaucratically administered capitalistic and nation-state institutions, as well as requirements for relatively high levels of formal education, and detached ‘vocational’ competencies — can be seen to involve situations where liberal individualism ‘goes on’ in practice.

The chapters in Part II discuss recent Anglo-American social conditions directly, and relate these to theories and practices of subjectivity in the second half of the twentieth century. These chapters discuss important currents in social theory as responses to contemporaneous social conditions, which are seen as offering both social explanations and frameworks for understanding subjectivity.

Chapter 5 discusses how, with the ending of the so-called Long Upturn and decline of welfare statism in the very late 1960s and early 1970s, a flush of ‘countercultural’ sensibilities spread across Anglo-America. These were accompanied by relatively high but unevenly distributed affluence, access to higher education, and occupational and cultural domains that, through high technologies, mass-communications, and personal-use commodities, favoured the articulate dispositions of what has more recently been called ‘cultural capital’. In such conditions, it is arguably the case that French post-structuralism — through the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix
Guattari, and Jean Baudrillard, amongst others — became important for thinking about subjectivity, especially in the United States.

Chapter 6 looks at how social, cultural, political, and economic scandals, or ‘crises’, seemed to continue throughout the 1970s and early 1980s as partial consequences of wide-reaching changes in globalizing structured institutional conditions. Such conditions are seen as bringing issues concerning nation-state’s governance and custodianship over the economic sphere to the fore. This chapter discusses Daniel Bell’s arguments concerning the ‘cultural contradictions of capitalism’, as well as Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter’s ‘rational actor’ theory-based analysis of the countercultural individualism. Although their work is retrospective, developed in the early 2000s as a comment on the counterculture’s role in the genesis of what they label ‘consumer society’, the subsequent influence exerted by so-called ‘rational actor’ theories — notably its ‘neoliberal’ variants — in many areas of Anglo-American societies means that their work is a prescient example for the argument of this thesis.

Chapter 7 then addresses some of the practices and discourses of subjectivity that seem to surround the ascendancy of what several commentators describe as neoliberalization. This said, Chapter 7 discusses how the rhetoric of Anglo-American *polity* seems to take on a distinct tone amidst ongoing high inflation and unemployment, the ‘energy crises’, worldwide ‘recession’ and financialization. This becomes apparent when considering commentary surrounding the election of conservative governments in the United States and Britain that had appealed to an ill-defined ‘moral majority’ based on somewhat nebulous calls for a ‘return to values’. This chapter focuses primarily on governmentality theories of subjectivity in the work of Peter Miller, Nikolas Rose, and Mitchell Dean. Although such theory may be largely associated with the work of Michel Foucault in the 1960s and 1970s, it becomes relevant to my argument through these authors’ more recent analyses using Giorgio Agamben’s philosophy.

As such, Chapter 8 links so-called neoliberalization and financialization to conditions for stock market, real-estate property price, and consumer ‘booms’, and the erstwhile ‘high-tech bubble’ of the 1990s and early 2000s. It discusses commentary that recognizes how such structured and institutionalized conditions seemed to enframe the entrenching of a marginalized underclass in these decades. This chapter links large-scale ‘downsizing’, ‘off-shoring’, and the expansion of service and information-intensive industries with the embrace of so-called ‘neoliberalism’ by social- and liberal-democratic as well as conservative parties. Chapter 8 suggests a notion of ‘core arenas for sociality’ that focuses upon actions, meanings, and things that can be seen as central to the job of creating and reproducing Anglo-American societies amidst widespread
de-industrialization and de-/re-regulation of ‘the economy’. The chapter concludes Part II by concentrating on how Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, taking relatively similar approaches, discuss a post-materialistic ‘politics of self-identity’ in these decades.

These discussions of social conditions and reviews of current theory mean the present thesis partially and very critically springs from the ‘Third Way’ debates that arose in Anglo-American and European social theory in the late 1980s and 1990s. In Part III, focus is upon the problem of developing a theoretical and methodological framework for the thesis’ overall argument. Hence, Chapter 9 summarizes concepts developed in discussion so far and uses engagements with current theory to develop a general research problem that takes into account four key points. In brief, Chapter 9 suggests that theory may be ‘too deep’ or ‘too shallow’, and sublime or trivialize inquiry. The chapter suggests that theory might open social power to analysis, but in doing so; appear to eschew the inquiry’s normative groundings. Fourth, theory might so neatly imbricate itself and the subjectivity it explains into the modernity that is its topic, such that the inquiry’s critical position seems to dissolve in a froth of only-ostensibly realized potentialities.

In order to account for these problems, Chapter 9 sets out the approach around a requirement that the inquiry avoid ‘strong’ empirical claims. These four points allow a suggestion that, where used wholesale, or uncritically framing inquiry into conditions for subjectivity, such theories appear to culminate in unsustainable claims, which are in some ways similar to cosmology or metaphysics-based modes of inquiry. The approach is designed in this way because it seems that inquiry based in ‘strong’ empirical claims elides, rather than accounts for an important condition imparted to inquiry by modernization’s secularity, or worldliness. ‘Strong’ empirical claims about the world might succumb to positivist realism, and assert the perspective or interest of an ultimately personal will-objective over inquiry and the world, or asocial relativism, and claim that ‘being’ human is an ethereal moment amidst contingent series’ of ‘presents’. Arguably, both approaches ‘forget’ that material-physical reality, as well as ‘being’ human ‘within’ it are necessary and sufficient conditions for explanations of worldly phenomena. The concept of ‘modern artificialism’ becomes important again here. Where the modern social world is said to be at once ‘objective’, the material-physical contextual reality that encompasses individual and collective ‘going on’, yet inasmuch as it is reality for humans, it is ‘subjective’, a ‘real’ world that resides in person’s
bodies, in space, over time, and amongst others, inquiry that ultimately addresses itself ‘strongly’ to ‘immediate’ being risks solipsism.

The framework for inquiry is based in recognition that strong ‘empiricism’ is a problem for inquiry, a series of ‘weak’ empirical claims are indispensable for the argument. The approach developed is based around a claim that human-being is a socialized embodied norm-based and relational condition that ‘goes on’ in particular worldly settings. This means that the thesis approaches inquiry through theory that recognizes an ‘immediate’ self-orienting and projecting subjectivity both frames and is enframed by social worlds. Therefore, the approach to discussing the formation of subjectivity is, in the sparsest way, seen as the job of explaining a spatial, temporal, embodied, and shared condition. Around this proposition, the approach aims to avoid ‘going too deep’ by accounting for the inter-subjective ‘material-physicality’ of subjectivity. The approach aims to avoid being ‘too shallow’ by accounting for how subjectivity is at once the creation of and creator of the social world. And the approach aims to avoid transposing ‘means’ into ‘ends’ by recognizing that in social worlds, humans create and reproduce actions, meanings, and things, and in doing so, give them orders and values that serve as criteria for assessing differences and similarities, and legitimate the social power that frames the granting or rescinding of authority. In addition, the approach aims to avoid imbricating subjectivity within sociality, such that it appears as if a functioning unit in a system-like complex by maintaining a commitment to embodiment that remains linked to norm-based and relational contextuality ‘all the way down’.

In order to develop a workable framework for inquiry that takes into account these theoretical and methodological issues, Chapter 10 shifts focus to recent social anthropology and philosophy. These engagements develop an approach to societal and relational dynamics in contemporary conditions. Using Maurice Godelier’s and Annette Weiner’s current anthropology helps to conceptualize sociality in terms of “twin spheres of exchange and transmission …” in a world where “both ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ tend to fall apart, to alter, and change”. The chapter connects Godelier’s and Weiner’s work to approach human societies in terms of the commonalities and continuities that socialized subject-agents share and communicate in and through the job of creating and reproducing social worlds. That is, it sets up an approach that sees ‘being’ human as ‘going on’ because subject-agents can be said to imagine ‘real’ worlds, and to ‘materialize’ them as part of the job of creating and reproducing societies in space, over time, and amongst others through institutions. On the one hand, that sociality ‘goes on’ means that the inquiry sees the job of creating and reproducing it as one of “legitimizing the order of the universe”. In space, over time, and through institutions, embodied subject-agents share an in-common and
enduring reality. Yet, on the other hand, because socialized embodied subject-agents are seen to imagine ‘real’ worlds, and ‘materialize’ them as ongoing sociality, the inquiry recognizes that subject-agents can also be seen to create and reproduce particular possibilities for ‘legitimating’ and challenging the forms of authority and value criteria that frame actions, meanings, and things.9

Chapter 10 creates room for ‘weak’ empirical claims by suggesting that particular practices and discourses ‘go on’ within a social universe that is created and reproduced along particular lines: the near-ineffable totality of an ‘immediate’ reality ‘conceived as material forces’. What subject-agents ‘materialize’ are all those actions, meanings, and things that go into creating and reproducing a form of life. Discussing Godelier’s and Weiner’s work means suggesting that contemporary Anglo-American conditions — what are ‘materialized’ as subject-agents imagine ‘real’ worlds — work to privilege, to ‘normalize’ a particular liberal individualism. Taken to be the form of life that a dominant subjectivity manifests in particular conditions, liberal individualism is said to work as the ‘inalienable’ motor and anchor point for the job of creating and reproducing contemporary Anglo-American social worlds.

These engagements situate the overall thesis within the field of critical social theory in a particular way. The approach raises an issue that, on the one hand, requires attention but, on the other hand, is beyond the ambit of this project. This centres on big debates about the role of the symbolic order in theory and method. Adapting Godelier’s and Weiner’s anthropology helps to account for ‘weak’ empirical claims, but does so at the cost of raising this issue. The key implication here is that where socialized subject-agents are said to imagine ‘real’ worlds, to ‘materialize’ them and, thus, create and reproduce a reality that is inter-subjectively ‘off-limits’, what goes on at the intra-personal level, the imagining of ‘real’ worlds, is cordoned-off from inquiry and its analyses. Chapter 10 digresses briefly to suggest that granting primacy to the symbolic order in the inquiry might be to base it around claims that signs or symbols can have an order that exists for other than a single socialized embodied ‘being’. Arguably, such an approach would require speculating about intra-personal states, or implying that subject-agents inhabit the same reality because pre-socially ‘grasping’ a univocal symbolic logic. Ludwig Wittgenstein’s philosophy here helps to clarify the approach, which takes signs and the symbolic order as merely ‘pointing the way’.10

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10 See, for example, Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, §65, 87, 105, 98, 432.
Chapter 11 links this anthropology of societal and relational dynamics to contemporary philosophical debates and social theory. It uses Jan Westerhoff’s argument that “ontological categories cannot provide us with information about the essential properties of things” but, rather, are limited to providing “a unified account of how objects in this world can fit together into states of affairs”\(^\text{11}\). Westerhoff’s argument is used to develop a basis for ‘weak’ empirical claims because it helps to explain and delimit inquiry’s ‘ontological commitments’. Westerhoff helps to define the ontic field as a totality of binding yet variable material-physical contexts that enframe states of affairs; that is, ‘normative’ societal and relational conditions. Westerhoff’s work provides a means for discussing a socially formative, yet arbitrary and contingent ontic field as an enframing context for the social form(-ation)s of life that ‘go on’ in social worlds. Chapter 11 then takes this claim from philosophical debate, and develops it into a means for discussing the social formation of subjectivity over an ‘ontological register’ through engagement with aspects of Paul James’ social theory. The chapter takes up James’ suggestions that theory might develop links between claims about the ways that “ontological categories” frame social conditions by discussing these in relation to normatively grounded modes of inquiry. The chapter takes up, directly, James’ categories of ‘spatiality’, ‘temporality’, and ‘embodiment’, but also moves away from his concept of ‘epistemology’\(^\text{12}\). Using aspects of Wittgenstein’s philosophy as an explanatory aid, the chapter develops an ontological category of ‘institutionality’, which is set up to explain an enframing category that means human-being is, in practice, always and already a shared and communicative norm-based and relational condition.

Chapter 12 uses this discussion to set out an approach to the social constitution of subjectivity over an ontological register. Bourdieu’s concepts of the \textit{bodily hexis}, and the nexus he sets up between the \textit{habitus} and the social field, are used to set out an approach to subjectivity as the condition human-being can be said to take in modernizing (Western) conditions. However, the chapter avoids taking up Bourdieu’s account of societal and relational dynamics as based around “collective misrecognition”, and brings in Carol Gould’s social-philosophical claim that society can be seen as an “ethical totality”\(^\text{13}\). The discussion uses Gould’s insights as a way of avoiding ‘strong’ claims about sociality. Instead, it takes up the ‘weak’ claim that human-being is a norm-based and

relational condition, which involves subject-agents imagining ‘real’ worlds in a reality where social, cultural, political, and economic, as well as material-physical conditions, change and so raise problems. Seen in the light of Gould’s work, Bourdieu’s schema opens to inquiry the patterns of access to and monopolies over materials, practices, and discourses, that can be said to ‘go on’ because humans create and reproduce particular social worlds amidst arbitrary and contingent ontic contexts. Again using sections from Wittgenstein’s work, the chapter sees Bourdieu as offering a way into inquiry that takes embodied ‘being’ as a socially constituted — embodied, in space and time, and amongst others — form-of-life. Bourdieu’s social agents embody ‘their’ practical sense because seen as ‘living’ socialized dispositions-of-the-body in the social field.

Chapter 12 develops an expanded definition of subjectivity as the ‘immediacy’ of ‘being’ amidst the in-common and enduring reality that humans ‘materialize’ as (Western) modernity. This means setting out a tripartite schema that, again aided by Wittgenstein, sees sensing, perceiving, and imagining ‘being’ as what can be said to ‘go on’ at the nexus of habitus and social field. Bringing back the notion of the imaginary–real’ nexus, therefore, means setting out to discuss subjectivity as the reflexive practicing of an embodied ethology; subjectivity as ‘being’ normatively so-disposed amidst the arbitrariness and contingencies of a binding ontic field. Based in these discussions, Chapter 12 develops an approach to inquiry over an ontological register into the social constitution of subjectivity that is based around three coeval layers of affect: the somatic, practical-ethological, and reflexive. The chapter brings together two levels of analysis for inquiry over an ontological register — those of ‘categories’ and ‘layers of affect’ — in order to discuss the (socially created) material-physical ‘universe’ as the enframing context for a dominant form of life.

Chapter 12 operationalizes the claim that ‘ontology’ always involves epistemology and, so, can ground normative claims. Chapter 12 brings back Giddens and Habermas. Giddens’ theory of ‘the reflexivity of modernity’ is important, because it allows the secular dynamic central to the job of creating and reproducing modernizing, indeed, globalizing sociality to be seen as ‘pervasive’ in scope. Habermas’ work on the relatively complex structured and institutionalized conditions of (Western) modernization allows discussion of the ways practical and discursive conditions might be said to privilege particular forms of individualism. That is, contemporary globalizing modernization involves the creating and reproducing of normative conditions that, between
deeply individuating conditions and, on the other hand, a self-orienting and projecting subjectivity 
mean, “the paths of legitimation grow longer”.14

The chapter links inquiry over an ontological register that is based in two analytic levels, 
with inquiry over a normative register also based in two levels. The first focuses inquiry upon 
normative conditions that can be seen ‘as’ the job of creating and reproducing social and cultural 
practices and discourses. At a second level, discussion works to relate the overall thesis’ inquiry — 
over ontological and normative registers — to a ‘critique of normativity’ based in the claim that 
human-being is a norm-based and relational condition. The chapters in Part IV operationalize the 
inquiry by bringing the approach to a series of illustrative examples drawn from the polity, 
economic, occupational, civil, and cultural domains in contemporary Anglo-American societies, 
and are chosen to look at what happens in practice in relation to the theory and method discussed 
in Part III.

\[\text{... ... ... }\]

\[\text{... ... }\]

This chapter discusses Western modernization in order to develop a provisional account of conditions for ‘subjectivity’. The chapter does not aim to set out a definitive account of modern Western subjectivity but, rather, to provide a background for theoretical and methodological discussions taken up later. Initially, the chapter uses Chandra Mukerji’s empirical-historical research to look at how the proliferating material ‘objects’ that spread across Western societies from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries fostered wide-reaching social change. It then brings in aspects of Louis Dumont’s work on the ‘genesis’ of a distinctive Western individualism and the peculiar ‘modern artificialism’ that arose with it. These engagements are used to link modernization with social and cultural ‘materialism’ and suggest how the emerging conditions might enframe an ‘immediate’, self-orienting and projecting subjectivity.

The chapter then discusses Habermas’ account of the ‘bourgeois private citizens’ that acted to form a ‘public sphere’ and contributed to the establishing of market-oriented Western liberal-democracies from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries on. In the light of Mukerji’s and Dumont’s work, Habermas’ thesis helps to focus upon how conditions that meant such milieux of ‘bourgeois private citizens’ could accrue wealth and control over power affected the individualism that arose in the modernizing West. Also important is Habermas’ discussion of a ‘bourgeois culture of arts and letters’ that arose in partial opposition to the predominance of ‘bourgeois private citizens’. This aspect of Habermas’ work allows the chapter to discuss different forms of individualism as situation-specific aspects of a dominant subjectivity. Habermas’ work helps the discussion to focus upon subjectivity and modernization in a way that allows changing social-historical and material-physical conditions to be seen in terms of shifting dynamics of power and authority.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan S. Turner’s ‘dominant ideology thesis’ and study of ‘sovereign individualism’, which helps clarify some of the methodological issues raised by discussion so far. These authors’ suggestion that analyses should focus upon the intertwining of an ‘economic subject’ and a ‘way of being in the world’ helps further to suggest an approach that looks at the formation of individualism in
terms of situations in and through which a dominant subjectivity is enframed. These discussions set out a provisional concept of ‘subjectivity’, which the next chapter takes up and uses as a background to briefly considering early-modern Western philosophical reflections upon human-being as ‘subjectivity’.

Mukerji describes the emergence of a “modern materialist culture” across the West from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries onward. Mukerji paraphrases Karl Polanyi and Marshall Sahlins to define the ‘materialism’ that arose — amidst widening inter- and intra-continental trade and expanding markets for goods and services fuelled, in part, by colonization — as a social and cultural “system in which material interests are not made subservient to other social goals”:

Where the sheer number of objects available to people and the increasing manufacture of goods for practical use — such as clocks, books, maps, and guns — also began to affect practical activities … they became less dependent either on other persons or on nature [or cosmology]. Once [material culture] is produced, it is part of the world in which people must function (at least, until it is destroyed or replaced with other goods) and to which they must adapt their behaviour. [T]he expansion of trade and increased appearance of objects on the market [and across society] were the occasion for the establishment of new and elaborate systems of thought, ones that advocated careful measurement and study of relationships among variables, conceived of as material forces.15

Mukerji suggests that the plethora of objects arriving or produced in the West, as well as the “systems of thought” that people developed to make sense of them, contributed to the emergence of relatively complex, abstract, and extended societal and relational conditions. Mukerji describes how, in and around this ‘plethora of objects’, communities expanded to encompass larger areas; involved more people, created new institutions, different knowledges, and ways of inter-relating, as well as relating as a society and as individuals to the material-physical world. For Mukerji, as sociality became increasingly created and construed in and around such ‘objects’ and

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the meanings associated with their use and exchange, new organizational domains arose, and hitherto unimportant ones became relatively more important. As land came to be used for relatively large-scale agriculture and industry, factories, and urban areas expanded. Similarly, as mercantile exchanges and industrial production grew in volume and importance, the ongoing creating and reproducing of sociality called for relatively specific data and precise measurements. Mukerji describes how the human world itself impacted upon human-being in historically ‘new’ ways. For example, as clocks and the relatively precise way of reckoning ‘time’, and map’ and the relatively precise ways of measuring ‘space’, these facilitated became important, it might be said that being human became something different than had been the case without these.16

Mukerji’s work implies that relatively direct inter-relations between persons were subsumed by relatively complex, abstract, and extended forms of inter-relating; such as through books and maps, or capitalistic markets mediatized by an abstract ‘medium’ for exchange. On the one hand, modernization displaced relatively direct relations between humans as almost the only settings for societal and relational engagements. As humans related amidst the ‘plethora of objects’ they created and reproduced, and insofar as relatively exacting measurement, reckoning, and control became important, the social structuring of institutions that framed human inter-relations became somewhat concretized. On the other hand, in and around such proliferating objects, and the knowledges and techniques associated with their uses, the material-physical environments for sociality was shaped and altered, giving rise to different and relatively volatile forms of authority and value criteria.17

While Mukerji’s detailed research is invaluable, the chapter pauses briefly here to take issue with her approach. This is allows discussion to raise some methodological concerns. Mukerji responds to Weberian sociology as an approach to modernity. Mukerji’s critique of Weber’s methodological “social idealism” forms the basis for the materialist framework she uses to inquire into the production of modern culture. For Mukerji, Weber uses a methodologically one-dimensional approach that incorrectly “treats ideas as social forces”:16

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16 Mukerji, From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism, 12, 15.

In making this point, I want to stress a perspective on ‘objects’, or ‘things’, as mediating, abstracting, extending, or otherwise altering the ways that humans relate with each other. Because humans act, create meanings, and modalize ‘objects’, it is the ways that relations between persons change when these proliferate that is important to my discussion. A similar point is made by Weiner, Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping While Giving, 28-33.
Objects are the carriers of ideas and, as such, often act as the social forces that [Weberian] analysts have identified with ideology-as-words. Objects can help make autonomous forces out of ideas … [but] material culture is not located in the human mind, although it shows the stamp of its creators and is known to people through their senses. [For Mukerji] material culture … does not gain its autonomy through free will or the spontaneity of subjective processes [but objects] can create a setting for human behaviour (including intellectual activity) that simultaneously encourages people to behave in ways that take advantage of that environment.\textsuperscript{18}

Mukerji’s suggestions, however, seem to discount the intertwining of material practices with discourses; which may, for instance, arise in an environment independent or external to that discussed. For Mukerji, discourses seem either determined by material ‘objects’, or conditions of “taking advantage of [an] environment”. This interpretation of Mukerji’s thesis is based on the way that she sets up her argument, around claims that in societies “it can be \textit{both} a physical and symbolic constraint [that] gives material culture a particular power over human action”. In this sense, casting “material culture” as holding “power over human action” seems to imply that the power of objects — and, moreover, the always social and cultural prioritizing of the power of objects — is produced somewhere outside or beyond the social worlds which humans create. Mukerji seems to hypostatize the always socially created power of objects. Social power enters discussion as if ‘hanging over’, rather than being continually produced and construed by humans in ongoing sociality. I am suggesting that this problem arises because Mukerji envisages societal dynamism in terms of “physical and symbolic constraint”. This seems to locate power in the objects themselves, not in the interstices of human-created worlds, the suggestion is that ‘constraint’ is a material and cultural condition, and that symbols can only represent things within social conditions.\textsuperscript{19}

Alongside these engagements with Mukerji’s work, the discussion now turns to Dumont’s account of the ‘genesis’ of “Western individualism” and a peculiar “modern artificialism”. Dumont’s historical anthropological perspective helps to link discussion of conditions in and around proliferating objects, techniques, and knowledges, to the influence upon the job of ‘being’ human

\textsuperscript{18} Mukerji, \textit{From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism}, 12-13, 15.
\textsuperscript{19} Italics in original. Ibid., 15.
amidst the predominance of Occidental Judaeo-Christianity in modernizing conditions. Dumont’s work allows discussion of conditions as these affected the position and status of ‘individuals’ in relation to the world and predominant ways of reflecting upon it from within Western societies. For Dumont, expanding capitalistic markets and industrial production made possible, amongst other things, the wide-reaching dissemination of information linking Rome to pan-European clerical corruption and venality. In the face of knowledge that Church corruption extended ‘all the way up’, persons began to entertain a relatively direct union with the Divine. Dogma pertaining to religious observance and, subsequently, feudal authority came to be seen as ‘constraints’ upon personal and “peculiar subjection to God’s will”. For Dumont, the flourishing of Lutheran and Calvinist ‘protest’ against the Roman Church altered the Judaeo-Christianity that pervaded Western society and culture. The belief-system that once offered “refuge from this imperfect world in another [transcendent] one” underwent a metamorphosis that framed a distinct “Western ideology of individualism” and the “modern artificialism” peculiar to it.²⁰

For Dumont, Occidental Judaeo-Christianity influenced the formation of a monadic and atomized Western individualism that emphasized personal autonomy in the world and idiosyncrasy in relation to others, and the Divine. It might be said that Dumont describes a shift in the locus for (cosmologically grounded ‘metaphysical’) Truth that coincided and intertwined with the “new and elaborate systems of thought” which “conceived of [the world] as material forces”. Concomitant with the proliferation of objects, knowledges, and techniques — such as commoditized labour and other markets mediated in abstraction through ‘money’, or the print-technologies that helped spread ‘news’ of ecclesiastic malfeasance — were conditions that required individuals to apply personal will-objectives to ‘worldly’ affairs. That is, conditions emerged that impelled embodied self-orientation towards, and projection within, an unstable Earthly realm of external ‘forces’. For Dumont, Earthly human endeavours became ‘expressions’ of a universal humanity, or ‘bare’ Human Nature. ²¹

In this sense, individual exemplarity became the universal point of determination for a private Soul’s relationship to the Cosmos; oriented towards a Heavenly future, ‘right’ beliefs valorized ‘true’ achievements, and motivated ‘good’ acts ‘here and now’. Dumont links Judaeo-Christianity’s insistence on equalitarianism between human Souls to the liberal individual exemplarity


that, in practice, framed modern democratic emphases on liberty, equality, and common unity. Dumont’s concept of “modern artificialism” comes in here, and helps to explain the displacement of traditional, ancestry-based social hierarchies that depend upon how a person seems in relation to “myth and history” by somewhat less definitive “class divisions” that depend upon what a person is in relation to the present. The concept helps to suggest that changing practical and discursive normative conditions, as well as material-physical contexts, emerged to enframe private ‘choices’ — based on (appeals to a transcendent) moral authority — as ‘self-evidently’ representing an individual’s efforts to position a ‘self’ in relation to the ‘Natural order of things’. Person’s ‘bad’ choices led to degradation and impoverishment, while ‘good’ choices elevated status and led to ‘solid means’ in a world of definitive material-physical and moral proportions.22

What had hitherto been Truth in the cosmological sense became “concentrated in the individual’s will”, a metamorphosis described by Dumont “as the model of modern artificialism at large”:

> [T]he systematic application to the things of this world of an extrinsic, imposed value. Not a value derived from our [i.e. humanity’s] belonging in this world, such as its harmony or our harmony within it, but a value rooted in our heterogeneity in relation to it: the identification of our will with the will of God. The will applied to the world, the end sought after, the motive and inner spring of the will are extraneous; they are to say, the same thing, essentially outworldly. Outworldliness is now [with the generalization of conditions for modern artificialism] concentrated in the individual’s will.23

The present thesis takes Dumont’s definition to imply cosmologically ordained Truth morphed into an ‘objective’ order of things; in which modern persons could be seen as subjects and agents, ‘actors’ in a world that corresponded and responded to individual’s wills. Anchored in an immaterial Soul, Western individualism became tied to material-physical Nature through embodiment-in-the-world ‘here and now’. Modern artificialism is the generalized application by subject-agents to worldly affairs of personal will-objectives that are, in effect, the concentration within individual’s wills of ‘objectively’ true reality: as a concept, it explains ‘being’ human as the art of making reality ‘real’.22

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22 Dumont argues that such a disposition towards the world might also underlie sociological conceptions, such as Ferdinand Tönnies’ distinction between “spontaneous will” and “arbitrary will”, and what Max Weber calls “modern instrumental rationality”. Dumont, Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective, 56, 64, 75, 90.

23 Ibid., 56.
The concept helps to set in relief subjectivity amidst the conditions that Mukerji describes. The emergence of materialist culture meant that persons themselves, along with their institutions — such as those based around production and exchange, knowledges and techniques, as well as power and authority — ‘conceived of the world as material forces’. Mukerji accounts for conditions wherein the reckoning of space, time, and information about the world became relatively more specific, intensive, and extensive: where ongoing sociality itself came to imbricate less that was seen as immeasurable and unquantifiable within it. The increasing array of objects and the forces unleashed by humans through them altered material-physical contexts for sociality per se. The consequences of applying “careful measurement and [the] study of relationships between variables” within the world altered the contextuality of the world for ‘being’ human.

In “a world conceived of as material forces”, space, time, institutions, and embodied human-being itself became, historically, different from what was ‘lived’ in non-modern conditions. Socialized embodied subject-agents were called-upon as self-orienting individuals verily to ‘make-up’ an ‘objectively true’ reality. In relation to sociality as a whole, subject-agents were called-upon to self-project into a (social) world that ‘required’ good choices and right actions. While in relation to proximate others, subject-agents appear called-upon to self-assert as authentic individuals in relation to ‘the present moment’. Hence, Dumont’s distinction between non-modern cultures emphasizing position in relation to hereditary Right, and modern cultures wherein personal merit, individual effort, and setting-of-the-self ‘against’ the world came to be valued. In this sense, socialized embodied subject-agents were also called-upon to be ‘creative’: to utilize the embodied self as the abode, or ‘housing’ for the tools and techniques required for ‘going on’ in modernizing conditions.

The chapter now focuses upon Habermas’ inquiry into the influence of a “public of private citizens” in the early-modern West. Habermas’ focus upon conditions that meant “public opinion”, as the “public will of private citizens” became important as the social ‘legitimation’ of worldly authority, helps to put Dumont’s claims in less abstract terms. Habermas’ thesis, also allows discussion to conceptualize the formation of Western ‘individualism’ in terms of situation-specific aspects of a dominant subjectivity, which is taken up in more detail through Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner’s work.
Like Dumont, Habermas describes the modernizing conditions in and thorough which persons came to engage as autonomous ‘moral’ individuals. Both authors help to explain how traditional backward looking, confessional, and obeisant forms of life became unsuited to societal and relational engagements amidst modernization’s increasingly important capitalistic markets for goods and services, and relatively complex, abstract, and extended structural and institutional conditions. Amongst other things, both see the proliferation of contract-style agreements for exchanging goods and services, and abstract decision-making in creative, and political domains as contributing to conditions where personal autonomy, duty, and ‘calling’ displaced the ‘traditional’ forms of life. Seen in the light cast by Mukerji’s work, Habermas and Dumont explain the situations in and through which a particular formation of individualism arose to create and reproduce conditions for an ‘immediate’, self-orienting and projecting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ subjectivity.

As material objects became important, the dispositions and capabilities conducive to ‘going on’ in and around them — such as, effort and industriousness, techno-scientific knowledges, and entrepreneurial or ‘creative’ talents’, for example — became means for attaining the moveable wealth created through them. The source of power that was control over landed property, based in inherited Right and for Dumont, sanctified by myth and history, became something that accompanied effort and achievement based on ‘good’ and ‘proper’ choices. The possession and accumulation of moveable wealth worked as one indicator of success in worldly actions, while attention to personal duty and moral calling also lifted personal status that was seen as confirmation of the alignment of individuals with the transcendentally ordained Natural order of things. Decisions taken ‘here and now’ altered the position of individual persons in relations to others and the world.24

Habermas describes modernization as undermining the hitherto near-total legitimacy of religious dogma and hereditary aristocratic authority. As a particular social fraction came to hold access to and monopoly over practices and discourses associated with control over ‘objects’, the locus of power within sociality shifted. Habermas describes how “private citizens” — adult,

literate, male individuals, buffeted by wealth, and an industriousness that reinforced reflections upon the Rationality, or Naturalness of actions — sought political power based on a “public opinion” that “aimed at rationalizing politics in the name of [the] morality” of a “private people engaged in rational-critical public debate … [which] interpreted itself as unpolitical”. The milieux that asserted political will and the Natural morality of “public opinion” did so against aristocratic domination and, indirectly, clerical value-criteria based in exclusive access to the Divine.

[There arose] a sphere of public authority [that] was now casting itself loose as a forum in which the private people, come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion. The publicum developed into the public, the subjectum into the (reasoning) subject, the receiver of regulations from above into the ruling authorities’ adversary.

The social fraction that controlled objects and created systems of measurement of material forces also exerted control through the materials, practices, and discourses that modernizing conditions unleashed. Habermas argues that particular milieux were able call for “public authority to legitimate itself” based in the shared experiences of a Nature each had mastered by making Right choices and forming Rational opinions. Bringing the elements of Dumont’s and Habermas’ work together, it might be said that political conditions for the emergence of this “bourgeois public sphere” and the nascent Western liberal-democracies that arose in and through them, centred on the increasing wealthy and power of such a fraction. By virtue of self-orienting moral decisions projected within an immediately present reality, a politically ascendant ‘public’ effectively naturalized the Natural order of things that had been created and produced as (Western) Modernity. In this sense, discussing their theories allows the present thesis to see Western modernization in terms of a shift away from the ‘total’ Truth of ancestry and the past, which enframes ‘being’ as ‘going on’ amidst the near-ineffable ‘totality’ of an ‘immediate’ reality.

For Habermas, where particular cultural milieux of “self-interested, property owning private … [male, educated, literate, and] autonomous individuals” acted to establish the political means for ensuring liberty from arbitrary domination and institutions for a secular ‘worldly’ law:

The fiction of a justice immanent in free commerce was what rendered plausible the conflation of bourgeois and homme, of self-interested, property-owning private people and autonomous


individuals per se. Under the social conditions that translated private vices into public virtues, a state of cosmopolitan citizenship and, hence, the subsumption of politics under morality was empirically conceivable. It could, in the same world of experience, unite two heterogeneous legislations without one being likely to encroach upon the other: the legislations of private people propelled by their drives as owners of commodities and simultaneously that of spiritually free human beings.27

Habermas sees in Immanuel Kant’s liberal cosmopolitanism explanation of and justification for conditions in and through which ‘the public’, exerting power sufficient to force authority to ‘legitimate’ itself, altered predominant forms of authority and value criteria. At once, power was something ‘out there’ in Nature, and something ‘internal’, within individual persons, albeit, subsumed to atomized moral ‘judgements’. The modernizing conditions that privileged control of ‘objects’ through wealth, over inherited entitlement and gnosis of the Supreme order, opened politics to claims of a relationship with the Natural order of things through control over Human Nature. Modernity’s subject-agents became bound to comply with an order that transcended them, by virtue of an inner ‘fortitude’ that a transcendent Nature, of itself, would ‘reward’ or ‘punish’ in public view. Hence, Habermas’ milieux of bourgeois private citizens, propelled by their drives as free men amidst a Natural order of things, verily forced a particular form of life that measured value in relation to that Nature, into the centre of sociality.

Habermas also describes a counter-mandatory “bourgeois culture of arts and letters” that coincided with the ascent of this “bourgeois public sphere”. This ‘alternative’ form of life claimed rights to self-expression and critical liberty that contradicted the property rights and ‘rule of law’ claimed by bourgeois private citizens. While ‘bourgeois public’ individualism employed norms as if justified by Nature, this counter-individualism employed an ‘objective’ position that justified Nature in relation to social norms. As bourgeois private citizens acted to force political stasis based in the Natural order of things, a non-conformist alternative arose to hold property in disregard and pursue disorder through immediate experiences and sensory gratification. Such a form of life asserted an ‘inner-worldly’ sensuality opposed to the rough and tumble of the public sphere, and an aestheticism that diverted moral autonomy into judgements about ‘taste’. However, as social structures and institutions became concretized under the force of milieux holding moveable wealth, and seeking government based in Natural Law, the “critical freedom”28 manifest in

27 Ibid., 111-12.
28 Ibid., 28-33, 134-35.
counter-mandatory individualism — that for Perry Anderson was “once the preserve of a ... leisured nobility” 29 — became marginalized as countercultural Romanticism, or ossified into parochial and domestic Mannerism.

... ... ...

These engagements allow an approach that delineates analytically between individualism and subjectivity. That is, discussion proceeds by looking at individualism in terms of the situations that subject-agents create and reproduce as aspects of conditions for an ‘immediate’ self-orienting and projecting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ modern Western subjectivity. Engaging Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner’s “dominant ideology thesis” and account of “sovereign individualism” allows discussion to be set up in a more schematized way. The authors conceptually disentangle social structure — the economy in practice — from discourse — as socially organized connotations of particular meanings. I want to take up the authors’ perspective in order to recognize intertwining yet relatively autonomous and historically particular formations of ‘practice’ and ‘discourse’ as combining to specify socially valid forms of agency and, as such, valorize the affectivity of agency. The authors suggest how different formations of the individual, through “socially organized” discourses and the “social groups with which they are associated conflict in the struggle for dominance” in industrializing and capitalistic modernization. Their point is that “classes rising to dominance are more likely both to control property and to be closest to the mechanisms by which discourses are transmitted in society”. Hence, the authors describe conditions at the interstices of an ascendant “capitalist social organization” and the “discursive dominance of individualism”. 30

Taken together, Habermas’ bourgeois private citizen and Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner’s sovereign individualism might be said to represent the situation-specific manifestation of an ascendant dominant subjectivity in early Western modernity. These authors’ work implies that, while a particular formation of individualism became central to modernizing Western, more so, in the co-authors’ work, Anglo-American societies a specific formation of individualism is neither a necessary nor a sufficient ‘outcome’ of modernization. Using these authors’ work, the present

30 Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism, 177-78, 83-84. Italics in original.
thesis suggests inquiry approach individualism as a situation-specific aspect of a dominant subjectivity. The conditions for modernizing subjectivity imply patterns of access to and monopoly over normative practices and discourses that are also consequential upon but contingent amidst certain material-physical contexts: such as the altered spatial, temporal, institutional, and even embodied ‘ways of conceiving the world’ that Mukerji describes. This is where the concept of ‘modern artificialism’ becomes important. In conditions where forms of authority and value criteria are no longer anchored in the ‘past and tradition’, concept of ‘modern artificialism’ makes it possible to look at the individualism that creates and reproduces patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses within sociality, and at subjectivity as ‘being’ in modernity’s ‘Natural’ reality. This concept is used to suggest how looking at subjectivity as the self-orienting and projecting, asserting and ‘creative’ immediacy of human-being implies that reality becomes an artifice of ‘being’ human.

Discussing things from this perspective allows development of an approach that, in subsequent chapters, focuses upon particular social-historical conditions amidst material-physical contexts as a wholly contingent totality of binding variables. For the present thesis, the ‘subjectivity’ that Western modernization enframes implies that inquiry’s focus is upon human-being as both the creation of and creator of social worlds that encompass in sum total. The emergence of conditions for subjectivity as immediately ‘being’ amidst a total reality means that inquiry is bound to base its claims upon what can be said to ‘go on’ within social worlds, as opposed to references in cosmology. Yet, this, the secular immanence that accompanies modernization’s (Western) subjectivity — as the ‘immediate’, self-orienting and projecting condition of ‘being’ in reality — also implies that what is in theory ‘positive empiricism’ and ‘methodological individualism’ become, in practice problematic and contestable Natural states of affairs.

... ... ...
This chapter uses a brief overview of early modern Western philosophy to develop the argument one more step. The chapter’s intention is not to comprehensively review early modern Western philosophy, but to background a series of more detailed discussions of subjectivity in theory and practice in subsequent chapters. While the philosophy of the subject is beyond the present thesis’ scope, discussing it here helps orient the developing approach. The focus here is upon Kantian and Hegelian philosophies as “systems of thought”. In particular historical and social conditions, these took-up questions of human-being that, while recognizing a world subject to material forces, with hindsight, can be seen to refer to a transcendent ‘pure’ Reason or metaphysical Absolute. Discussion in this chapter frames later engagements with theories of subjectivity that might explicitly recognize the ‘immediacy’ of human-being in modernizing (Western) conditions, yet in doing so draw this reality up into an explanatory method. The second half of the chapter combines these concerns with the provisional concept of subjectivity set out in Chapter 2 in order to discuss Marxist theories and practices of subjectivity, especially, as these relate to the commodity form.

In René Descartes’ early-modern philosophical reflections, the essence of human-being is seen as the reasoning mind: the cogito. Genevieve Lloyd suggests that Cartesian philosophy reconstituted the pre-modern notion of a Soul “divided into higher (intellectual) and lower (sensitive) parts” as a “dichotomy between mind and body”. As an innately human “faculty of Reason”, the cogito aims to understand the self in the world as a means to comporting an Earthly body. Cartesian mind-
body dualism accounts for human-being as a present state in immediate reality: the cogito ‘knows’ the self and reality because its capacity to reason facilitates an understanding of reality, as created by a perfect God. However, the Cartesian ‘body’, notably, its sensuality, distracts the cogito from reasoning about reality. While created by “some other more perfect [and transcendent] Being”, it is only through “clear and distinct” reason(ing) — right and good choices — that humans understand a “divinely guaranteed” Nature.\(^{33}\)

The Cartesian “emphasis on the [\textit{a priori}] privacy of the mind’s operations” becomes expressed as a normative claim in David Hume’s “positivist empiricism”. However, as Lloyd argues, Hume’s radicalized doubt can be sustained only by asserting that the world ‘is’ as it ‘is’: that reality accords with what the self takes as the Natural order of things.\(^{34}\) In this sense, Hume’s “inductive skepticism”\(^{35}\) accounts for human-being ‘here and now’, yet denies the actuality of what lay beyond the individual self. It is said that, for Hume, to ‘reason’ is not so much to understand the Nature’s Rationality, but to act in accord with “custom and habit”, which is necessary for existing in a reality where the self alone is \textit{True}. In abstraction, Hume authorizes a multiplicity of versions of what the world ‘is’ and ‘ought to be’. However, in practice, his inductive skepticism seems merely to justify the ‘naturalness’ of a particular social-historical order.\(^{36}\)

Terry Eagleton suggests that Kant responds to both Descartes and Hume to develop a methodologically, if not explicitly, secular philosophy. Kant posits human-being in a Natural world that is created for human ends, as the work of a rational and just God. Eagleton suggests that Kant ‘humbles’ the Cartesian cogito, because Kantian Pure Reason lay in Nature itself and is not directly accessible to human reasoning or introspection. In this sense, Kantian human-being is bound to a mundane world where Nature is the reality: the \textit{True} order of things. Nature is knowable, only insofar as it constitutes a world where human actions manifest in practice. The Natural world is a reality that humankind and individual humans must work at and communicate within, in order to ‘be’ morally Right. Kant elevates Nature’s Rationality to the position of

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\(^{33}\) Descartes reflected upon a state of being that was created by “a Nature more perfect than mine could be [as a human person,] … some other more perfect Being on which I [as a self] depended, or from which I acquired all that I had”. R. Descartes, "Discourse on the Method/Rules for the Direction of the Mind," in The Essential Descartes, ed. M. D. Wilson (New York: New American Library, 1969), 129. Descartes, "Discourse on the Method/Rules for the Direction of the Mind," See, for example, Rule XII, 73-75, and Part IV, 127-33. Lloyd, \textit{The Man of Reason: Male and Female in Western Philosophy}, 42.

\(^{34}\) Lloyd, \textit{The Man of Reason: Male and Female in Western Philosophy}, 45.


universal arbiter, binding human-being ‘here and now’ to a project of autonomous self-legislation, to a moral duty to understand, and the need for strength of will to act in accordance with reality.  

In one sense, insofar as rational dictates are open to humans through critical reflection upon Nature, Kant opens the relation between human-being, as a social condition, and a worldly reality that is always ‘artificial’. Yet, in another sense, by evoking a ‘scale’ that descends from Pure Reason, through practical maxims, on to aesthetic judgements, Kant situates the justification for human action beyond the empirical world of human-being. Kantian philosophy recognizes the immediacy of normative practices and discourses and the material-physical world, but casts reality as an ineluctable Truth ‘of itself’ in order to justify critique. Indeed, the Kantian notion of subjective intuition, which facilitates aesthetic judgements and, so, ‘connects’ persons to each other as ‘consensual’ individual monads, is a material-physical embodied condition. However, inasmuch as Kant recognizes this aesthetic sublimity as embodied, he finds it a threat to Nature’s Pure Reason, and the practical maxims it emanates: and, as such, offers to the moral and right individual. It seems that for Kant, fulfillment, satisfaction, creativity, and sensuality threaten to impede duty, and weaken the will to abide by Nature’s requirements. Arguably, Kant places human-being under the yoke of a didactic moralism that, in retrospect, justifies the enforcing of contingent norms by those holding power because they do so.

Habermas, like Eagleton, also suggests that in retrospect, it may be said that Hegel’s philosophy was motivated by this implication of Kant’s argument. Habermas and Eagleton suggest that Hegel saw Kantian philosophy as “expressing the modern world”, but not conceptualizing it. Hegel sees the Kantian morally autonomous monad — duty-bound to act reasonably — as consistently ‘becoming’ self-conscious: the created subject and re-producing agent of world history. These authors suggest that, for Hegel, modern subjectivity is both the taking on of the world, and the ‘principle’ for creating a meaningful human world. In these respects, Hegelian philosophy is important for two reasons. First, Hegel suggests an ‘immediate’ self-orienting subjectivity that disavows the legitimating force of what Dumont calls “myth and history”. Second, Hegel finds fault with the Romanticism that took Kant’s relegation of aesthetic judgement — below practical maxims and objective Truth — merely to anchor subjectivity in an unbounded immediacy of atomized sensory experience and aesthetic gratification. Hegelian philosophy ‘sets


free’ human-beings from “historical obligations”, and anchors it in immediate self-conscious reflection upon the conditions of its ‘becoming’: that is, upon identity in-the-world. Hegelian subjectivity is self-conscious ‘recognition’ of subjective ‘identity’ and of ‘difference’ from that which is other, or ‘objective’. For Hegel, subjectivity takes a dialectic trajectory towards absolute unity in the Idea, the Spirit, or Essence. The principle of subjectivity unleashed is ‘becoming’ self-conscious in the absence of ‘past and tradition’. Yet, in attempting to overcome both Kant’s ‘didacticism’ and Romantic ‘egocentrism’, Hegelian subjectivity seems to tempt a universalizing metaphysical rationale.39

... ... ...

To clarify the direction taken from here, the chapter concludes by looking at two suggestions from different commentators, who argue that both Kant’s, and Hegel’s ‘systems’ leave open an alternate route for developing theory and method for inquiry into the formation of Western subjectivity. Gerard Delanty suggests that Kant’s use of the concept of sensus communis to “explain the universality of aesthetic taste” points to the possibility of conceiving of “community as a process of communication, as opposed to a symbolic, institutional, or purely normative ideal”:

By the name of sensus communis is to be understood the idea of public sense, i.e. a critical faculty which in its reflective act takes account (a priori) of the mode of representation of everyone else, in order, as it were, to weigh its judgement with the collective judgement of mankind, and thereby avoid the illusion arising from subjective and personal conditions which could readily be taken for objective, an illusion that would exert a prejudicial influence upon its judgement.40

Delanty’s suggestions concerning Kant’s earthly and social criteria for ‘aesthetic judgement’ help to highlight the kinds of problems that subjectivity raises, and to suggest that beginning from a concept like that of ‘modern artificialism’ might be to move towards a way out that does not revert to transcendence or methodological individualism. In a similar sense, Robert


Pippin, like Eagleton and Habermas, recognizes that Hegel does not ‘succeed’ in settling the key problem that Kant raises. Pippin suggests that Hegel fails to maintain rational justification for “normative authority”. Instead, Pippin suggests that Hegel issues “a great existential power to the force of reason in human life”, such that the Absolute ‘assumes’ metaphysical proportion. However, Pippin sees in Hegel a ‘gesture’ toward the possibility of reflecting upon subjectivity from within ‘consciousness’ that is anchored in sociality:

Pippin’s claim that Hegel “gestures in … a [different] direction” allows me to raise a problem for my developing claims about contemporary subjectivity. I suggest this here, because, insofar as the present thesis looks at subjectivity in terms of immediate reality, ‘all there is’ or, rather, all that is taken to be within dominant ideologies, it stresses that the world can only ‘be’ reality for a single human in the ‘act’ of ‘being’. For the purposes of this thesis, the early-modern Western philosophers imply that human-being — ambiguously cut loose from ‘past and tradition’ by socio-cultural change and ‘urged on’ by shifts in concepts of material-physicality — on the one hand, came to engage from within a reality that was ‘everything’ and, on the other hand, became open to a risky and unstable world. Modern subjectivity might be seen as ‘being’ in reality in its stark ‘totality’. Put another way, the discussion so far implies that subject-hood or intra-personal states become the final arbiter of reality — the Hegelian ‘fact as experienced’ — in modernizing Western conditions. Iterated as such, the concept of ‘modern artificialism’ allows a methodological problem concerning the ‘starting-point’ for critical social theory inquiry to be raised. Recognizing a ‘secular’ subjectivity precludes analyses based in ‘strong’ empirical claims; the condition of modern Western subjectivity that Hegel points up as the ‘fact as experienced’. In this sense, Delanty’s

suggestions concerning Kant and Pippin’s reflections on Hegel offer are a way into discussing subjectivity that is based in a ‘weak’ empiricism.\(^{42}\)

These commentators suggest that both Kant and Hegel make explicit how, because ‘going on’ in time and space, human-being can be said to ‘be’ sharing normative conditions and enduring as such amidst material-physical contexts. These are irreducible to ‘strong’ empirical claims because ‘facts as experienced’ by embodied humans — as they ‘be’ — rest in the shared and communicative conditions of which they are part. Arguably, for Hegel, human-being as experienced is ‘an illustration and a copy of the original and completely self-supporting act of thought’ because this ‘original and completely self-supporting act of thought’ is the radicalized modern condition itself. On this point, Victoria Burke, for example, suggests that Hegelian theory needs to assume that each and any subjectivity has ‘recognition’, not so much of ‘the other’, but of others’ idea of the Idea. Burke argues that Hegel falls back upon a universal absolute principle for recognition, binding subjectivity to a dynamic of reciprocity between subjects that must be always-already conscious of the form and content of each other’s consciousness, lest claiming that the Absolute permeate consciousness. Burke’s argument that ‘difference’ and ‘identity’ lay not primarily in the ‘thinking of being’ helps me to make some tentative suggestions that will become more important later. Burke’s suggestions help me to focus upon subjectivity as a norm-based and relational condition because making reality ‘real’.\(^{43}\)

This is to point out that subjectivity has ‘difference’ that, at one level, precedes ‘understanding’. Because to ‘be’ is, of necessity, to ‘be’ material-physically embodied yet, also that such ‘difference’ can only be iterated because subjectivity is ‘embodied’ in space and in time and, so, amongst ‘others’— in ways that inquiry might see as constituting the situations of a form of life. This points to possibilities for analytic recognition of a somatic quality of subjectivity, as an affect of the material-physicality of human-being in space, over time, and collection. These engagements also imply an ‘in practice’ quality of subjectivity, a socialized ethological ‘consciousness’ that takes on the practical terms of a world made up in space and time, and amongst others. Therefore, it creates possibilities for recognizing practical-ethological affect of ‘being’ in a social world of temporal, spatial, and institutional dimensions. This means treating ‘institutions’ as enduring social


constructions that humans create and reproduce because they share and communicate amidst and as parts of a material-physical context. Furthermore, these engagements also imply analyses recognize another ‘layer’ constituting subjectivity. In this sense, Hegel’s reflections upon the conditions of subjectivity’s ‘becoming’ might be said to imply reflexive ‘creative’ self-orienting and projecting assertion of an identity in-the-world, amongst others, and under the ‘weight’ of social institutions collectively created and reproduced.

Discussion now moves consider Karl Marx’s materialist approach to modern subjectivity, and his discussion of commodity fetishism. Marx ties theory to practice and, in so doing, responds to both Western idealist philosophy and rationalist positivism. This becomes important later, insofar as theory of the nexus between production and consumption of commoditized goods and services seems to take on several guises in twentieth century social theory. The discussion takes up the well-covered issue of Marx’s dialectical Materialism — theorizing critical subjectivity that is both subject and the agent of ‘productive forces’ — in order to suggest how the Marxist concept of ‘alienation from species-being’ might simultaneously explain and operationalize what Dumont calls “modern artificialism”. Discussion then looks at commentary on Marxist analyses of relatively recent Anglo-American affairs. In particular, it looks at ‘rational actor’ reviews of Marxist analyses as a way of shining a critical light upon the concept of ‘alienation from species-being’. This juxtaposition allows a suggestion that, as theoretical frameworks, both Marxist and liberal ‘rational action’ theory might be seen to obtain explanatory force by reaching beyond the world they otherwise recognize as an over-arching totality. The chapter concludes by making some tentative suggestions about the nature of commodities, and by linking Marxist theory to the earlier discussion of an ‘immediate’ self-orienting and projecting subjectivity.44

In the mid-nineteenth century West, amidst expanding industrial production and capitalistic markets, the ascent of bourgeois political institutions, and ongoing de-legitimation of cosmology and tradition, Marx criticized both mainstream political-economics and Hegelian philosophy. Marx recognized that Western social institutions had become secular — that is, created and reproduced in accord with the ‘worldly’ environment and human actions in it — and

set out to ‘measure’ the human condition in terms of these profane material forces. As norms once based in religious doxa and cultural taboo, which had enforced sabbatical on holy days, constrained the passions, or governed contract, for example, gave way to market relations and ever-increasing productive ‘necessities’, Marx argued that “relations between men” became objectified as “relations between things”.

Marx also argued that political-economists, such as David Ricardo and Adam Smith obscured from genuine appraisal the worldly conditions that rapidly spreading urbanization, industrialism, and commodity markets were creating. For Marx, mainstream political-economy speciously naturalized the individuated inter-relations that were central to markets, as if these were atypical human relations. He argued that political-economy was ahistorical and falsely offered ‘scientific’ analyses of ‘material forces’ when, in fact, it merely advanced the interests of a particular class fraction. Through these observations, Marx disavowed Hegel’s subjectivity, arguing that philosophical idealism was inadequate for thinking about human-being amidst the normalizing of large-scale ‘institutionalized’ impoverishment and widespread despoiling of the environment.

Marx took up Ludwig Feuerbach’s materialist philosophy to review Hegel’s theses on subjectivity. As the God of religion, the authority of Kings, kinship and, even human affections, morphed to accommodate ever-expanding production and accumulation, Marx combined Feuerbach’s and Hegel’s insights to argue that alienation was not the condition of distractedness from the essence of the Absolute, but the historical ‘material’ condition of detachment from a definitive human state of ‘species-being’.

As does Hegel, Marx finds in contemporaneous conditions the unleashing of a radical future-creating subjectivity: a historical ‘principle’ that unfolds over time and in space to create ‘the future out of the present’. It might be said that Marx unites (Western philosophical) theory and practice to ‘claim’ subjectivity as critical self-awareness in a world that is, in sum total, the product

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47 Richard Wilkinson, for example, describes the “institutionalization of poverty” in ‘early’ modernity as “a kind of accumulating debt” that was a condition of the loss of local self-sufficiency networks in the wake of industrial development, market expansion and techno-scientifically enhanced technique. See, Wilkinson, Poverty and Progress: An Ecological Model of Economic Development, 174-76.

48 In retrospect, Marx seems to accuse ‘the political-economists’ of using the secular perspective they, and himself, had availed themselves of as ‘modern’ thinkers in order to express and justify the functional principles of ‘capitalism’, rather than to explain society in secular terms, as it affected human life.
of human action upon it. Marx charges subjectivity with the task of modernizing social conditions in order to realize species-being. For Marx, the class divisions and ways of interrelating wrought by ‘capitalism’ motivated subject-agents to create conditions for alienation-free relations. Thus, Marx could argue that all classes in the modernizing West were alienated from species-being, including the industrialists despite ostensibly benefiting from ‘capitalism’: “money dominated [their] own existence”, it caused “the pleasure-loving individual [to be] subordinated to the accumulating individual”.

Yet, Marx argued that the extremes of alienation suffered by an impoverished proletariat were the wellspring of agency that would universalize conditions through which humanity could realize species-being:

[The proletariat is] a sphere of society which claims no traditional status but only a human status … a sphere finally which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society, without therefore emancipating all these other spheres, [the proletariat is a sphere] which is, in short a total loss of humanity and which can only redeem itself by a total redemption of humanity.

In these respects, the notion of alienation from species-being seems to reach beyond the society that Marxist theory otherwise subjects to analysis as a totality determined by material productive forces. The concept of ‘species-being’ works as a mooring point, which tethers Marx’s analysis of subjectivity to an a priori claim. Arguably, to attain explanatory force, Marx’s thesis on alienation evokes a metaphysical motif. Species-being serves as a ‘universal constant’ in Marxist theory: it seems to form an arbiter that hangs over and binds inquiry to findings that imply subjectivity is either on a trajectory towards or away from achieving species-being. Marxist theory thus seems to unify analysis around a pre-theoretical claim that obscures what materialist analysis otherwise uncovers as the ‘total’ enframing of human-being in modernizing conditions.


51 Bottomore and Rubel, eds., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, 190. Taken from Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Italics in original.
What is of interest for the present thesis here is how the concept of ‘alienation from species-being’ appears to play itself out in Marx’s theory of “commodity fetishism”. It is with some trepidation that I move to destabilize the concept of commodity fetishism here. My aim is to move away from the connotations that seem attached to concept of ‘species-being’, but to maintain a commitment to critical materialism. For Marx, commodities ‘mystify’ and, so, obscure the alienating quality of the capitalistic social relations central to their production, distribution, and exchange:

The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as socio-natural properties of these things. Hence, [the commodity-form] also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. Through this substitution, the products of labour become commodities, sensuous things which are at the same time supra-sensible or social … [T]he commodity-form … is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves, which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. [T]his is the fetishism that attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.52

Arguably, this aspect of Marx’s work has often been the focus of critical scrutiny by both sympathetic and antagonistic authors, notably from within the West in the late-twentieth century. At an ‘empirical’ level, such engagements with Marx may draw on perceptions that the job of producing, distributing, exchanging, and consuming commodities is more significant within contemporary sociality than was the case in the nineteenth century. Alternately, sustained criticism of Marx’s thesis on commodity fetishism arises in classical and neoclassical economics-based theory, which argues that to conceive of commodity fetishism as obscuring ‘truly’ alienated relations is merely to privilege an objective observer, or to maintain a total ideology. Arguably, such criticisms of Marx’s thesis on commodity relations are important, because this mode of critique seems central to both the classical economics directly addressed by Marx, as well as to the

‘neoclassical’ economics theory said to be the main influence upon contemporary political neoliberalism.53

Discussion now turns to look at rational action theory-based criticisms of Marxist analyses of alienation and commodity fetishism in late-twentieth century North American societies through one example. However, I first reiterate my recognition of Marx’s injunction against such liberal economics-based theory as expressing the functional principles of modernization, rather than offering a framework for explaining modernity as a social condition. Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter’s work is instructive here, and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Heath and Potter argue that Marxist and ‘post’ Marxist analyses of ‘capitalism’ in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s began to be organized around recognition that the “the public at large might actually like capitalism, that they might genuinely want consumer goods … because the people have no deeper needs”. Heath and Potter suggest such reflections by Marxists led to an ever-deepening critique, which culminated in the “total ideology” of countercultural New Leftism that aimed to “attack oppression at a deeper level”.54

Here, there is a strange conceptual meeting point between certain strands of Marxism and rational action theory. As suggested, Marxist theory, moreover, the concept of alienation from species-being, might be said to reach beyond the social world it otherwise opens to analysis as a ‘material’ totality to attain explanatory force: it appears to unify explanation from ‘outside’. As such, Marxist theory vaults the critique of commoditization ‘away’ from the world, and towards transcendent metaphysics. Rational action theory seems to make a similar move, albeit negatively. Rational action theory seems to appeal to ‘common sense’ to establish a presupposition that is recycled into ‘fact’, only because it so clearly explains itself. Such analyses merely ignore any empirical information incommensurate with rational action so-defined. Hence, Heath and Potter suggest an Anglo-American “public at large” did not oppose capitalism in the late-twentieth century, not because it could not ‘see’ or ‘feel’ its own alienation or repression, but because


commodities are not fetishized. They merely deliver ‘maximal utility’ to ‘rational actors’ in given situations.55

If this is a fair representation, the notion of alienation from species-being effectively sublimes analyses of the social creating of commodities and of the forms of life that weave in and around commodity-relations, while rational action theory trivializes them. Arguably, the concepts of ‘species-being’ or of ‘rational action’ presume the inaccessible perspective of an immediate reality. It is as if the world ‘is’ for other than a single human in the act of ‘being’. A pre-theoretical ‘universal constant’ such as species-being or rational action unifies analyses because interceding upon what both approaches otherwise recognize to be the secular radicalization of human-being as a self-orienting and projecting, embodied ‘immediacy’ in modernizing (Western) conditions. In these respects, I suggest that Marxist and rational action theory might be said to comment upon, while operationalizing, what Dumont calls “modern artificialism”.56

Therefore, in conclusion, I want to link Marxist theory to my discussion of an ‘immediate’ self-orienting subjectivity. Marx’s materialism remains important because it opens to analysis the social-historical enframing of an ‘immediate’ self-orienting human-being as ‘subjectivity’ in Western modernity. Rational action theory, on the other hand, is unsuited to the present thesis’ argument because it tends towards ahistorical ascription of a given subjectivity: self-interest. Marx links social power and its justification to a secular dialectic: humans create and reproduce the world and, so, ‘themselves’. Marx redefines reflection upon the human condition as a secular endeavour because bringing into question the authoritative force of religion and tradition in a way that also makes it possible to question the authority of milieux that might draw upon these for authority or the structures and institutions that would sustain value criteria within society. By rejecting cosmology and belief as ‘false’, Marxist materialism might provide a lens that, alongside the notion of ‘modern artificialism’, undermines ‘idealism’ and ‘positivism’ as conceptual schema because revealing how, in social worlds, these come down to ‘innerworldly’ assertions of personal will-objectives and work to perpetuate existing patterns of monopoly over and access to wealth and power.

In these respects, moving away from the grounding that a notion of ‘species-being’ might provide for theory allows inquiry to shift from a focus upon commodities, and back to commodity

55 Heath and Potter premise their overall argument on the claim that action to perfect the market, not to curtail it, is the key requirement for achieving social justice and environmental care. Heath and Potter, Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can’t Be Jammed, 327-35.

relations. Commodities are things that humans create and reproduce — both as ‘material’ goods and ‘immaterial’ services, which through economic exchange, take on ‘material-like’ qualities — and, so, might be said to reveal something about patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses ‘going on’ amidst a material-physical context that encompasses in sum total. Rather than looking at commodities as “products of human labour in the abstract”, I want to approach them as material and ‘material-like’ things set within a matrix of social relations that can be seen as mobilizing, propagating, and perpetuating a dominant subjectivity.

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4 Individuation: mobilizing, perpetuating, and propagating subjectivity

This chapter brings the earlier discussion of materialism, individualism, modern artificialism, and subjectivity into limited engagement with aspects of Emile Durkheim’s and Max Weber’s sociology. The chapter does not aim at a comprehensive Durkheimian or Weberian theory of subjectivity but, rather, draws together the social-historical and more abstract methodological discussions in Chapters 2 and 3 in order to frame discussion in Part III of social conditions and theories of subjectivity. Initially, the chapter discusses Durkheim’s account of ‘individuation’ as a structured and institutionalized atomizing of subject-agents’ engagements in modernizing conditions. The chapter then discusses Weber’s suggestion that occupational domains in Western modernity seem to require relatively high levels of education and articulate dispositions, notably, in specialized technical or scientific ‘vocations’. Weber’s account of the political and cultural links between large-scale and complex organizational domains, capitalistic economies, and mass-democracy, is used here to discuss ‘vocation’ in terms of a particular formation of liberal individualism. Discussion links ‘individuation’ as a social condition to occupational vocation, in order to begin to describe how a self-orienting and projecting dominant subjectivity might be seen as affected by and, also, as affecting the formation of modernizing Western sociality.

Chapter 2 discussed Mukerji’s suggestion that subject-agents ‘could turn more frequently to things’, to describe how particular orders of skill, dispositions, techniques, and knowledges became increasingly important to social engagements across arenas central to modernization. Similarly, Mukerji’s research was used to focus upon how, amidst proliferating objects, ‘careful measurement and study’ of the world in more incremental and exacting terms also became important within modernizing social worlds. Mukerji’s claim that persons ‘became less dependent, either on other persons or on nature’ is here taken as a ‘phenomenological’ point. The emergence of modern ‘materialism’ meant that subject-agents needed to ‘reckon’ temporality in relatively precise
increments; ‘know’ materials as finite resources; ‘hold’ labour as a quantifiable thing; and, ‘recognize’ space as property or territory, for example, in order to engage within mediated ‘capitalistic’ markets, and with relatively de-personalized ‘government’ authorities. ‘Human-being’, in this argument, becomes enframed by a consistent impulsion to ‘orient’ and ‘create’ the self; to acquire skills, and dispositions; to ‘project’ and ‘assert’ the self, and assume techniques, or knowledges for social engagements that anchor ‘being’ human ‘here and now’.

Durkheim’s concept of ‘individuation’ helps to take up these issues in more detail. Durkheim is used here to emphasize how the secularizing qualities of Western modernization can be said to ‘go on’, regardless of whether or not secularism, or secularist political claims, may manifest, or whether religion or religious observance is important to sociality. Durkheim contrasts non-modern societies, said to ‘go on’ under the aegis of “some [cosmological] force communicated to it from without”, with structurally differentiated and institutionally segmented modern societies. As complex web-like interdependencies spring up, dissolving cosmological ordinance and localized self-sufficiency networks, modernization links together hitherto relatively independent productive domains. Such relative societal complexity means that diverse and ‘functionally' differentiated societal and relational domains can, of themselves, be seen as “co-ordinated and subordinated one to another … there is no longer anything about [modernity] that is not temporal and human”. For the present thesis, this means that the “web-like interdependencies” described by Durkheim constitute an encompassing and pervasive totalization of modernizing conditions.  

Central to this account of the wide-reaching specialization of tasks arising across the occupational domain as a condition of the “complex division of labour” is Durkheim’s thesis that sees modernity based around an all-pervasive “cult of individualism”. For Durkheim, this “cult of individualism” is manifest because modernization tends to individuate societal and relational engagements across almost all of society. Durkheim argues that the rise of an “individualist

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58 Durkheim goes on to link the co-ordinating and subordinating of the diverse arenas for sociality he identifies into an analytically delineable ‘functional unit’ by setting up a biological-zoological analogy with the contemporaneous ‘scientific’ concept of the organism. This step is not suited to the present thesis’ argument. E. Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society, trans. G. Simpson (London: The Free Press of Glencoe Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1933 [1911]), 181, 82.

59 Durkheim points to Adam Smith’s initial development of the concept to explain the breaking down of an overall productive project into discreet tasks with the aim of increasing profitability per commodity-unit, per labour-task, per hour, by a commodity producer, operating in a market economy. Durkheim takes up the concept and broadens its scope. For him, the division of labour extended beyond a single business organization. He used it to conceptualize a “general movement” of separation, specialization, differentiation, and diversification: the “division of labour is not peculiar to the economic world; we can observe its growing influence in the most varied fields of society. The political, administrative, and judicial … aesthetic and scientific functions [of societies] are growing more specialized” as modernization expands and extends its reach. Ibid., 39-40.
morality” accompanies a decline in the “collective conscience”. As such an ‘organic’ individualism emerges, it breaks down the ‘mechanical’ bonds that, through “collective conscience”, had hitherto worked to bind morality and ethical norms together. It might be said that the individuation and individualism identified by Durkheim combine to push moral decisions into a privatistic realm of autonomous subjective orientations-to-the-world:

[The collective conscience is displaced by] the human person, whose definition serves as the touchstone according to which good must be distinguished from evil … which is considered as sacred, in what one might call the ritual sense of the word. [I]Individualism has something of that transcendental majesty which the churches of all times have given to their Gods [and] is a religion of which man is, at the same time, both believer and God. [I]Individualism thus understood is the glorification not of the self, [which is no more than ‘natural’ egoism,] but of the individual in general. This cult of man [sic] has for its first dogma the autonomy of reason and for its first rite freedom of thought.60

Here, Durkheim seems to attribute the decline of social bonds held in place by the “collective conscience” to increasing individuation and individualism. However, by seeing the “cult of individualism” as the source of justification for reason and freedom, Durkheim might be seen to suggest that a ‘new’ quasi-religious motif manifests ‘from above’. Reason and freedom seem to go beyond individual’s ‘belief’ in them, and manifest as if these are an ineffable, pre-subjective, modern orthodoxy. As such, the present thesis leaves aside Durkheim’s social philosophical arguments and restricts discussion to the sociological, arguably, even demographic aspects of his work.

The concept of ‘individuation’ is discussed here in terms of the spread of intricate structural interdependencies and wide dispersal of segmentally differentiated production, distribution, and exchange activities that might be said to enframe a self-orienting and projecting subjectivity. The concept allows discussion of a particular autonomous and autarchic form of life, not only within occupational domains, but also beyond them, within the structured and institutionalized commodity markets so important to modernizing societies. A concept of ‘individuation-in-practice’ might make it possible to discuss the so-called ‘universal’ medium for exchange central to capitalistic relations as occluding historically ‘taken-as-natural’ differences and value criteria, and thrusting ‘responsibility’ for sustaining and defining these onto subjectivity itself.

It makes it possible to look at capitalistic relations based around money exchanges as if these allow for potential equivalences between vast arrays of different commodities to be valued because relations of this order shift the onus for exchanges from transcendent ‘principles’ to the matrices of idiosyncratic individual desires. In part, as a condition of their increasing importance to ongoing social formation, criteria for value in market exchanges — hitherto, largely dependent upon Divine Providence or aristocratic Right or, merely, less important to the job of creating and reproducing sociality — can be discussed in terms of unique and exemplary desires-in-action, brought to increasingly predominant markets by autonomous subject-agents.

To look at things in this way implies a nexus between value, effort, and a particular form of life. In this sense, subject-agents might be said to exert effort or, indeed, perform desires, before markets or — moreover, as market-based practices and discourses are seen to become more important — society-as-audience. Where money becomes a near ‘universal’ medium for exchange, markets effectively ‘guarantee’ the equal individuality of subject-agents, who might be said to ‘demonstrate’ exemplarity, through autonomous ‘projections’ of choice or effort. This is to suggest that, insofar as a universal medium for exchange facilitates value criteria, valuation itself might be seen to move from things-in-themselves to more permanently unstable criteria as things-in-society. Discussing the institutionalization of markets along these lines means, first, moving away from conceiving of production, distribution, and exchange solely in terms of labour-power: subject-agents might use effort and choice in consuming things, creating them, or disseminating them as information in ‘services’.

Where markets are seen in terms of self-orientation and self-projection, through idiosyncratic actions and ‘displays’ of individual exemplarity, they can appear premised upon an equalitarian ‘right’ to participate as a liberal individual. This approach brings into question how the increased importance of capitalistic markets to sociality could be seen in terms of commodities that mobilize, propagate, and perpetuate normative conditions that ordain effort and choice on individuated terms. Durkheim’s concept of ‘individuation’ helps to focus upon subjectivity in ways that emphasize how structured and institutionalized conditions might be seen in terms of patterns of access to and monopoly over normative practices and discourses amidst broader material-physical contexts that arise because subject-agents create and reproduce societies in particular ways.
I now want to move to discuss Weber’s theses on the intertwining of ‘equality’ and the “abstract regularity … of authority” in Western modernity, structured and institutionalized around capitalistic markets and ‘bureaucratic’ government administrations.\(^6\) I use Weber’s discussion of ‘vocation’ in modernizing conditions as a way into making some suggestions for a perspective upon the dynamics of social power that will allow me to recap my discussion so far and suggest the direction I want to take in Part II.

Weber describes ‘vocation’ as a form of labour, a specialization within specific occupational domains that requires relatively high levels of education and articulate dispositions and, so, is deeply individuated. For Weber, “personal experience [and] inner devotion to the task” are necessary for the “virtuoso-like mastery of single yet methodically integrated functions” of occupational vocation. Weber argues that vocation involves personal training with an aim. It involves a self-creating and asserting disposition, and is self-oriented action, projected into the world. Weber’s work helps to suggest how large-scale organizational practices and discourses frame a self-creating and asserting subjectivity, insofar as autonomous individual subject-agents ‘choose’ vocation in a specific ‘field’ of expertise.\(^6\)

For Weber, ‘vocation’ is the historical form that labour takes in within the commercially managed enterprises and bureaucratically administered governments that become central to the ongoing reproduction of structurally complex and institutionally differentiated modernizing societies. For Weber, vocation encompasses endeavours in science, technology, art, or law, and academic inquiry, as well as commercial, industrial, financial enterprise, and nation-state ‘public office’. Essential to the practice of vocation is the opening of subject-agents to continual assessment; by formal examination, informal peer review or, merely, in relation to ‘substantive’ organizational ends, such as profitability, or efficiency.\(^5\) In this sense, Weber’s account of


\(^5\) Weber discusses ‘bureaucracy’ as a phenomenon in many historical contexts, but makes clear that it takes on certain distinctive characteristics in modernizing ‘Occidental’ settings. See, Ibid., 204.

\(^5\) Of course, topical for Weber were the relatively well-educated and articulate ‘middle-class’ of intellectually and technically trained professionals of the 1910s and 1920, and who were numerically less well-represented in United States’ (and German) societies than is arguably the case in the 1990s and 2000s. I am suggesting that, in recent decades, the form and level of educational attainment and articulateness that Weber describes are important, and relatively commonplace, across Anglo-America, and that his insights offer a bridge between my dealings so far and current theory. Arguably, this is so when considering several decades of declining employment in unskilled occupations, the proliferation of semi-skilled service and highly skilled ‘new economy’ work requiring at least minimal education and articulateness, and high retention rates in senior high school, technical, and university level education courses. Similarly, when we consider contemporary geographical mobility, wide-reaching dissemination of information from ‘across the globe’ by communications media, and relatively
‘vocation’ offers a way into discussing how the “methodical ordering” of materials and methods within large and complex modern organizational domains might be said to enframe a self-asserting and creating, self-orienting and projecting ‘immediate’ subjectivity.

Most important for Weber is the way that ‘vocation’ is also tied intimately to the “abstract regularity of the execution of authority”. He describes how, amidst the scale and complexity of modern organizational domains, decision-making ‘flows’ along path-like channels, where at myriad junctures the holders of vocational ‘expertise’ apply specialist knowledges or skills in order to realize these decisions and, as such, express an abstract and remote authority. Weber argues that the key characteristic of commercial ‘management’ and government ‘bureaucracy’ is comprehensive ends-oriented formal and regularized authority:

Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction, and of material and personal costs … are raised to the optimum point. The ‘objective’ discharge of business primarily means a discharge of business [and governance] according to calculable rules and ‘without regard for persons’.64

Weber links the primacy of “the abstract regularity of the execution of authority” in modern commercial management and nation-state administration to historical shifts in the structural and institutional conditions within Western societies. For Weber, “bureaucratic structure goes hand in hand with the concentration of the material means of management … in the development of the big capitalist enterprise, [while] a corresponding process occurs in public organizations”, and emerges as a result of intertwining political and cultural change.65

For Weber, a necessary “but by no means decisive” condition, prompting the creation of large-scale bureaucratically administered modernity, is the universalizing of capitalistic “money-economies”. For Weber, a structural condition of the expansion of such ‘market’ economies is the displacement of corruption-prone and irregular ‘tithe’ or ‘in-kind’ levies by ‘taxation revenue’. This implies a broad-based structural shift toward the regularizing, formalizing, and abstracting of authority, which is removed from local patricians (as embodied persons) and concentrated in (the arbitrary institutions of) a taxing government. However, Weber argues the “sufficient condition” for such formalization and regularization — such ‘rationalization’ — is that “[b]ureaucracy

‘multicultural’ urban and suburban cultural environment, for example, it may be the case that Weber’s account of vocation remains relevant to contemporary inquiry. Ibid., 136, 44-45, 53, 229.

64 Ibid., 214-15, Italics in original.
65 Ibid., 206, 21, 24-25.
inevitably accompanies mass democracy”. Weber calls attention to how political and sub-political agitation for mass democracy, notably, for “equality before the law … makes a clean sweep of the feudal, patrimonial, and — at least in intent — the plutocratic privileges [of irregular] administration”.

To conclude, the chapter links ‘vocation’ as a key occupational form in modernizing Western societies to the impact of ‘mass-democracy’ upon the structured and institutionalized development of large-scale bureaucratically administered and formally organized capitalistic markets and nation-state governments. In these respects, Weber’s account of ‘vocation’ is used to open to discussion the kinds of conditions that subjectivity — seen as the form that human-being takes in modernizing (Western) conditions — might be said to create and reproduce as modernization. I am suggesting that the qualities that Weber attributes to ‘vocation’ — self-assertion, creativity, achieving ‘formal’ education, and maintaining articulate dispositions, for example — can be discussed in terms of subject-agents creating and reproducing a particular form of life, because deeply ‘individuated’ amidst relatively complex, extended, and abstracted social conditions and a peculiar cultural history.

Weber describes conditions for the emergence of bureaucratically administered nation-states and large-scale industrial-commercial enterprises and the vocational form of life central to them as concomitant with the wide-reaching social-historical desiccation of possibilities for religiously determined ways-of-life. For Weber, modernization is both ‘unstable’ and ‘risky’. On the one hand, the ordination of structured and institutional conditions around ‘instrumental rationality’ occludes possibilities that sociality — ‘brotherliness’ or ‘religious existence’, for example — predominates as an ‘ends-in-itself’. On the other hand, at a more intimate level, modern vocation evokes subjective crises of ‘meaninglessness’ or ‘disenchantment’. For Weber, ‘vocation’ calls for knowledges-about-the-world that rest in unquestioned assumptions which modern organizational ends encompass human effort within are ‘worthwhile’. It seems that, for Weber, the ‘intellectualization’ which complex, industrialized, abstractly administered, and ‘mass-democratic’ societies brings to subject-agents’ existences make ‘enchantment’ problematic:

[Increasing intellectualization [through vocation] and rationalization [through organizational practices] do not, therefore, indicate an increased and general knowledge of the conditions

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66 Ibid., 196, 204, 24, 98. Italics in original.
67 Ibid., 352-53.
under which one lives. It means something else, namely, the knowledge or belief that if one
but wished one could learn it at any time. Hence, it means that principally there are no
mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle,
master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no
longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did [those
non-moderns] … for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and
calculations perform the service. This is above all what intellectualization means.\textsuperscript{68}

Arguably, Weber’s suggestion that ‘disenchantment’ is a condition of the way that
modernity truncates ‘big’ questions as to the grounding of modern social worlds. This is because
opening human-being to the universe as a material-physical ‘knowable’ totality implies that
modernity ‘is’ reality; sociality ‘goes on’ because ‘what is’ is what it ‘ought’ to be. Weber helps to
describe modernizing conditions in terms of an ‘immediate’ subjectivity, implying the world is all
there is, but also opening possibilities that the world ‘is’ in particular ways, because humans create it
as such. Modernization may, or may not be ‘meaningless’ in relation to subject-agents’ lived
experiences of it, but for it to be seen analytically as creating ‘meaningless’ would, it is argued,
require a position that sees meaning in reality. Arguably, it is in the direction of increasing
‘meaninglessness’ in this sense that the Frankfurt School theorists have been said to take Weber.\textsuperscript{69}

Such a perspective might be said to take it that ‘meaninglessness’ manifests over only one
analytic register: that anchored in conceiving of reality as an order independent of human-being. In
another register, modernization renders reality a total ontic field of arbitrary and contingent
possible states of affairs, while remaining wedded to the inescapable condition that is human-
being: embodied in space, over time, and amongst others. Taking subjectivity to be the
‘immediacy’ of ‘being’ in reality, for the present thesis, means that situation-specific and only ever
ostensibly ‘true’ claims gain traction, which they do by virtue of particular patterns of access to and
monopoly over materials, practices and discourses. Hence, it might be fruitful to take Weber in a
slightly different direction. It might be possible that the conditions which Weber identifies with
modernization militate against the shared and communicative — norm-based and relational
condition — that human-being arguably ‘is’. This means approaching subjectivity, not so much as
a condition of ‘disenchantment’ — a consequence of totalitarian domination by ‘instrumental
rationality’ — but as a largely incoherent and messy pervasive ‘wholism’. Hence, the present thesis

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 339. Italics in original.

discusses subjectivity, not so much as “disenchanted and denuded of its mystical but inwardly genuine plasticity”, but as a condition that means inquiry requires two simultaneous perspectives. On the one hand, as subjectivity per se; the generalized condition that human-being takes in modernizing conditions. That is, where a generalized modern artificialism, amongst other things, means that individuals are seen as socialized embodied subject-agents that are called upon to self-orient amidst particular normative conditions and material-physical contextuality. And, on the other hand, a perspective that combines these two registers of inquiry in relation to the claim that human-being ‘is’ a norm-based and relational condition.

In Part II, discussion focuses upon the Anglo-American societies over recent decades, and engages with current social theory approaches to subjectivity in such conditions. Part III develops a framework for inquiry through engagements with current social anthropology and social theory, and develops an approach to test conditions within contemporary Anglo-American societies through a series of examples that are discussed in Part IV.

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II: Theory & Practice
This chapter looks at theories and practices of subjectivity, amidst sustained economic growth and Cold War, and an Anglo-American *realpolitik* conducted around calls for social welfare and civil rights in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The chapter discusses theories of social homogeneity and cultural conformity as explanations of subjectivity in such conditions, and evaluates these in relation to the present thesis’ aims. This chapter discusses theories and practices of subjectivity, especially, focusing upon the post-structuralism Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Jean Baudrillard. Deleze and Guattari are important because they make explicit links between their work and the ‘countercultural movements’ which became widespread in these decades. The chapter then considers Baudrillard’s theses, in the light of Gerry Gill’s critique of his work. Gill helps me to emphasize similarities between Deleuze and Guattari, and Baudrillard, and to suggest how such theory may ‘go too deep’. Discussion in this chapter informs a focal shift, in the next chapter, towards social conditions in the 1980s and 1990s and theories of postindustrialization, post-materialism, and counterculture.

Several commentators describe Anglo-American conditions across the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s in terms of a Long Upturn. These link Cold War geopolitics to strong nation-building and economic growth. Robert Brenner, for instance, describes how successive United States administrations and major corporate interests supported West European and North Asian reconstruction programs that stimulated global commodity and financial markets. Although used primarily in reference to economic conditions, the Long Upturn also provides a metaphor for public affairs in these decades. Organized around three major institutions — nation-state government, commercial enterprise, and labour movement-civil organizations — these concerns for national security and economic growth were parlayed into large-scale infrastructural
developments and the raising of loosely defined ‘living-standards’: the “Keynesian/welfare state compromise”. Hence, the motif of the Long Upturn also implies the proliferation of relatively available commoditized goods and services, ‘nuclear-familial’ housing, ‘full’ employment and a ‘living wage’, or ‘social security’, for example. Keynesian policy and welfare-statism were manifest amidst what Leslie Sklair, for example, suggests was a “qualitatively new globalizing phase in the 1960s … [where] for the first time in human history, the dominant economic system, capitalism, was sufficiently productive to provide a basic package of material possessions and services to almost everyone in the First World”.

While many influential political or labour movements and civil organizations may have sought to destabilize and, so, re-create sociality along collectivist lines, it seems that conditions in these decades centred on the establishing of basic material and civil rights within market-oriented liberal-democracies. Arguably, at the level of the polity, programs such as United States’ government commitments to “ending poverty and providing a social safety net for the disadvantaged” and “state-mandated expansion of civil rights in affirmative action programs in employment and education” seem peculiar to particular structural and institutional conditions. I am suggesting that conditions were such that economic-distributive claims, for a ‘living wage’, and cultural-recognition claims, for minority rights, could both gain purchase in the arena of the polity because the bearers of such claims were more or less important to ongoing sociality. Where Jackson Lears discusses a United States “organized to satisfy human desires … a picture of

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72 My argument does not enter into debates about the welfare-state compromise as a ‘dirty’ settlement by Western trades and labour unions, social democratic, and left-liberal political parties, which undermined efforts to universalise social justice and equal rights in a not-market-oriented modernity. Rather, helpful here is Nancy Fraser’s suggestion that some did seek “to institute an initial set of apparently affirmative redistributive reforms, including universalist social-welfare entitlements, steeply progressive taxation, macroeconomic policies aimed at creating full employment, a large non-market public sector, and significant public and/or collective ownership”. However, to claim that these concurred on whether or not “full reform would shift the balance of power from capital to labour and encourage transformation in the long term [would be] arguable, to be sure”. See, A. Blunden, "Subjectivity," in Hegel Summer School (Melbourne: 2005), 11-13. N. Fraser and A. Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, trans. J. Golb, J. Ingram, and C. Wilke (London: Verso Books, 2003), 80, 106. Fraser refers to a similar point, made by G. Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

abundance based around a surfeit of mass-produced, disposable commodities”.

I make two points. On the one hand, such commentary implies an extension of the potential to access an array of commoditized goods and services to formerly excluded subject-agents and, on the other hand, it implies an expansion of core arenas for those societal and relational engagements of key importance to social creation and reproduction, to encompass what are effectively ‘more’ subject-agents.

Gerhardt Schulze’s account of ‘affluence’ allows discussion of changing societal conditions in these decades. Schulze argues that affluence is not limited to personal wealth or to commodity consumption per se. Moreover, it implies conditions where almost “unlimited contingency of choice” becomes central to a range of societal and relational engagements. Schulze argues that the job of ’selecting' amidst a range of contingent possibilities displaces that of ‘influencing’ the world in conditions of affluence. As such, “the stresses of getting through life” require “situation management” and mean that “self-reflection, as a consequence of choosing between many alternatives [becomes] a permanent and ubiquitous condition”.

What is interesting for this thesis’ argument is that Schulze describes such wide-reaching structural and institutional conditions in terms of a shift from “situation-centred” to “subject-centred” norms. However, he makes clear that “this development is often misunderstood as a shift towards extreme selfishness”. Schulze’s discussion of conditions in and around which “uncertainty [over] not knowing the ends” displaces “the traditional uncertainty of not knowing the means”, allows me to bring back the concept of a dominant subjectivity. It suggests how — amidst Cold War and globalizing commodity and finance markets, domestic economic growth and political stability combined amidst norms based in liberal-democratic nationalist patriotism, freedom, and


75 Schulze seems to extend and elaborate upon John K. Galbraith’s argument that an Affluent Society extends particular material benefits to large numbers of persons, based on their participation in economic activities, while effectively restricting non-economic development and ignoring persons beyond areas important to economic growth. For Schulze, affluence is a generic term that applies to Western societies since the 1960s and 1970s. He contrasts these with non-affluent societies, where persons may possess vast wealth in relation to others in the same society, but would be simply rich individuals. Such wealth does not amount to affluence for Schulze, because these societies may be strictly authoritarian, lack 'transparent' administration, or include the arbitrary use of force in subjective domains of action. Jean Baudrillard also discusses Galbraith's concept in a similar way, suggesting that affluence becomes the benchmark or “integral logic” of Western sociality and, so, does not bear comparison with personal wealth in situations of scarcity or of violent repression. See, J. K. Galbraith, The Affluent Society (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958). See, J. Baudrillard, For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, trans. C Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981 [1972]), 20-33, 88-90. G. Schulze, "From Situations to Subjects: Moral Discourse in Transition," in Constructing the New Consumer Society, ed. P. Sulkunen, et al. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 39-43.

76 Schulze, "From Situations to Subjects: Moral Discourse in Transition,” 43, 49.
liberty — core arenas for sociality came to privilege atomized ‘personal’ autonomy and individuated sovereign ‘choice’. Arguably, looking at Anglo-American conditions in the late 1960s and into the 1970s allows suggestions about how self-realization through experiential desiring became central to an ‘immediate’ self-orienting and projecting, self-creating and asserting subjectivity.

The chapter now turns to look at Anglo-American conditions of relative affluence in terms of ‘suburbanization’ and ‘automobilization’. Such motifs may call to mind ‘the critique of mass-society’ writings. This critique focused upon relatively available personal-use commodities, large-scale ‘full-time’ employment in ‘big’ organizations, and expanded access to mass-education, ‘planned’ housing, and mass-entertainments. They were seen as products of Cold War geopolitics, Fordist mass-production, Taylorist standardization, and mass-communications techniques as conditioning widespread social homogeneity and cultural conformity.

In these decades, almost full employment and economic growth prompted relatively large domestic migration and international immigration. Primarily, Americans moved from the South to cities like Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia, while Caribbean and Indo-Asians migrated to Britain and, Southern Europeans and South-East Asians migrated to Australia and Canada. Amidst this Long Upturn, and combined with a demographically significant ‘baby-boom’, these population movements prompted large-scale private and public housing development projects across Anglo-American societies. In this sense, one facet of welfare-statism in these decades was that nation-state administrations undertook to promote the commercial development of tract housing, dormitory suburbs, and New Towns to house low-middle and middle income groups. In different ways, direct and indirect funding was used to develop ‘public’ housing for low-income groups. The United States’ government funded commercially owned and managed mass-housing Projects, the British government developed Council Estates, and the Australian States constructed Housing Commission suburbs to accommodate those on welfare or lower incomes. This de-urbanization and suburbanization of Anglo-American cities has been described as creating ‘donut’ cities, as middle and lower-middle income groups were encouraged to leave inner-cities for the new developments. The deracination of city centres in Chicago, Birmingham, and Sydney, for example, left single-use industrial-commercial ‘wastelands’ and, largely rundown Victorian-era housing for low-income and marginalized groups, while opening these areas to redevelopment as commercially viable ‘postindustrial’ spaces. Interestingly, in the United States, “by 1972 the Federal Housing Authority had helped eleven million families to buy their homes and another twenty-two million to improve theirs”, which for David Reynolds implies that “the suburbanization of America … owed much to federal policy – state socialism, if you like, for the middle classes”. Also important to note is that the Australian experience here differs markedly from that of the United States and Britain. Much public housing development on the fringes of Australian cities accommodated disenfranchised groups, in contrast with the markedly ‘deserving’ character of British New Towns and American commuter belts. Hence, the ‘ghettoization’ of an underclass in inner-city districts, such as Harlem or Brixton, for instance, took on a different character in the Australian setting, where ‘outer’ suburbs became the preserve of disenfranchised groups, while inner-cities were relatively quickly ‘gentrified’ by the late 1970s. Reynolds also makes explicit the link between suburbanization and automobilization. Mike Featherstone and John Urry present detailed critical analyses of conditions of ‘automobilization’, which they describe as a “self-organising autopoeitic, non-linear system, which links together cars, car-drivers, roads, petrol supplies … in an expanding relatively stable system which generates unintended consequences”. M. Peel, The Lowest Rung: Voices of Australia’s Poverty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), D. Reynolds, One World Divisible: A Global History since 1945, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 154-57. R. Sennett, Respect in a World of Inequality (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003). Reynolds, One World Divisible: A Global History since 1945, 156-7. See, also, Galbraith, The Affluent Society, 206-12. and, D. Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (Oxford: Blackwell Books, 1990), 83. See, M. Featherstone, "Automobilities an Introduction," Theory, Culture & Society 21, no. 4/5 (2004): 1-24, J. Urry, “The System of Automobility," Theory, Culture & Society 21, no. 4/5 (2004): 25-39.
However, as Chapter 4 suggests, analyses based in Left-Hegelian iterations of Weberian sociology are unsuited to my argument. Theorizing homogeneity and conformity as conditions of ‘false consciousness’ and ‘totalitarian domination’ excludes analysis itself from the sociality of which it is part. Arguably, such an approach totalizes its own critical ideal, and then objectifies sociality and social conditions in this image. Theories of ‘false consciousness’ seem to insulate analyses from self-reflection as part of the social field they discuss. Construing subjectivity as a condition of ‘totalitarian domination’ offers an extremely important critical perspective upon modernizing Western sociality, yet by attributing what is unjust or inhumane, for example, to an out-of-control ‘instrumental rationality’ may imply that theory and practice, the alternative to such oppression, arises from ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ sociality. Such an ‘alternative’ position seems to risks appealing from within the ‘immediacy’ of reality. It is anchored in an ideal, transcendent, or metaphysical claim that lies beyond the social world under discussion or practical action. As such, in practice, this approach may collapse back in upon itself. The world becomes a total affront to an atomized subjectivity that, because facing consistent threats of ‘false consciousness’, must constantly pursue a specious ‘authenticity’. Such theory seems to elude practical applicability because consistent need for comparison with a transcendent critical ideal licenses a subjectivity that overruns shared normative sociality in pursuit of ‘itself’.

As such, I want to focus upon suburbanization and automobilization as conditions for the formation of a dominant subjectivity that turns on self-realization and experiential desire-opportunities. The ‘green fields’ development of stand-alone ‘nuclear’ households, for example, loosen the boundeness to extended family, community, and place in these decades. At the same time, merit-based ‘full-time’ employment for cash-wages within formally administered and, often, large governmental or commercial organizations, and commuting by public transport or in mass-produced but ‘private’ vehicles, for example, appear to bring relative liberation from class or status group strictures, and responsibilities to extended kin or community groups. Expanded access to secondary, technical, and tertiary education, basic primary health-care and material welfare, for example, based on citizen ‘rights’, seemed to weaken the purchase of gender or ethnic bias.

Where Mike Featherstone and David Harvey find that a generation of “baby boomers”, unfamiliar with depression or wartime shortages, took on paid employment and “entered higher education in numbers higher than ever before” amidst a plethora of commoditized goods and
services, a relatively sustainable ‘youth’ culture emerged. Distance from local community and extended family, relative economic and personal independence, and expanded access to higher education also meant to some extent that the authority wielded by ‘moral custodians’ and the ‘village rumour mill’ became an anachronistic irrelevance for relatively many. In this sense, youth, women, and ethnic minority claims, as well as those of a generalized countercultural movement, may have manifest within conditions for a dominant subjectivity as the present thesis describes it. Numerous commentators discuss the proliferation and spread of such countercultural movements, beyond an extant bohemian fringe of artists and intellectuals, as beginning in the late 1960s and into the 1970s. The suggestion here is that the counterculture, as such, manifests through a Western individualism that is a situation-specific formation under the order of an ‘immediate’, self-orienting and projecting, self-creating and asserting subjectivity.

... ... ...

It is here that Deleuze and Guattari’s, and Baudrillard’s, work becomes relevant. Their work helps to highlight an epistemological division between Left-Hegelian critique and hermeneutics, and in the next chapter, uncritical ‘conservative’ and ‘rational action’ theories of subjectivity. In addition, their work expressly contributes to social practice in these decades and remains, in certain respects, influential upon Anglo-American social theory and cultural studies. Deleuze and Guattari describe the “task of schizoanalysis in relation to the revolutionary movements” of the Anglo-American counterculture and of Third World anti-colonialists. Looking at Deleuze and Guattari’s, and Baudrillard’s post-structuralism allows me to suggest how their theory may ‘go too deep’, and

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Deleuze and Guattari argue that “capital, meaning, value”, and human-being itself, are made inconsistent and dependent upon, while subjected to, constant re-evaluation amidst the processes and systemic forces of West-centric modernization. They describe modernization as an “Oedipal configuration” of global proportions. For them, “[t]he hour of Oedipus draws nigh” as a globalizing “Oedipal machine without organs” creates evermore “desire-production”, all the while “presupposing a fantastic repression of desiring-machines”. Modernization is an “amorphous continuum” where flows of “schizophrenic indifference” are in constant tension with a “paranoiac axiomatic” that “exorcises and repels” fluidity by constantly asserting “a unit of code”: “the flows are decoded and axiomatized [as code] by capitalism at the same time. Hence, schizophrenia is not the identity of capitalism, but on the contrary its difference, its divergence, and its death”.

It seems that Deleuze and Guattari base their theory and method in the comprehension that the creating and reproducing of sociality itself is the unstable and contingent, yet sole plane of significance for the human condition in modernity. Western society and culture, along with its epistemological premises, are merely contingent ‘plays’ within this globalizing “capitalistic machine”. It turns on “desire-production” following a Western template. Desires created in Western settings, and anchored in the ‘nuclear family’ — “the Daddy, Mommy, Me triangle” — are set loose upon the world in all their incipient contradictions by the “globalizing capitalist machine”. The ‘battle’ between a nascent subject, a ‘Me’ the desirer of ‘Mommy’, and an omniscient ‘Daddy’, the jealous oppressor of such desire, is always torn between achieving desires, or, becoming a replica of ‘Daddy’. In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari recognize theory that would ‘code’ the world in relation to a practical or ideal Truth would merely re-affirm ‘Oedipus’.

Extrapolating this schema into an account of globalizing, modernizing social relations creates serious empirical difficulties, which Deleuze and Guattari avoid in a specific way:

[T]he elements of production and antiproduction are not reproduced in the same way as humans themselves, but find in them a simple material that the form of economic reproduction preorganizes in a mode that is entirely distinct from the form this material has as human reproduction. Precisely because it is privatized, placed outside the field, the form of the material or the form of human reproduction begets people whom one can readily assume to be all equal to one

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81 Ibid., 3, 33, 240, 45-46, 51.
82 Ibid., 51-56.
another; but inside the field itself, the form of social economic reproduction has already preformed
the form of the material so as to engender … the capitalist … and the worker … etc.\textsuperscript{83}

The Freudian-Lacanian Oedipus complex, as social explanation, seems to become a pre-
theoretical, ‘pre-organizing’, ‘pre-forming’ force. It seems that, in order to overcome the empirical
difficulties of explaining sociality in terms of ‘Oedipus’, the authors naturalize the Freudian-
Lacanian psychological motif. Yet, naturalizing the Oedipus complex in this way risks the kind of
essentialism that confronts Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism. In these respects, Deleuze and Guattari
seem to explain how the “Oedipal configuration” that “creates desiring-machines” does so such
that the “individual persons” pre-formed within it become immaterial \textit{simulacra}:

[S]ocial persons are first of all, i.e., functions derived from the abstract quantities. They are nothing
more nor less than configurations or images produced by the … breaks-flows … of capitalism.
Private persons are therefore images of the second order, images \textit{of} images — that is, \textit{simulacra} that
are thus endowed with an aptitude for representing the first-order images of social-persons. Private
persons are an illusion, images \textit{of} images or derivatives of derivatives.\textsuperscript{84}

In these respects, Deleuze and Guattari’s argument closely resembles Baudrillard’s theory
of the “procession of the simulacra”. Baudrillard suggests that, in ‘late’ modernity, ‘simulation’
displaces domination through ‘false’ representation as the condition of ‘false’ consciousness:

Simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself over four successive phases of the
image:
- it is the reflection of a profound \textit{reality};
- it masks and denatures a profound \textit{reality};
- it masks the \textit{absence} of a profound \textit{reality};
- it has no relation to any \textit{reality} whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum.\textsuperscript{85}

Gerry Gill enters here to argue that the device of “the Code” in Baudrillard’s schema
seems to be at once a social creation, and “implies the existence of a pre-existing fixed hierarchical
structure”. At this point, similarities with Deleuze and Guattari’s work become explicit. Where

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 263. Italics in original.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 264. Italics in original.
Gill, along with John Hinkson and Geoff Sharp, for example, suggest that where “self-forming (identity-seeking) and self-integrating persons break out of parochial settings of the formation of individuals”, analyses must account for the framing of subjectivity in terms of a “society transformed by its products”. Both Deleuze and Guattari seem to insert a pre-theoretical claim into analyses. Following Gill, I suggest that this may be “a consequence of the inability to account for the way in which the determining code or structuring logic are themselves constituted by historical social processes”.

Following Gill’s critique of Baudrillard’s work here, to the chapter concludes by suggesting how it may be that such post-structuralism may lose sight of subjectivity by basing analyses in a formation of Western individualism. Gill suggests that Baudrillard’s theory implies method that “celebrates the joy of the moment of release from fixed or externally imposed meaning”, yet only does so by “naturalizing and celebrating … an abstract relation to an increasingly abstract society”. Gill criticizes Roland Barthes’ notion of the “writerly reader” and Jacques Derrida’s concept of “active interpretation” on the same bases. Gill allows it to be suggested that such post-structuralism naturalizes an individualism that is an aspect of a self-creating and asserting subjectivity in conditions of relative affluence, high levels of education, and articulate dispositions necessary for engagement in core areas of Anglo-American sociality in these decades. Sprunging from a “mode of subjectivity constituted in specifiable social and cultural forms”, such theory seems to take leave of material-physical and social-historical context to revel in an abstracted and only ostensible ‘de-centredness’.

Here, it becomes important to note that Deleuze and Guattari, and Baudrillard speak to groups beyond social theorists, psychologists, and associated intellectual practitioners in the early 1970s. For example, Foucault prefaces Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus, declaring it “a book of

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67 Gill, “Post-Structuralism as Ideology,” 72, 93.
ethics. [It] can best be read as an ‘art’ … the strategic adversary is … not only the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini … but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us”.

Similarly, Baudrillard closely associates his work with the “events of May ’68”, and with criticism of participation in ‘popular culture’ into the 1990s. Another soixante-huitard, Regis Debray suggests of the general countercultural ambiance that arose in the late 1960s that “this urban mobilization of the upwardly socially mobile” helped to transform mannerist Western bourgeois culture and subjectivity into an “agile, splintered civil society” made up of “entrepreneurs of the spirit”. For Debray, “many thought that … they were discovering China …, when in fact they were landing in California”.

It may be helpful to look at Deleuze and Guattari as representatives of a self-understanding exercised by Western hermeneutics at a particular social-historical conjuncture. Deleuze and Guattari’s extension of Jacques Lacan’s reading of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic concept of the Oedipal syndrome might also be said to follow Marx, in criticizing social conditions, and Friedrich Nietzsche, in criticizing Western hermeneutics as the epistemological support for globally hegemonic Western culture and society. Deleuze and Guattari appear to collapse Hegel’s idealist dialectic of subjectivity, in the form of an ‘anti-truth’ that is the product of this epistemological-historical trajectory, into Marx’s so-called inversion of the idealist dialectic, by casting the unfolding of this anti-truth as the consequence of practical-historical actions. However, by grafting Freud and Lacan onto their thesis, the co-authors seem bound to re-stage at a ‘psychologizing’ level the methodological problem that Godelier and Edmund Leach, in different ways, identify with Claude Levi-Strauss’ structuralism. That is, to expose something innate to ‘humanity’ or ‘human consciousness’ that would reveal the form and content of sociality is to expose ‘consciousness’ as ‘common’ in a way that human embodiment implies is a material-physical impossibility: it requires insight into a consciousness that Deleuze and Guattari, at least, argue is ‘unconscious’.


What is suggested here is that Deleuze and Guattari super-ordinate the historical and epistemological enframing of their theory, such that they make Western hermeneutic endeavour itself the psychological profile and, effectively, the template for the subjectivity they describe. Against this, the ways that Gill, Hinkson, Sharp, and Eagleton link countercultural individualism based in “liberation of the imagination from the restrictive structures of bourgeois life” to such post-structuralism are helpful. These allow me to raise certain problems that arise where theory springs from an immaterial Nietzschean *fantasia* of ‘de-centredness’ where “the notion of truth no longer functions.” Arguably, such theory ‘goes too deep’ because the move to theorize ‘persons as illusions’ or, as Baudrillard does, ‘simulacra’ makes Western hermeneutics itself — the social-historical task of understanding the world through textual interpretation — a heuristic device that pervades analyses of the social world and subjectivity.

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90 See, for example, Vattimo, who suggests Nietzsche argues that “since the notion of truth no longer exists, and foundation no longer functions … there can be no way out of modernity through a critical overcoming”, but that such conditions require a “nihilistic conclusion”. G. Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*, trans. J. R. Snyder (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988 [1985]), 167.
This chapter discusses the ‘postindustrialization’ and so-called ‘crises’ that arose in the 1970s and 1980s as conditions framing theories and practices of subjectivity. It first discusses how Daniel Bell approaches the “contradictions of capitalism”, and focuses upon his division between ‘puritanical’ and ‘hedonistic’ individualisms. It then revisits Heath and Potter’s retrospective analyses of Anglo-American culture and society since these decades. As Chapter 3 suggests, Heath and Potter use ‘rational actor’ theory to frame their analyses. My suggestion here is that Bell’s ‘traditional’ conservatism and Heath and Potter’s ‘rational actor’ theory raise similar methodological issues. That is, because based in appeals to ‘common sense’, these approaches seem ‘too shallow’ and endorse the assertion of personal will-objects in aid of existing forms of authority and power structures.

Several commentators discuss societal ‘crises’ that continued throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s across Anglo-America. These include international Currency Crises and Oil Crises, the wage-price spiral, mass-sackings, stagflation, recession, and global banking collapses. In addition, the fall of Saigon, Watergate, and the crisis of confidence arose in the United States and reverberated across the West. In Britain, the winter of discontent, three-day week, miner’s strike, and increasing homelessness, and in Australia, the Khemlani affair, the Dismissal, uranium exports, and collapse of commodity prices, for example, all seemingly contributed to such ‘crises’. Social theorists and philosophers also described conditions in these decades in terms of ‘crises’. Habermas and Irving Kristol theorized a “legitimation crisis” from two very different perspectives, while Hannah Arendt described ‘crises’ in terms of the modern nation-state republic.91

Amidst such conditions, Daniel Bell linked ongoing ‘crises’ to social-historical ‘postindustrialization’. Bell argued that ‘postindustrialization’ began in the 1960s, as the locus for Western sociality shifted, away from producing goods by transforming the material of the world through heavy industry, and towards developing, transferring, storing, processing, and applying information by managing knowledge about the world through a “service sector”. For Bell, the most important social and cultural condition of postindustrialization is the emergence of a technocratic or “knowledge class”. He argues that information-intensive “knowledge industries”, based on “technical and professional services, and on human services”, require relatively well-educated and articulate, technical, professional or, at least, semi-skilled, and skilled personnel and, consequently, less unskilled manual labour.\(^{92}\)

On the one hand, Bell argues that this knowledge class displaces industrial labourers as the group most important to ongoing Western sociality. On the other hand, he also argues that this relatively well-educated and articulate class undermines, but does not displace the “Establishment … the major political elite” as the group that he holds responsible to “temper policy … provide a source of judgment” and “create political authority” in Western liberal-democracies. Bell argues that the “primary institution” of postindustrial societies is the university, “where theoretical knowledge is codified and tested”, training is conducted, and “policy advice” developed. Bell makes clear that postindustrialization is predicated upon knowledge-based control and prediction of social processes, such as economic growth. As Giddens suggests, where “the multiplying complexities of modern social and economic organization [mean that] all forms of decision-making take on a technical character”, Bell argues that “the formation of policies concerning industry and the economy devolves into the hands of technical specialists”.\(^{93}\)

Importantly, Bell finds that knowledge workers are antipathetic to the “axial principle of economizing” around which such knowledge-based control and prediction is oriented. Bell seems to argue that, like industrialization, postindustrialization is “propelled by the dynamo of technology” and the “trajectory of the economic impulse”. He argues that the advent of

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93 Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism, 201-02.
postindustrialization marks a caesura as the groups central to it embrace “a hedonistic way of life whose promise is the voluptuous gratification of the lineaments of desire”. Bell seems to argue that the skills and dispositions for “knowledge work” facilitate understanding and action in the face of “failures of knowledge”, and a kind of ‘hubris’ that unleashes a “self-infinitizing [sic] spirit of the radical self”.94 This aspect of Bell’s thesis is interesting, because it allows me to take issue with his overall theoretical approach.

Bell synthesizes theses on asceticism and acquisitiveness in the work of Weber and Werner Sombart to describe the cultural orientations central to modern Western “capitalistic, bureaucratic, and technological industrialization”. “[A]sceticism … the principle of the economic realm … discipline, delayed gratification in order to save and invest, and commitment to work” constantly opposes “acquisitiveness … hedonism, pleasure as a way of life”, the principle of “the cultural realm”. For Bell, as the knowledge class proliferates, hedonism displaces “self-control and delayed gratification, purposeful behaviour in the pursuit of well-defined goals”, bringing “every individual … increasingly into conflict with the role requirements of the technocratic order”. In postindustrial conditions of mounting “cultural contradictions” overload mediation effected in a “political realm, which regulates conflict, and is governed by the axial principle of equality” in an orderly and regularized manner “tensions between bureaucracy and equality frame the social conflicts of the day”. For Bell, “modernity is individualism”, but postindustrialization unleashes a rapacious, amoral, vain, and self-obsessed individualism from social, religious, and cultural ‘ideologies’ that once sustained the industrial order. In postindustrial society, a deeply individuated ‘self’ renders such constraining ‘ideologies’ meaningless as the “unrestrained self” becomes “the sole point of reference for action”.95

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94 In these respects, it may be said that Bell negatively echoes Durkheim’s claims for the progressive potential for justice that is unleashed by individuation and the Western “cult of individualism” amidst industrialization. Where Durkheim saw such potential realized in intellectual support for the Dreyfusard movement, Bell argues that the dominant groups in postindustrial society undermine social stability and are a regressive force. Ibid., xvi, xxix, 198-99, Durkheim, "Individualism and the Intellectuals," 14-16, Giddens, The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies, 257.

95 Bell argues that such conditions bring “ideological exhaustion”. At one level, this “end of ideology” arises as ‘technocratic’ elites achieve relative personal wealth, attain knowledge and articulateness, and liberate themselves from mannerist Victorian cultural tropes. For Bell, academia, the fine arts, and an exceedingly liberal polity constitute arenas in which these elite reformulate the radical avant-gardism and ideology-crique central to Western industrial Modernism. The result is a generalised anti-ideological resistance to constraint and hedonistic obsession with “the inner emotions rather than the external world”, which tends to spread beyond these circles. At the other level, this “end of ideology” manifests as welfare statism, widespread affluence, and decreased working hours affect ‘popular’ allegiance to existentialist and humanist ethics, and encourage the eschewing of work, in favour of consumption, leisure, and pleasure. For Bell, postindustrial elites and a new bourgeoisie elevate bohemian posturing, self-indulgence, and artistic navel-gazing to the apogee of Western culture, while the masses descend into banausic avarice and pathetic obsession with the minutiae of personal emotions and private desires. In this sense, Bell’s thesis arguably resembles Kristol’s claim that a “legitimation crisis” begins to emerge in these decades as a “left-liberal intelligentsia” comes to exert undue influence over mass-media and social research. Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism, xxviii, xxiv, xxi-xxvii. See, for example, Bell, The End of Ideology, Esp. Ch. 13. and Kristol, "Keeping up with Ourselves."
Bell bases his thesis in pre-analytic bias towards the techno-economic efficiency criteria that he perceives to be intrinsic to the bureaucratic order, self-discipline, and delayed gratification which supported industrialization. It seems that Bell’s overall argument telescopes back, from the ‘crises’ he uncovers, through such arbitrarily naturalized ‘criteria’, to an *a priori* base in Judeo-Christian assumptions of fallen humanity. In a way, Bell negatively reposes the Hegelian motif of ‘diremption’ by re-presenting modernization as the descent of humanity towards universalized proletarianism. For him, in a civilization built by virtue of disciplined human effort within the Natural order, hedonistic pleasure-seeking and atomistic selfishness overtakes with the advent of postindustrialization, to render all that is worthwhile dysfunctional and meaningless.96

This brief discussion helps to suggest that Bell’s explanation appeals to a ‘past and tradition’ that can only ‘be’ for a single human in the act of ‘being’. Bell seems to suggest that the antinomian libertarianism and consumerist hedonism that he saw as enveloping sociality in these decades undermines technologically complex market-oriented liberal-democracies. Arguably, his approach implies the asserting of personal will-objectives over an ‘objectively’ true *reality*, such that these seek to reinforce historical-archetypal monopolies over practices and discourses. Here, the concept of ‘modern artificialism’ allows me to suggest that Bell seeks to coalesce ‘personal-will-objectives’ around appeals to an extant but decaying order of things. Bell’s method may imply justification for, but not explain how an ‘immediate’, self-orienting and projecting dominant subjectivity may manifest in situation-specific ways.

… … …

The chapter now uses this discussion to turn and briefly look at Thomas Frank’s account of Anglo-American cultural ‘coolness’ and “market populism”, and then look in more detail at Heath and Potter’s more theory-based work on cultural formation in late-twentieth-century Anglo-America. Frank discusses the cultural ramifications of nominally postindustrial conditions since the ‘end’ of the Long Upturn in the mid-1970s. Frank’s polemical current affairs commentary links a ‘coolness’ within North American marginal culture in the 1950s, and a more emphatic and

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widespread ‘countercultural’ rejection of ‘mainstream’ society in the 1970s to the flourishing of ‘consumerism’ across Anglo-American societies since then.97

The aim here is to link the cultural shifts that Frank describes as the emergence of a hedonistic and aesthetic consumer sovereign individualism to structural and institutional shifts within Anglo-American sociality. A number of economic commentators suggest that nation-state and globalizing market actions amidst the “major international economic crises” of the mid-1970s — such as President Nixon’s 1971 decision to end ‘convertibility’98 — “unarguably favoured international finance”, and affected a lasting “financialization of the international economy”. These also connect institutional actions over subsequent decades to the ongoing proliferation of Anglo-American “private consumption” and “personal indebtedness”. For example, Galbraith, Brenner, Gerard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, William Lazonick and Mary O’Sullivan suggest that decisions like the “Nixon shock”, while possibly “a combination of wishful thought and sheer recklessness”, effectively forced the “collapse of the Bretton Woods system of fixed international exchange rates”, and entrenched conditions inappropriate for Keynesian policy in ways that undermined the welfare statist ‘compromise’.99

Frank argues that such conditions framed a major shift in Anglo-American realpolitik, from ‘Great Society’ welfare statism to “stock market boosterism” and civility based in personal-use commodity consumption. Although Frank avoids theoretical discussion, I want to underline his point that the ‘culture wars’ are based in an inherently conservative elision that seeks to base


98 On August 15 of 1971, via live national television broadcast United States’ President Richard Nixon addressed “the American people”:

In recent weeks, the speculators have been waging all out war on the American dollar. Accordingly, I have directed the Secretary of State to take the action necessary to defend the dollar against the speculators … to suspend temporarily the convertibility of the dollar into gold or other reserve assets, except in amounts and on conditions determined to be in the interest of monetary stability and in the best interests of the United States.


appeals to the polity in calls to ‘common sense’ amidst a ‘soft’ labour market, especially affecting manual and unskilled workers. In these respects, Frank helps me to reiterate my concern with theoretical and methodological issues that arise where analyses seem ‘too shallow’. Because based in appeals to ‘common sense’, they re-present extant forms of authority and power structures.

What Frank describes as the awakening of major market-based organizations, especially, mass-media and advertising-promotional enterprises, to a more ‘full appreciation’ of hitherto derided or ignored groups means considering ‘secularization’ alongside a suggestion that a dominant subjectivity in Anglo-American settings seems ‘overblown’ or ‘puffed-up’. In this sense, what Frank describes as the array of consumption, leisure, marketing, and advertising organizations that became important to sociality since the 1960s may be the conditions of a relatively expanded societal materialism.

Before moving on, I digress briefly here to revisit Chapter 4’s suggestion that partial impetus for exchanges, and the evaluation criteria within them, can be seen to manifest around the idiosyncratic and exemplary desire and taste complexes that subject-agents create by ‘being’ within them as particular market-oriented social worlds. Arguably, where ostensibly ‘free and equal’ subject-agents make autonomous ‘choices’ and, in doing so ‘create’ markets, they also give them content. That is, they contribute what is or can be exchanged, and ‘value’ these through exchanges. In this sense, the market-based organizations that emerge might be said to link subject-agents’ idiosyncratic desires, as self-projecting ‘performances’, to markets-as-audiences, which ‘respond’ with ever-further ‘offers’. As commoditized exchanges come to encompass almost all aspects of the job of creating and reproducing Anglo-American societies, personal autonomous choices and indviduated autarchic desires become increasingly central to the creating and reproducing of sociality itself. It might be said that, in the late-twentieth century, under the rubric of liberal-democratic cultures emphasizing personal freedom and sovereignty, claims for social justice and civil equality could gain purchase within sociality — as welfare-state programs and civil rights — but because also readily recognizable as personal desires, were readily and frequently translated into market(able) private choices.


This is the central theme in Frank, The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism.
On the one hand, amidst the practices of individuation described in terms of suburbanization, the formation of culture and subjectivity was to some extent cut loose from mores and mannerisms once ordained by relatively proximate and influential predominant milieux. On the other hand, the remoteness and diffusion of milieux able to monopolize and access materials, practices, and discourses implies that more subject-agents became increasingly involved in acting, creating meanings, and modalizing things of importance to ongoing sociality: albeit, in abstraction or in mediated terms. Therefore, the present approach is, in some respects, venturing to broaden and take a different direction on Arjun Appadurai’s claim that the “critical cultural move of advanced capitalism” has been to condition “the fetishism of the consumer rather than of the commodity”.

The chapter now moves to discuss Heath and Potter’s work in more detail. Chapter 3 pointed to these co-authors’ claim that Anglo-American workers did not oppose ‘capitalism’ in the late-twentieth century, not because they could not recognize their own alienation, but because commodities are not fetishized. For Heath and Potter, commodities deliver maximal utility to ‘rational actors’ in a given situation. Like Frank, and the economists, Heath and Potter suggest that decades of economic growth, raised productivity, workplace flexibility, and techno-scientific advances have failed to sustain the levels of economic distribution characterizing the decades immediately before the mid-1970s. The “the money is being spent on private consumption goods”. The authors’ key argument is that which Frank discusses: ‘coolness’ and “countercultural rebellion” as central to the expansion of ‘consumerism’. For Heath and Potter, far from subverting ‘the system’, Western countercultures and the “countercultural ideal” are intrinsic to ‘capitalism’ and market-oriented liberal-democracy.

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104 Heath and Potter use Canadian statistics to argue that “GDP ... has doubled since the ’70s, [yet] the level of ‘basic needs’ poverty remains unchanged” into the 2000s. However, Duménil and Lévy, Pusey, and Hay, for example, discuss similar conditions in United States’, British, and Australian societies. These authors suggest that such mal-distribution has arisen, at least, as a partial consequence of shifts from policies aimed at macroeconomic stimuli, such as military development, nation-building projects, and welfare statism, to those aimed directly at ‘growing’ GDP (Gross Domestic Product) through ‘supply-side’ microeconomics and consumer spending across Anglo-America. See, for instance, Duménil and Lévy, *Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution*, 44-50, C. Hay, “The Normalising Role of Rationalist Assumptions in the Institutional Embedding of Neoliberalism,” *Economy and Society* 33, no. 4 (2004): 524-27, Heath and Potter, *Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can’t Be*
The authors suggest that counterculture and countercultural movements, together with “the idea of counterculture”, the “countercultural ideal”, and “countercultural thinking” spread across Anglo-America since the 1960s because shifts “in the popular imagination” have led to a normalization of Freudian theory, which is “for us like water to the fishes. It is barely regarded as a theory — something that could be proved right or wrong. It has become the lens through which we perceive all of reality. This is especially obvious in the United States”. They argue that, while the “idea of counterculture would probably never have taken hold had it not been for Freud”, what is more important is that Freudianism helped “the Marxian critique of mass society” to become “wildly popular”. The authors suggest that a lack of “revolutionary fervour” amongst the Western ‘masses’ meant that “leftist intellectuals” had to accept that “the workers might actually like capitalism” and, so, rethink ‘traditional’ Marxism in these decades.105

For the authors, Freudian theory combined with Marxist concepts of ‘alienation’ and ‘commodity fetishism’ contribute to normalizing a critical cultural orientation, whereby the “critique of mass society” and notion of consumerism, “a kind of conformist group think transmitted through the mass media” entered the popular imagination. They suggest that most Westerners accept the social norms necessary for oppressing the “animal instincts” that would otherwise run amok as “rampant desires”. However, counterculturalists buck this trend, and reject “any form of rule or regulation” because they believe that any social norms imply “creeping totalitarianism”. For the authors, the ‘normalization’ of Freudian and neo-Marxian concepts in countercultural thinking means that countercultural movements aim to “attack oppression at a deeper level”, while “counterculturalists aim to “liberate consciousness”. For the authors, “countercultural thinking” links personal authenticity to abandoning self-repression, and leads to an ever-receding series of rejections and contrarian oppositions; it means, “[p]erpetual cycles of obsolescence can be blamed on the system rather than be seen as a consequence of competition for a positional goods”.106

105 The authors argue that, in the 1960s, it was “widely understood” that a “culture of conformity” had been central to the rise of Nazism in Germany. They argue that widely publicised information, such as Arendt's Eichmann in Jerusalem and Stanley Milgram's Obedience and Individual Responsibility, “lent considerable plausibility to the parallels many people were drawing between fascism and the ‘mass society’”. Furthermore, the authors argue that, not only the “intellectual Left” but within the “popular imagination”, the “the net effect of anticommunist hysteria was to make people … anxious about creeping totalitarianism”. Heath and Potter, Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can't Be Jammed, 28-35, 199-200.

106 For the authors, this Freudian ‘lens’ implies a ‘popular imagination’ such that, humans have deep animal instincts that consistently seek satiation, regardless of others and the social world. Nevertheless, persons repress such egotistic desiring by force of Reason, manifest as self-control. The source of this control is internalization of social rules and cultural norms. Self-
It is here that I want to take issue with the authors’ method. While Heath and Potter develop a stinging rebuttal to New Left and postmodern theory that has, since the 1960s and 1970s, jettisoned commitments to material and social justice in favour of “liberating consciousness”, their overall case tends to blur an important analytic distinction between claims about social and cultural phenomena and speculations about intra-personal states. On the one hand, it seems that the authors identify “countercultural critique” with what Habermas or Eagleton, for example, explain as the impasse reached by Left-Hegelian philosophy in the twentieth century. Yet, on the other hand, while this aspect of the authors’ argument holds at the level of theory, their ‘critique of the critique of mass-society’ creates a methodological problem when transposed into claims about an idea or ideal that subject-agents may hold, or a belief or way of thinking that would inform actions.

The authors reduce the counterculture and countercultural thinking to the same thing. Heath and Potter’s method does not seem to distinguish between a socially enframed countercultural individualism and speculations about the intra-personal psychological states that so-designated counterculturalists may hold. Furthermore, an explanatory tension emerges where the authors transpose this methodological framework onto claims about countercultural individualism. The authors describe counterculture as the preserve of a particular group, yet also as something so generalized that it is “one of the most powerful forces driving consumerism for the past forty years”. On the one hand, the authors suggest that countercultural ideals are held by affluent, educated, and articulate, yet misguided elitists — student radicals, the acolytes of various popular subcultures, inner-city intellectuals, and the creative class, for example — that have “simply mistaken their own class interests for the general interest”. Yet, on the other hand:

control takes persons out of the animal kingdom and into the human world; but, sociability and ‘culture’ come at a price. This price is ‘repression’, which for Heath and Potter means that, it is “widely understood” in the “popular imagination” that the “human mind in society is like a pressure cooker after the lid has been clamped on”. The authors describe fads, such as beatniks, hippies, Rastafarians, punks, rap’ music, and skateboarding, yet, oddly, also include urban ‘creative types’, SUV (Sports Utility Vehicle) drivers, IKEA shoppers, technology ‘geeks’, and the ‘Unabomber’ as examples of countercultures. 

Hence, the authors draw an epistemic thread that links the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Romantics, Marx and Freud, Gyorgy Lukács, Antonio Gramsci and “ideology critique” in the Critical Theory of Herbert Marcuse, Theodore Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, populist works by Theodore Roszak and Charles A. Reich, and the environmentalism of Murray Bookchin and Buckminster Fuller, for example, to more recent work by Naomi Klein, Noam Chomsky, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, and agent provocateur Michael Moore, as well as anti-corporate globalization theory, and the ‘slow food movement’. }

The authors argue that “it is hard to avoid the impression that the so-called critique of consumerism is just thinly veiled snobbery, or worse, puritanism”. Heath and Potter, Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can’t Be Jammed, 9, 22, 28, 49-51, 62, 98, 104-08, 205-08, 50, 93-94, 328-31.
There seems to be something pathological about consumption habits in our society. We are obsessed with acquiring more and more consumer goods, even though this leads us to make unreasonable sacrifices in other areas of life. It is this compulsion that critics refer to as ‘consumerism’.\footnote{109}

The authors seem to argue that ‘consumerism’ is a universal condition. This implies that counterculture is merely a pathological expression of this compulsion, which “has for decades been the driving force of the marketplace … it’s the nonconformists, not the conformists, who are driving consumer spending”.\footnote{110}

Suggesting that ‘consumerism’ is a natural tendency makes the task of analysis a matter of delineating between aberrant pathological and acceptable ‘common sense’ forms of this ‘compulsion’. Arguably, the authors make this the objective of their inquiry. Based in what I suggest is a model of the critique of Left-Hegelianism, the authors recognize that countercultural “psychologically deep explanations are not better by virtue of their depth” and move to develop a “far more simple explanation” of countercultural individualism based in ‘rational action’ theory. The authors combine Thomas Hobbes’ concept of “rational egoism” and John Rawls’ theory of “cosmopolitan pluralism” to argue that, “It is simply a lack of trust” that causes “undesirable outcomes” in society, such as rampant consumerism, because these are “produced through a rational [individual, small-group, or nation-state] response to a situation characterized by distrust and insecurity”.\footnote{111}

Heath and Potter operationalize their approach through Thorstein Veblen’s theory of “conspicuous consumption” and Bourdieu’s concept of ‘distinction’. This is important because Bourdieu’s work is discussed in detail later. What Heath and Potter describe as ‘distinction’, however — “it involves separating out that which is superior from that which is inferior” — does

\footnote{109} The authors argue that this is so because, “Cool has essentially replaced class as the central determinant of social prestige. Unlike so-called bourgeois values, which are basically an imitation of feudal social norms, hip [countercultural] values are a direct expression of the spirit of capitalism”, and cite Richard Florida’s claim that counterculture “is a misnomer, since all it refers to is pop culture”. However, while stretching the content that counterculture as a definition encompasses, suggesting that ‘we are obsessed’ pathological consumers adopting cool or countercultural values seems to undermine the essential formal point that what is subject to critique as counterculture is ‘counter’ to something. Ibid., 101, 03, 99-202.


\footnote{111} Heath and Potter suggest that, “Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar”. Hence, they argue that explanations and ‘solutions’ to ‘consumerism’ do “not need to transform human consciousness … all we need to do is realign people’s incentives … the problem and the solution arise at a strictly institutional level. [It] simply requires the application of enough force to align individual incentives with the common good”. Italics in original. Heath and Potter, Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can’t Be Jammed, 83, 84, 87-89.
not seem compatible with Bourdieu’s overall argument. Heath and Potter argue that “Bourdieu’s analysis of aesthetic judgement shows how naïve it is to think we can opt out of consumerism, and avoid the problems that Veblen diagnosed, simply by avoiding status-seeking and envy”, because, like the (Left-Hegelian) “countercultural critique” that implies ‘opting out’, much social theory is also based in similar and unnecessarily ‘deep’ explanation.¹¹²

For Bourdieu, the concept of ‘distinction’ works as a boundary condition that enframes human-being; it implies that embodied subject-agents pre-reflexively take on and enact a ‘feel for the game’ within a contingent social field that is of a particular social-historical order. Therefore, in contrast with Heath and Potter’s claim for it, Bourdieu’s ‘distinction’ does not ‘simply’ imply that status seeking, envy, or competitive consumption are ‘human nature’, but that “the ideology of natural taste” is a condition of particular situations that may or may not manifest. For Bourdieu, ‘distinction’ is an affective, situation-specific ‘rationality’ that occludes “the arbitrariness of rationalized force”. It is not reducible to ‘taste’; more so, ‘distinction’ frames the aestheticized ideologies of ‘natural taste’. Further, Bourdieu categorically rejects as “fallacies … the rational action theory, [which] holds that the agent acts freely, consciously and … ‘with full understanding’, the action being a calculation of chances and profits”. Contra Heath and Potter, Bourdieu wants to challenge conditions that mean channeling an omnipresent ‘arbitrariness’ in specific ways. That is, ways that make the ostensible ‘rationality’ that underlies ‘judgements of taste’ almost the only alternative for subject-agents bound to engage within sociality of a particular order.¹¹³

How can it be that Heath and Potter’s approach to societal and relational dynamics based rational action theory naturalizes an arbitrary and ideal situation-specific individualism? I am suggesting that a naturalized ideal constitutes the point from which the authors delineate between aberrant pathological and acceptable ‘common sense’ forms of the ‘compulsion to consume’. In this sense, the authors appear to presuppose a psychological profile, and explain from it. The authors put forward a logical presupposition — all persons are rational actors — and allow this to bleed into their analyses as if it were an empirical claim. This means that the authors’ analyses

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¹¹² Heath and Potter go further here, and argue that critical social theory and “the left” refuse to accept what they present as Veblen’s thesis that “social hierarchies are actively maintained by competitive consumption among all classes in society.” Ibid., 116-17, 23-26, Italics in original.

become a speculative account of the degree to which an ‘alternative’ countercultural pathology digresses from a naturalized ‘mainstream’ and, so, rational state.

It begins to become clear that Heath and Potter’s method implies that the spread of counterculture undermines the standards of distributive justice upheld until the mid-1970s; not because it bolsters consumerism, but because such faux ‘alternatives’ contravene the nature-like rationality of an idealized market-oriented liberal-democracy. Hence, the authors’ ‘more simple explanation’ seems to reiterate the functional principles of market-oriented liberal-democracies based in the abstract perspective of an idealized beneficiary of sociality in this form. Arguably, the authors’ substantive definition of counterculture, as heightened or amplified consumerism, rests in a transcendent concept of rational action. Yet, in order to rescue claims about the social world from the transcendent realm, Heath and Potter re-insert rationality into their argument by concretizing it: it becomes an over-arching psychological principle and the ‘common sense’ template for assessing ‘the order of things’. Hence, in their next move, Heath and Potter call for the “application of enough force to align individual incentives with the common good”, while defining ‘alignment with the common good’ as action to “perfect the market”.

Heath and Potter radicalize what I describe as Bell’s ‘traditional’ conservatism; the iterating or asserting of a historical-archetypal ‘past and tradition’ that, only ever anchored in a single personal will-objective, is limited to the reinforcing of particular monopolies over practice and discourse. Heath and Potter’s thesis, thus, seems to constitute a ‘neo’ conservative idealization of a utilitarian ‘future-possible’. Calling upon the concept of ‘modern artificialism’ here allows me to suggest that their approach is based in an appeal to the concentrating in personal will-objectives of an extant order of things, such that asserting individual ‘being’ over the world is justifiable because supporting the ‘rationality’ of extant monopolies over materials, practices and discourses. Calls for “the application of force to align incentives” as a necessary measure to “perfect markets” might also be said to imply demands for ‘the survival of the fittest’ under the ‘rule of the strong’.

Chapter 5 focused upon theories of subjectivity that may be said to ‘go too deep’. This chapter has focused upon theories that end up being ‘too shallow’. On the one hand, theory and

114 Indeed, the authors argue that, “One need only glance at an introductory economics textbook to see what an ideal market would look like”. Heath and Potter, Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can’t Be Jammed, 84, 334.

115 Indeed, the authors argue that the problem of achieving and sustaining social justice does “not need to transform human consciousness … all we need to do is realign people’s incentives … the problem and the solution arise at a strictly institutional level. [It] simply requires the application of enough force to align individual incentives with the common good”. Heath and Potter seem to be suggesting that critical inquiry must accept that received liberal concepts of ‘freedom and liberty’ represent an apotheosis, and demand not critical reflection upon their manifestations, but simply more “informed choices”. Ibid., 83, 84, 87-89.
method that would ‘go too deep’ might support an ‘alternative’ to totalitarian domination. However, because such alternatives seem based in pre-theoretical claims to situation-specific notions of what an emancipated subjectivity would look like, they appear bound to ongoing threats of ‘false consciousness’: these set subjectivity off in pursuit of an always-already unattainable ‘authenticity’. Otherwise, such ‘deep’ approaches may super-ordinate the historical and epistemological enframing of theory itself, to a point where subjectivity becomes a similarly elusive condition. In this case, theory loses critical perspective because it anchors subjectivity in an unsustainable ‘dream of flying’ that is the expression of a contingent situation-specific form of life: cast between nihilistic self-destruction and ‘shameful’ inability to self-destruct. On the other hand, this chapter discusses theory may be seen as ‘too shallow’; resting in ‘common sense’ assurances that the world is of a Natural order. Such ‘shallow’ theory springs from an arbitrary pre-supposition — based in the ‘rational action’ of an archetypal ‘past-heroic’, or a future-creating ‘strong-and-virtuous’ ideal — yet transforms this into an empirical condition. The analyses that result seem bound to delineate between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ subjectivities based in such pre-suppositions. It implies that such approaches ultimately and indiscriminately reinforce existing social orders.

The next two chapters focus upon governmentality and posttraditional theories and practices of subjectivity in conditions that arose in the 1980s and 1990s, and conclude Part II. The chapters in Part III summarize the discussion so far, and set out research problems that allow development of a framework for the inquiry.

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This chapter discusses social conditions in the 1980s and 1990s and ‘governmentality’ approaches to the theory and practice of subjectivity in the light of these. Initially, the chapter engages public affairs commentary and political-economics research that describe wide-reaching structural and institutional change in these decades as processes of ‘financialization’ and ‘neo-liberalization’. These engagements suggest how a concept of ‘core arenas for sociality’ may delineate some of the social, cultural, political, or economic practices and discourses important to the ongoing job of creating and reproducing contemporary Anglo-American societies. It helps in focusing upon conditions where ‘market-building statism’, expanded service, info-tech, and personal-use commodities industries, as well as micro-credit coincide to engender an ostensibly ‘new’ or ‘creative economy’. Setting out a notion of ‘core arenas for sociality’ also frames the approach in Part III to societal and relational dynamics by providing a basis for linking theories of social power and a dominant subjectivity.

Governmentality theory offered a range of critical insights into such conditions in the Anglo-American societies in the 1980s and 1990s. On the one hand, governmentality theory offers a valuable critical perspective upon contemporary ‘entrepreneurial’ or ‘consumer’ subjectivity. Analyses using governmentality theory also offer a platform for a critique of the ways that partial withdrawal of nation-state support for welfare and techno-scientific research, in favour of market-driven ‘solutions’ may work to strip-back subjectivity to a condition of ‘bare life’. On the other hand, however, I want to highlight a deep-seated methodological issue in governmentality theory. In the light of Dumont’s indirect, and Nancy Fraser’s direct critical commentary on governmentality theory, this chapter suggests how such theory seems to imbricate into analyses a subjectivity bound to ‘overcome’ the increasingly complex, diffuse, insidious, or abstract power formations it identifies as created by globalizing modernity. Arguably, the subjectivity that emerges is bound to seek mastery over reality through the assertion of personal will-objectives, in a way that seems to disqualify arguments that human-being is a shared and communicative condition.

Several commentators describe Anglo-American nation-state and market policy shifts as bringing an end to the welfare state ‘compromise’ amidst the global financial ‘crises’ and domestic
economic ‘stagnation’ of the 1970s and 1980s. These commentators argue that such institutional responses to a range of ‘crises’ were of a specific order. Such authors include Galbraith, who denigrates United States policymakers in the 1970s and early 1980s for adopting ‘monetarism’ and, later, using the “Laffer Curve”, accompanied by rhetoric in the realms of the polity, to justify large-scale tax cuts on upper incomes as boosting private consumption and provoking a “trickle-down economy”. Similarly, Colin Hay suggests how an array of policy recommendations, media releases, and research papers — linking stagflation to market-disequilibrium, low incentives, and a generalized unwillingness to ‘maximize utility’ through individual effort and entrepreneurialism — worked to “normalize neo-liberal discourses” of a similar order in Britain. In addition, Michael Pusey and Steve Keen argue that near pan-institutional acceptance of “neoclassical economics theory” in Australian government, public services, and universities conditioned moves away from nation-building welfare-statism and towards market-building statism.116

These writers link globalizing structural conditions to ‘neo-liberal’ policy in particular ways. They explain such shifts as the combined effects of wide-reaching and long-term ‘financialization’ and a “neo-liberalization of the economy”. They describe how major business advocacy groups, think-tanks, and university faculties, acted upon such ‘crises’ using a specific set of claims-to-knowledge. Such organizations entered the discourses of domestic realpolitik amidst conditions of high inflation and unemployment, as well as a broad cultural shifts away from experimental, ‘alternative’, marginal, or critical radicalism and towards ‘conservatism’. Making recommendations to Anglo-American political parties, social movements, and the general public, such organizations are said to have called for “economically responsible government”, “economic rationalism”, marketization, or privatization, arguing There is No Alternative!.117


117 Stephen Hill describes how, in Britain, ‘Thatcherism’ turned on “the easing of many restrictions on the use and transfer of property; the freeing-up of markets by the withdrawal of the state from the economy and the use of state power to weaken producer cartels, especially trades unions, in the labour market; the transfer of public property into private ownership; the endorsement of greater material inequality as reflecting the different market capacities of individuals; the end of [nation-state] commitment to full employment as the major goal of economic management; and the reduced scope of public welfare … [often involving] liberal market freedoms in economic life and illiberal restrictions on personal and civic freedoms in the social
Authors describing public affairs in these decades may point to the ‘fallout’ from United States’ President James Carter’s 1979 ‘Crisis of Confidence’ speech. Arguably, these offer a prescient motif for Anglo-American realpolitik in conditions of neo-liberalization. Carter used national television to “blame the despair into which he believed the nation had fallen into … [on] a sense of national malaise due to crushing materialism … American excess consumption and self-absorption”. However, as Lears and James Gilbert suggest, amidst “high interest rates, inflation, and high unemployment – plus the Iranian hostage drama”, Carter’s call for “ecologically grounded sacrifice” was readily assimilated to “an un-American respect for limits” by “a disparate combination of Reaganite boosters, social-cultural historians, and postmodern critics”. Eleanor Townsley describes how, in a similar manner, reaction to ‘crises’ of increasing poverty and welfare dependency came to be expressed as problems of “diminished responsibility” and “morally misguided welfare policies”. She cites subsequent President Ronald Reagan’s 1988 State of the Union Address. In that address, he argued that welfarist “government created a poverty trap that wreaks havoc on the very support system the poor need to lift themselves out of poverty — the family”. Townsley and others suggest there is a shift in the rhetoric of the polity here, away from support for nation-building, welfare statism, and collective action, and toward claims that “human ingenuity would render energy sources and other natural resources literally inexhaustible” and “assert[ions] of the moral superiority of the independence of individuals from reliance on others”.

Such commentary on Anglo-American public affairs is congruent with more theory-based discussions by Habermas, Foucault, Wendy Brown, or Susan George, for example. These theorists situate such rhetoric within the orbit of a co-habitation between neo-liberals and neo-conservatives. Habermas, for example, argues that groups advocating ‘personal responsibility’ and a ‘return to morals’ refused or elided links between material and social relations and ongoing structural and institutional ‘crises’. That is, as “economic and administrative imperatives … which monetarize and bureaucratize growing dimensions of life, and increasingly transform relationships into commodities and objects of administration”, the ‘moral crusaders’ of the 1980s and 1990s


blamed an expansive and spectral culture of ‘subversion’; and irresponsible, decadent, and amoral people.119

“Populist conservatism”, these theorists suggest, became a pervasive theme in the the polity of the 1980s, and presages what Frank terms “market populism”. Frank’s metaphor points to how, amidst generally buoyant financial markets and asset of ‘new’ autonomy-in-the-workforce principles, a combination of ultra-liberal ‘entrepreneurialism’ and moralistic calls for ‘individual self-reliance’ entered the social field, often via mass-communications media, corporate and investment institutions, and intellectuals enthusiastically “celebrating the New Economy”. However, while Frank’s term offers an intuitively plausible metaphor for Anglo-American domestic realpolitik in these decades, I want to pause and consider structural and institutional conditions in more detail. This allow clarification of the concept of ‘core societal arenas’ and to describe conditions in which governmentality theories approached subjectivity in these decades.120

As such, these authors’ work suggests how neo-liberalization, as an institutional formation, and financialization, as a structural condition, seem to intertwine to affect the kinds of acts, meanings, and things of central importance to ongoing sociality in the 1980s and 1990s. Political-economists Brenner, Duménil and Lévy, and Greta Krippner, for example, link declining profitability in manufacturing and non-financial industries to a “large-scale move into finance and speculation” amidst the ‘crises’ of the 1970s and early 1980s. These authors seem to extend David Harvey’s suggestion that, in part, such global ‘crises’ were a condition of “the large-scale re-orientation of whole organizational domains” as multinational corporations sought to realign and integrate financial transactions across and between nation-states using relatively complex technologies, especially, communications and information-data processing tools and techniques.121


120 Frank argues that the “central premise of ‘market populism’ [in that] in addition to being mediums for exchange, markets are mediums of consent. Markets express the popular will more articulately and more meaningfully than do mere elections. Markets confer democratic legitimacy”. Frank, One Market under God: Extremist Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy, xiv.

Duménil and Lévy, Brenner, and Krippner argue that such techno-informatic developments worked to stimulate a process of ‘financialization’, whereby “activities relating to the provision (or transfer) of liquid capital in expectation of future interest, dividends, or capital gains” arose. They describe how financialization in the ‘global economy’ undermined the Bretton Woods Treaty and “the welfare state compromise” in Anglo-American contexts. In addition, they argue financialization lends itself to neoclassical economic management systems and — because turning on the ‘fluidity’ and ‘instantaneity’ afforded by techno-informatic and communicative development — augurs against activities that rely on plant, material, and labour assets or geographical fixity. However, Krippner stresses that financialization does not “represent an entirely novel phase of capitalism”, but rather a series of major structural changes combined with institutional responses of a particular order.122

Lazonick and O’Sullivan, and Ewald Engelen, for example, describe how since the 1970s “financial deregulation of the American economy” continues to be based in “an idealized … model of shareholder activism and liquid equity markets”, which began “as part and parcel of the Reaganite and Thatcherite ‘revolutions’”. Such arguments imply that globalizing processes of financialization and Anglo-American reform-centred neo-liberalization combined to foster wide-reaching shifts in the organizational practices of market institutions. “Retain and reinvest strategies” — based in training and retaining highly skilled employees, improving and upgrading plant and equipment while funding research and development — fell out of favour with major market-based organizations. In place of these, especially in the United States and Britain, corporations began to deploy “downsize and distribute” practices. These aim to reduce workforces, outsource production, research, and development, carry out “asset stripping” to “enhance market capitalization” and involve frequent borrowing for speculative investments to “maximize shareholder value”:

Under the new regime top managers downsize the corporations they control, with a particular emphasize on cutting the size of the labour forces they employ, in an attempt to increase … market capitalization … [and] return on equity. [The contention is] that when the corporate enterprise maximizes shareholder value, everyone — workers, consumers, suppliers, and distributors — will,

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What concerns my argument here is Krippner's claim that, because “accumulation is now occurring increasingly through financial channels”, the combination of financialization and policy oriented to “maximizing shareholder value” continue to condition a broad “dissemination of control” over financial instruments across Anglo-American societies. However, Krippner also makes clear such ‘dissemination’ is restricted. This is supported by Duménil and Lévy, who describe a generalized movement of personal incomes and assets held by “upper salaried classes … the ‘working rich’, ‘share-owning workers’ [and] high-income households” into “the orbit of the financial sector”. They argue that where ownership or control over financial assets is ‘disseminated’ as such, it brings a re-distributing of wealth to upper and high middle-income groups and away from low middle and low-income groups, and the tax-base in general. These authors argue that this represents a new “top-level compromise” which has arisen in place of the “welfare-state compromise”.\footnote{That is, towards a “diffusion of financial assets [such as] mutual, trust, insurance, and pension funds, stock options, capital gains, financial partnership income, interest, and dividends”. As of April 2006, United States Federal Reserve measures of ‘household debt’, as a percentage of ‘disposable income’ was at 16 percent, “a historically high figure”. Similarly, The Bank of England declared in early 2006 that “the amount of personal debt in Britain ha broken through the £1 trillion mark … [while] personal insolvency filings in the first quarter of 2006 increased 73 percent from a year earlier”. Duménil and Lévy, Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution, 79-85, 139, 211, L. Elliott, "Duff Hand Means Tough Call," The Guardian Weekly, March 31- April 6 2006, 12. R. Brenner, “The Boom and the Bubble,” New Left Review II, no. 6 (2000): 29, Krippner, "The Financialization of the American Economy," 176, 99, 202, Lazonick and O'Sullivan, "Maximizing Shareholder Value: A New Ideology for Corporate Governance," 21-23, A. Seager, "A Million Debt-Ridden Britons Face Threat of Bankruptcy," The Guardian Weekly, May 26-Jun 1 2006, 26.}

Duménil and Lévy’s, Krippner’s, and Lazonick and O’Sullivan’s political-economic commentary provides a bridge into more social-theoretical analyses. To take a step further, I bring in economic sociology by Robert Manning and Robin Blackburn. Manning argues that the nation-state, corporate, and private ‘indebtedness’ which intertwining financialization and neoliberalization foster implies, especially in the United States, “national economic growth has become inextricably linked with household spending … produc[ing] increasingly sophisticated mass marketing campaigns for consumer products as well as personal credit”. For Blackburn, such structural and institutional conditions mean, in recent decades, “Finance houses have teamed up with retailers to shower so-called gold and platinum cards on all and sundry with the hope of
ratcheting up consumer debt — running at 110 per cent in 2002 [and] rising to 130 per cent of personal annual disposable incomes at the end of 2005”.125

In these ways, the conditions that underpin financialization and neo-liberalization might help mark out ‘core societal arenas’. Such conditions may include the large-scale movement of manufacturing industries out of Anglo-American nation-states; the emergence of financial, knowledge, and service industries based in relatively complex technologies that require relatively high levels of skill and education; and the broad-based transfer of upper and middle-incomes into financial assets, for example. Similarly, neo-liberalization, where policymaking may include reduced taxation in place of welfare spending; large-scale privatization programs and “restructur[ing] … of social institutions … along the lines of the commercial business organization”; deregulating of labour markets; flexible employment regimes; workforce downsizing, and casualization; and relaxed consumer credit to foster consumption, also partially delineate core arenas for sociality in contemporary Anglo-American settings.126

In macroscopic terms, the “large scale re-orientation of whole organizational domains” around processes such as financing, distribution, promotions, marketing, and publicity, the creation of artificial scarcity, the law, involving licensing and protecting of intellectual property become, in many ways, fragmented but, also, tightly planned by “larger companies … through [the] vertical integration” that Harvey calls “flexible accumulation”.127 On a lesser scale, a notion of ‘core arenas for sociality’ allows suggestion that ways in which the conditions of neoliberalization and financialization deliver considerable impetus to what David Hesmondhalgh calls “core cultural industries”. Hesmondhalgh’s focus upon the situatedness of cultural industries within sociality is helpful for my argument. Hesmondhalgh critically extends Frankfurt School theses on the “industrialization of culture” in the mid- to late-twentieth century West while aiming to avoid its extreme pessimism. He argues that “the industrialization of culture” creates “complex, ambivalent, and contested” conditions that do not necessarily mean cultural forms are “subsumed by capital and by an abstract system of ‘instrumental reason’”.128

Taking up Hesmondhalgh’s approach here allows the discussion to clarify further the notion of ‘core societal arenas’. It focuses attention upon social and cultural practices and

discourses that might be said to, in part, arise in, and around the organizational domains, which Harvey describes. That is, the industrialization of culture may constitute a key aspect of the overall job of creating and reproducing relatively technologically ‘advanced’, market-oriented, and liberal-democratic sociality. Where so-called financialization and neoliberalization intertwine with what Harvey or Castells describe as increasingly important service and personal-use commodity industries requiring high skills, education, and articulateness, these might be said to bring into Anglo-American sociality practices not amenable to ‘top-down’, bureaucratized or “retain and reinvest” practices. These practices imply subjectivities that involve “autonomy within the processes of production” and “freedom to ‘create’”. In other words, certain themes that Harvey and Castells raise, imply that, as partial consequences of ‘globalizing’ structured and institutionalized conditions, aspects of what Hesmondhalgh calls “core creative industries” may ‘spill over’ into wider contemporary organizational practices and cultural discourses.\(^{129}\)

The chapter now moves to distance this argument from claims that such conditions imply the emergence of a Knowledge Economy or Creative Age. Business-management theorists and liberal sociologists regularly make such claims, often by drawing on Bell’s ‘postindustrialization’ thesis. For example, management theorist Peter Drucker describes the ascent of “knowledge workers” in a *Post-Capitalist Society* dominated by large-scale financial investment firms and multinational mega-corporations. For Drucker, such conditions centre on “knowledge people as specialists … ‘technicians’ with a high level of skill, a high degree of formal knowledge, and above all a high capacity to learn and to acquire additional knowledge”. However, Drucker also suggests, “Plenty of people will always be needed [in the future post-capitalistic order] who can bring only muscle to the job. With our present knowledge of training, they can quickly be made productive in traditional jobs”.\(^{130}\)

While Drucker recognizes the globalizing structural changes and institutional shifts described here, using the terms ‘financialization’ and ‘neoliberalization’, the ‘post-capitalist’ order he describes seems bereft of social power. Drucker seems to account for conditions where Western industries requiring manual labour ‘off-shore’ such jobs to the global South, because “employees become a liability”, while the “knowledge jobs” that remain favour short-term contracts and outsourcing by focusing on individual capacities to become “universally educated


persons”. For Drucker, the “leading social groups of the knowledge society will be ‘knowledge workers’ — knowledge executives who know how to allocate knowledge to productive use”. Drucker seems to be arguing that the provision of a “universal education” for individual knowledge workers will make these “intellectuals and managers” the moral custodians of “responsibility-based organizations”. For Drucker, it seems the solution to the kinds of problems that increasing technological complexity, information-processing capabilities, systemic institutionalization, and infrastructural developments raise lay in “the universally educated person who needs to take responsibility [because] he or she embodies society’s values, beliefs, commitments”.131

Liberal sociologist Richard Florida extends Bell’s postindustrialization thesis in a similar way. For Florida, conditions emerging across the West since the 1970s and 1980s mean that contemporary cities and, indeed, nation-states must attract “cultural creatives”:

We live in a time of great promise. We have evolved economic and social systems that tap human creativity and make use of it as never before. This in turn creates an unparalleled opportunity to raise our living standards, build a more humane and sustainable economy, and make our lives more complete … Human creativity is the ultimate economic resource … the current [social transformation] … is based fundamentally on human intelligence, knowledge and creativity.132

For Florida, the proliferating hypermobility, freelancing, “horizontal labour markets”, and “economic individualism” that the present thesis describes using the concepts of ‘financialization’ and ‘neoliberalization’ seem almost unconditional sources of personal freedom, autonomy, and creativity:

Now people are free to direct their loyalties to more meaningful aspects of their life: their own personal development, their families and friends, their communities and the things that truly interest and matter to them.133

However, a number of critical sociologists also identify in these conditions a creeping precariousness that transcends class divisions, and springs from a pervasive lack of security

131 Ibid., 98, 174, 217-18.
133 Florida, The Rise of the Creative Class, 109, 249, 81.
wrought in large part by ongoing financialization in the economy and “marketization, privatization, and market-oriented re-regulation”. Florida seems either to elide the coincidence of such conditions, or to address any ‘downsides’ with calls for ‘more of the same’. Florida expresses heartfelt concern for those unable to “tap into the Creative Economy”, yet argues that “only by ensuring that the creativity of the many is tapped into and that the benefits of the Creative Age are extended to everyone” will social harmony emerge:

Creative centers provide the integrated ecosystem or habitat where all forms of creativity — artistic, cultural, technological and economic — can take root and flourish [amidst] abundant high-quality amenities and experiences, an openness to diversity of all kinds, and above all else the opportunity to validate … identities as creative people.\footnote{E. Appelbaum, “What Explains Employment Developments in the US?,” Briefing Paper Nov. (2000): 3, Hesmondhalgh, The Cultural Industries, 261.}

Like Drucker, Florida does not seem to recognize ways that structural changes and institutional shifts can alter the dynamics of societal conditions. By contrast, Eileen Appelbaum, for example, recognizes “the development and deployment of information technology” (IT) has been important to productivity growth in the late 1990s but, like Hesmondhalgh, does not see these as conditions for a new Knowledge Economy based in “culture, information, and symbols”:\footnote{Hesmondhalgh, The Cultural Industries, 112, Krippner, "The Financialization of the American Economy," 176.}

The division of the economy into an ‘old economy’ and a ‘new economy’ presents a false dichotomy and is very misleading. IT has had dramatic impacts on manufacturing and on wholesale and retail trade, as well as on such IT-intensive activities as communications and financial services. [Yet, many] companies have introduced more participatory workplace practices that involve front-line workers in decisions and that take full advantage of the potential of IT. Between 1989 and 1999 labour productivity increased 20.5%. However, this rise did not translate into a comparable growth in wages … [which] was slightly less in 1999 than in 1989.\footnote{See, Florida, The Rise of the Creative Class, 183, 318.}

Appelbaum also concurs with sociologists such as Sennett, Pusey, and economists Duménil and Lévy, for example, in suggesting that, accompanying an erstwhile Creative Age are lower levels of job security, decreased incomes, longer average hours, and rising personal-debt...
levels, as well as increased workplace responsibility for decision-making. While decreasing full-time employment and an increase in non-standard jobs may be a laudable development — insofar as these may point to increasing ‘free-time’, family-time, ‘cultural’, sports, or educational participation, for example — the kinds of self-assertion, self-creation, autonomy, and articulateness that seem central to contemporary Anglo-American sociality seem to involve something different.

Where processes of neoliberalization and financialization that, in part, raise the importance of information ‘about’ industrial processes, knowledge jobs, industrialized culture, and relatively sophisticated strategies for promoting personal-use commodities and micro-credit, for example, core societal arenas might be said to impel forms of self-realization and ‘self-creativity’ that are bound up with particular social and cultural histories. Terry Flew’s suggestion that the “danger of conflating growth in these creative ‘sectors’ with greater individual autonomy and cultural openness, because creativity as a social practice has historically been associated with individuality and non-conformist behaviour, is one of the potential problems of [the] ‘creative class’ thesis” becomes important here. Flew’s point helps to clarify ways that core arenas for sociality may imbricate a particular formation of individualism because these privilege patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses in certain material-physical contexts.

Arguably, theories of a Creative Age or Post-Capitalist Society conflate and neutralize possibilities for discussing the kinds of societal dynamics that contemporary ‘globalizing’ sociality might create and reproduce in particular settings. By stressing a truism — that social transformation is based on human intelligence, knowledge, and creativity and extending it across analyses of Creative Economies without accounting for the different modalities of power such ‘transformation’ may bring — these make the ‘individual creativity’ of erstwhile ‘knowledge workers’ both explanans and explanandum. The result is that such claims elide or ignore the dynamics of power that globalizing structured and institutionalized modernization brings into sociality. Societal or relational problems become a matter of personal moral ‘failure’ or ‘success’ or, alternately, of extending claims about particular situations that facilitate opportunities to ‘tap creativity’ out into generalized claims about sociality as a whole.

137 Interestingly, Duménil and Lévy also question the ‘common sense’ assumption that IT developments actually contribute to increased productivity. Appelbaum, "What Explains Employment Developments in the US?," 3-5, Duménil and Lévy, Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution, 150-55.

Hence, the concept of ‘core arenas for sociality’ allows me to set economics research and claims about political affairs alongside commentary on social and cultural affairs. The notion of ‘core societal arenas’ helps to focus analysis on structured and institutionalized conditions that enframe a dominant subjectivity. Moreover, the notion of ‘core societal arenas’ offers an analytic abstraction. It allows discussion to focus upon relatively open and porous social fields where humans act, create meanings, and modalize things under particular social-historical orders, and amidst certain material-physical contingencies. Analytic focus on core arenas for sociality helps suggest that certain social practices, cultural discourses, and phenomena, such as goods, services, and information, may be relatively more important to ongoing social reproduction than are others. As this discussion suggests, however, the argument is not that ‘heavy’ industries and their interests, for example, are no longer economically important, or sources of political power. Rather, the suggestion is that contemporary sociality may encompass ‘marginal’ subjectivities, but that these are ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ core societal arenas. I am suggesting that, while Anglo-American market-oriented liberal-democracies do not exclude subject-agents ‘for themselves’, they may exclude particular subjectivities.

Part III takes up the concept, and links it to suggestions that the present inquiry should be based around ‘weak’ empirical claims. As such, the concept helps to link theories of a dominant subjectivity to a means for theorizing social power. I conceptualize core arenas for sociality by focusing upon how changing structural and institutional conditions might be seen to coincide with and privilege particular patterns of monopolies over or access to materials, practices, and discourses. On the one hand, structural financialization appears conducive to measurement, qualification, and prediction using particular ‘tools’: those of neo-liberal or neoclassical economics. On the other hand, where nation-state and market institutions deploy these particular ‘tools’, they seem to contribute to sociality that — for Alain Supiot, engendering “a caricature of self-oblivious normativity” — privileges particular actions, meanings, and things over others.139

... ... ...

The chapter now turns to discussions of the formation of subjectivity that draw on ‘governmentality’ theory. The governmentality theories discussed here draw upon Foucault and Agamben’s social philosophy to focus upon subjectivity in terms of a particularly modern and, arguably, Western, dynamics of power. While Foucault relates modern power — as ‘biopolitics’ — to the displacement of overtly violent forms of control by “knowledge-based discipline” and “regimes of self-control”, Agamben extends the concept of ‘biopolitics’ to explain its workings. He argues that ‘biopolitics’ works to define ‘norm’ and ‘exception’ and, so, in the case of subjectivity, to ‘dehumanize’ oppositional ‘forms-of-life’ while commanding sovereignty over ‘bare life itself’. However, because Foucault’s and Agamben’s work is largely abstract and philosophical, I focus here upon work by authors applying their theories in analyses of consumption, biomedical technologies, neo-liberalism, welfare statism, and Third Way politics in the 1980s and 1990s.

Engagements here draw upon Dumont and Fraser’s criticisms of governmentality theory and method. On the one hand, Dumont offers oblique criticism of realism and Foucault’s work. He suggests the “reduction of politics to the raw notion of power” springs from a “modern tendency to confuse hierarchy with power” and is a condition of “Western individualism and modern artificialism”. Dumont argues that, where secularization destabilizes the (cosmologically ordained) True order of things, power itself emerges as the means by which hierarchies, value, or forms of authority are instantiated in modernity. Hence, for Dumont, the central issue is not to dwell on power itself, but to uncover how humans in social contexts may qualify or disqualify “practical limitations” on its deployments. On the other hand, Fraser takes issue with Foucault directly. She argues that, while Foucauldian methods may uncover practical affects that arise from the ‘uses’ of discourse, his overall approach is methodologically ambiguous. Fraser contends that, while construing modern power as “‘productive’ rather than prohibitive”, “‘capillary’ … and ‘everyday’ rather than exclusive” and “touch[ing] people’s lives more fundamentally through social practices than through their beliefs”, therefore, “rul[ing] out … orientations aimed primarily at

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demystification of ideologically distorted belief systems”, Foucault’s theory lacks “an adequate normative perspective”.

Nonetheless, governmentality theory may offer insights into practical and discursive conditions for a dominant subjectivity. For example, Miller and Rose suggest that neo-liberalizing institutional reforms encourage “entrepreneurial selves” in societal arenas hitherto organized on social or collective principles. Similarly, Paul du Gay links a “new wave” of corporate practices and consumer-centred cultural discourses to “neo-liberal reformism”, and describes how these constitute a web of institutional efforts to revitalize “liberal-democracy ‘in-action’” after the ‘crises’ of the 1970s. For these authors, “the new forms of work-based identity new wave [management theory] tries to forge among all members of an organization” represent a shift from “reactive to proactive postures” and “from bureaucratic to entrepreneurial styles” affective across Anglo-American sociality. In fact, Du Gay suggests that new-wave management theory aims to transform labour itself, “from a painful obligation … [or] an activity undertaken to meet instrumental needs”, into “a means to self- responsibility and hence self-optimization”.

Governmentality approaches suggest structural and institutional changes in these decades that, at least partially, worked to augment a self-creating and asserting idiosyncratic and self-projecting subjectivity. In another way, emphasizing how practical and discursive shifts enfamed ‘entrepreneurial selves’ — that simultaneously enact immediate desire-objectives and self-orienting ‘proactive postures’ — helps to disqualify idealist demarcations, which as Chapter 6 suggests, seem to re-present either ‘mainstream’ or ‘alternative’ individualisms as a subjectivity-in-dominance.

Miller and Rose also discuss how commodity promotions and advertising work to “assemble the subject of consumption”. They describe how commodity industries use “political techniques for the government of conduct”. They argue that, as “human technologies [these] should be understood as one element in the complex construction of our contemporary ‘passional economy’, connecting human being and its corporeality into a regime of needs, desires, pleasures, and terrors”. For Miller and Rose, the “economy of consumption … is less a matter of dominating or manipulating consumers than of ‘mobilizing’ them”, because “individuals play their own part in


142 Miller, Rose, and du Gay emphasize the coincidence of these shifts in management theory and corporate procedure with the elections of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and, later, of Ronald Reagan in the United States. Miller and Rose link political administrations and public service bureaucracies, management theorists, employer groups, such as the British Confederation of Industry, and large corporations, to “a crusade”. du Gay, *Consumption and Identity at Work*, 36, 57-58, 180, 82, 92, Duménil and Lévy, *Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution*, 84-85.
the games of civilization that shape a style of life through participation in the world of goods”. They describe how such ‘human technologies’ have been used in state-sponsored programs with “more virtuous resonances”, such as the use of market-oriented “focus group techniques developed to sell ice cream” or, in “Ministry of Transport campaigns to limit drink-driving”.143

However, Miller and Rose seem to formalize the ‘passions’ under the order of ‘power’ here, in such a way that it is difficult to discern virtuous from specious deployments of ‘human technologies’. Arguably, a similar problem arises when Rose, in a separate discussion, deals with ethical issues raised by “biomedical technologies”. Rose begins from Foucault’s thesis that “political power [is] no longer … exercised through the stark choice of allowing life or death”, as in pre-modernity. Foucault theorizes how, in modernity, “political authorities, in alliance with many others, have taken on the task of the management of life in the name of the well-being of the population as a vital order and of each of its living subjects”. Rose uses Agamben’s theory of “sovereignty over ‘bare life’” to extend Foucault’s concept of “biopolitics … [as] inextricably bound up with the rise of the life sciences, the human sciences, clinical medicine [that] have given birth to techniques, technologies, experts, and apparatuses for the care and administration of the life of each and all”. Hence, for Rose, “biomedical technique has extended choice to the very fabric of vital existence”. In contemporary settings, “the tasks of deliberating about the worth of different human lives” is “not one in which authorities claim — or are given — the power to make such judgments”. Rather, “a kind of politics of life itself … enfuse the everyday judgements of all those professionals of vitality: doctors, genetic counselors, research scientists, and drug companies”, and “poses these [ethical] questions to each of us”.144

From beginnings anchored in Foucault’s theses on spectral ‘biopolitics’, Rose’s move to use Agamben’s notion of sovereignty over ‘bare life’ leads to a subtle inversion of critical intent in his argument. Rose concludes that contemporary ‘biomedical techniques’ are the progenitors of

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143 Miller and Rose suggest that this ‘mobilizing’ of the subject of consumption works “by forming connections between human passions, hopes, and anxieties, and very specific features of goods enmeshed in particular consumption practices”. Miller and Rose, “Mobilizing the Consumer: Assembling the Subject of Consumption,” 2-3, 31, 32-33.

144 For Agamben, “the exercise of power in contemporary liberal democracies entails matters of life and death as much as ones of the direction of conduct, on the right to kill without committing homicide, as well as of the shaping of freedom and exercise of choice … sovereign power is becoming indistinct from biopolitics”. Where “the sovereign decision on the establishment of a particular form of life (bios) meets matters of mere existence (zoe) itself … we are not merely faced with the enhancement of the life of the population but the sovereign decision on bare life”. Agamben argues that the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, for example, ascribes equality and dignity as rights to the individual “at the moment of their birth”. This is juridico-legal entrenching of rights implies power, for those charged with maintaining the validity of such declarations, over the “state of exception” upon which contemporary governance turns. G. Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), cited in, Dean,"Powers of Life and Death Beyond Governmentality," 122-25, 33-35 Italics in original.
this new “vital politics of life itself”, where “the power to make judgements in the name of the quality of the population or the health of the gene pool” is no longer held by ‘authorities’. Biomedical technologies make it “possible for human beings to demand the protection of the lives of themselves and others in no other name than that of their biological existence and the rights and claims it confers”. What seems to be the historical extension, abstraction, and intensification of the ‘human sciences’ — which Foucault saw as sources of ‘governmentality’ through ‘biopolitics’ — ‘biomedical technologies’ now appear a source of what seem to be progressive and critically desirable conditions of ‘vital politics’. The alternative is that Rose is condemning the dissemination across sociality of power in ways that mean “we have become the kinds of people who think of our present and our future in terms of the quality of our individual biological lives and of those with whom we identify”.145

Arguably, a similar methodological issue arises in Dean’s work. He also uses Agamben to extend Foucauldian analyses of biotechnologies, and of liberalism, neo-liberalism, and welfare statism and Third Way politics. This is because Dean finds Foucauldian governmentality analyses “are always in danger of acceding … to the normative content of liberalism and neo-liberalism themselves”. For Dean, “Whether we consider the welfare of the poor, the rights of refugees or indigenes, biomedical interventions, or environmental catastrophe, we are not simply faced with the enhancement of the life of the population”. He argues that:

a diagram of possible forms of contemporary liberal government emerges when contemporary transformations of the government of the state are located in multiple zones of power … [as Agamben suggests] in relation to the powers of life and death. At the heart of certain contemporary transformations of government is not simply the economic concern, in which the production of a certain form of economic citizenship is necessary for economic security in a global economy: it is also a political one in which the diagnoses of disorder and pathology require the reimposition of authority and the re-inscription of the poor within a hierarchy. The problem of new forms of productive, efficient, and entrepreneurial economic citizenship and rights here meets new forms of moral discipline, restraint and, above all, obligation. The ethos of welfare is a potent admixture of rights and obligations, freedom and coercion, liberty and life … [it] includes the use of deductive and coercive powers of taxation, of systems of punishment, detention, expulsion and disqualification,

145 Rose also argues that “the politics of life itself” means we must question the ethics of “our own lives, in those of our families, and in the new associations that link us to others with whom we share aspects of our biological identity”. Rose, "The Politics of Life Itself," 1-2, 21-22, Italics in original.
and of compulsion to drug rehabilitation, child support, immunization and workfare programs, etc.,
for the achievement of various goals of national government.\textsuperscript{146}

Patricia Harris and Yvonne Hartman also use governmentality theory to inquire into neo-liberalism and welfare statism. Harris follows Foucault’s suggestion, that “resistance emerges in the cracks and fissures of power, in the implausibilities and disjunctures of governance”, to describe how “social security, unemployment, the provision of free or subsidized health facilities, child protection, and aged care [that] claim to be directed … to the ‘welfare’ of the people” constitute “welfare rationality/ies”. Meanwhile, Hartman argues that the “welfare state can be understood in its broadest definition as the transfer of resources by the state, the underlying rationale was the prevention of exploitation of the weakest members of an unequal society”. However, she also argues that contemporary “neo-liberal rationalities have in fact pursued a strategy of reshaping but not abolishing welfare regimes, which … form an integral component of neo-liberal governmentality”.\textsuperscript{147}

Dean does not discuss what are arguably key phenomenal differences between, on the one hand, redistributive ‘child support’ or ‘immunization’ programs and, on the other hand, ‘expulsion’ or the Orwelian-titled “workfare schemes” of neo-liberalism and the Third Way, for example. Similarly, he seems to consider ‘taxation’ and ‘punishment’ on parallel terms. While this may be visible as a normative claim — that is, differentiating between taxation and punishment requires assertion of a normative position — I argue that uncovering the various configurations of power in this way works to obscure possibilities for comment upon the social or historical enframing of social conditions in relation to the ‘forms-of-life’ associated with them almost totally. This problem is also noticeable in Harris’ history of Australian ‘welfare rationalities’. Harris applies the Foucauldian notion of ‘resistance emerging in cracks and fissures’ of government to describes how “Keynesian planning” and the ‘welfare state compromise’ arose as depression, then warfare, opened up such ‘cracks’ or ‘fissures’. However, Harris also argues that, in the 1970s, “the Keynesian economic-social partnership gave way to the neo-classical synthesis” through the same ‘cracks’ and ‘fissures’. Therefore, Harris seems to imply that neo-liberalism is also a mode of ‘resistance’: in this case filling the lacuna caused by international financial ‘crises’. Hartman seems

\textsuperscript{146} Dean, "Administering Asceticism: Re-Working the Ethical Life of the Unemployed Citizen," 87, Dean, "Powers of Life and Death Beyond Governmentality," 19, 125, 27, 33, 34-35, 37.

to argue a similar point. She suggests that, “Though neo-liberalism may exacerbate inequality on a massive scale, welfare provision in wealthy countries is integral to its continued success … neo-liberal and welfare rationalities are bedfellows nonetheless”.

My main point here is not to relate Keynesianism or the politics of welfare statism and shifts to neo-liberalism to norms of, for instance, social justice or equality. These questions lay beyond the ambit of this thesis. Rather, I reiterate discussion of commentary on the shift from Keynesian welfare statism to neo-liberalism in order to point to a seeming elision in these analyses’ method. The discussion implies that the so-called ‘welfare state compromise’ came to be construed, in practice and discourse, as an affront to the ‘natural tendency towards equilibrium’ inherent in ‘free-markets’. This was not only in the neo-liberal rhetoric prompting institutional shifts but as a condition of structural change extending across markets, techno-scientific, and communicative fields-of-action. It seems that, regardless of normative claims, the move from welfare statism to neo-liberalism involved changes in the dynamics of power and its paradigmatic modern composite, economic wealth.

In conclusion, I want to suggest that, because based in a misapprehending of ‘means for ends’, analyses such as these remain silent on much that would be of interest to this thesis’ overall argument. Arguably, these governmentality analyses ‘can’t see the trees for the forest’ and, so, not only lack an ‘adequate normative perspective’, but inject into subjectivity normativity of a particular order. The resulting analyses seem based in ‘strong’ empirical claims that the world is of a Natural order, and that human-being is a task of ‘overcoming’. These governmentality approaches have relatively little to say about patterns of access to or monopolies over materials, economic wealth.

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149 Important here is Brenner’s claim that there exists no necessary link between, on the one hand, ‘stagflation’, high-unemployment, and economic instability in the 1970s and 1980s, and, on the other hand, relatively high Anglo-American wage costs, Keynesianism, and welfare state expenditure. Brenner blames “the crises of the 1970s” on decades of “uneven development” and “intensified competition” that precipitated “falling profitability” because the “global manufacturing sector” was tied to high research, development, and fixed capital costs amidst the ascent of a high technology but relatively low fixed capital cost globalising financial sector. Such a financial sector could only manifest in the developed West. Brenner argues that “overproduction and oversupply” was an international problem, and that relative proximity to communications and information technologies and infrastructure, sources of investment capital, and pressure to supply novel goods and techniques in an almost satiated marketplace, combined to condition moves into ‘finance’ and out of manufacturing. Moreover, Brenner claims that “wage pressure and social expenditure” does not explain “the long persistence of reduced profitability” in manufacturing and non-financial industries because, from the mid-1970s into the late 1990s, “growth in real wages” and “real social expenditures” remained negative, while profitability was stagnant or continued to fall in all but the financial industries. Brenner’s argument helps me to draw attention to the structural and institutional conditions and the kinds of practical and discursive interventions that accompanied the shift from welfare statism to neoliberalization that, I am arguing, these governmentality analyses do not discuss. (Brenner cites OECD statistics that show average annual wages growth in the United States at 2.8% from 1960-1973, falling to 0.3% from 1973-1979, rising to 0.4% from 1979-1990, and falling again to 0.3% from 1990-1998, while social expenditure grew 6.5% from 1960-1975, then only 2.0% from 1975-1980, and up to 2.7% from 1980-1985.) See, Brenner, "The World Economy at the Turn of the Millennium toward Boom or Crisis?,” 16-18.
practices, and discourses that would allow analyses to discern how or ‘on what grounds’ a formation of subjectivity predominates within a particular social order and, as such, eclipses or marginalizes other subjectivities.

The result is that such theory seems to result in the actualizing of a pseudo-normative perspective that, in effect, ordains an untenable solipsism. The concept of ‘modern artificialism’ is helpful here. Governmentality theory, as an analytic framework, seems to implicitly justify the concentrating within an individual’s will of ‘objectively true’ reality: it diminishes the importance of socially created conditions, and the others who would create and construe it, in favour of the assertion of personal will-objections over the world. The generalized observations of ‘power’ in governmentality theory pass quietly over the material-physical and social-historical contexts that enframe subjectivity as a spatial, temporal, embodied, and institutional human condition. Elision of a sustainable normative ‘perspective’ means that governmentality theory constructs ‘power’ in such a way that it eclipses possibilities for analyses of human-being as a shared and communicative condition. Undue focus upon ‘power’ subsumes the terms by which it is deployed within in sociality, and by which humans may ‘legitimate’ hierarchies, values, and forms of authority.

Hence, governmentality theory frames a kind of analytic ‘relativism’ that may begin with condemnation but end with celebration of individual-centred agency. This mode of relativism is not so much absolute but contingent: it seems anchored in the ‘will-to-power’ of a secular, atomized, and unhindered self-suzerainty. While governmentality analyses may discuss ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’ individualisms in ways that disqualify idealist representations of either one in place of a dominant subjectivity, they seem to ‘overshoot the mark’. Such theory seems based on the positive projection of a subjectivity that turns upon some of the aspects of the very concept of ‘entrepreneurial selfhood’ it otherwise so acutely and critically brings to light.
This chapter focuses upon social conditions and theories of subjectivity into the 1980s and 1990s. Initially, it expands the concept of ‘core arenas for sociality’, first introduced in Chapter 7, through work addressing conditions for the entrenching of an ‘underclass’. The chapter suggests how structural changes, from manufacturing to service and ‘info-tech’ industries, and institutional shifts, towards ‘neoliberalism’, might be seen in terms of conditions that superordinate a form of life. Giddens’ theses on ‘self-identity’, the ‘sequestration of experience in late-modernity’, and a post-materialistic ‘life politics’ are brought into contention here. Engaging Giddens on these issues means raising concepts of subjective ‘embodiment’, the ‘practical consciousness’, and ‘reflexivity’. The chapter also raises theoretical and methodological issues in relation to his concept of ‘ontological security’. It suggests that Giddens’ ‘stratification model’ for explaining subjectivity might be too psychologizing and, so, require ‘strong’ empirical claims that reality is for more than a single subject-agent in the act of ‘being’ human. The chapter concludes by looking at Ulrich Beck’s work on post-materialist subpolitics. Similarities are drawn between Beck’s and Giddens’ work, suggesting that both identify the subjectivity they describe so closely with high-modernity itself that their analyses move towards reductive closure. Discussing their work is important because it provides a point-of-entry into the next chapter, which sets out a series of research problems that serve as guidelines for discussing methodological issues in relation to developing a framework for analyses.

Chapter 7 suggests that, since the mid-1970s, relatively wide-reaching structural changes and institutional shifts — processes of financialization and neoliberalization — seem to affect conditions central to the ongoing creating and reproducing of Anglo-American sociality. It suggests that a concept of ‘core arenas for sociality’, ‘core societal arenas’, or, ‘core arenas’, might help open to inquiry the patterns of monopoly over and access to materials, practices, and
discourses that ‘go on’ in such conditions, and allow analyses to link these to theory of the dynamics of social power in contemporary Anglo-American social worlds.

On the one hand, the concept of ‘core arenas’ implies that there exist arenas of contemporary Anglo-American sociality, which involve relatively middle or high-income groups that act, create meanings, and modalize things in particular spaces and ways and that these are of relative importance to the job of creating and reproducing social conditions. In this sense, the concept might help focus analyses upon social and cultural practices and discourses manifest in gentrified inner-cities and aspirational suburbs, the so-called Latte Belts and Sea Change ‘exurbs’, and in situations where occupations require relative education and articulate dispositions, for example. On the other hand, the concept of ‘core arenas’ also implies the encompassing, not of subject-agents as a ‘class’ per se, but of a lifestyle, in a way a ‘form of life’, which milieux of subject-agents can be said to bring to, to ‘animate’, in engagements of key importance to the job of creating and reproducing of sociality. To discuss a dominant subjectivity amidst core societal arenas is to discuss the form of life that is brought before analysis when relating particular structured and institutionalized conditions to social and cultural practices and discourses amidst certain material-physical contexts.

Several commentators describe the entrenching of a “paradigm of exclusion” since the 1970s in terms of a disadvantaged underclass becoming ‘normalized’ within the Anglo-American societies. They attribute this underclass to declining requirements for unskilled labour and mass-consumption based on relatively low-cost homogenous goods and services, combined with shifts to non-manufacturing service and heterogeneous consumer industries. Thus, we see re-regulation “favour[ing] large, private corporations and their shareholders”, and the “marketization of publicly held assets”.

As the ‘heavy’ industries once employing low-skill labour moved ‘off-shore’, occupations once important to Anglo-American economic growth became scattered across largely low-wage and ‘casual’ service sector and the informal economy. These conditions are said to undermine the political power and economic advantage of organizations representing such groups, simultaneously, the support-base for welfare statism and ‘living wage’ claims. In the mid-1970s, Giddens argues that such conditions created a distinction “between primary and secondary

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employment”, encouraging market-institutions to seek alliances with the state against a mainstream organized labour movement corralled into ‘economistic’ claims by inflationary conditions.\textsuperscript{152} Similarly, Habermas argues such conditions prepared the way for the entrenching of an underclass:

\begin{quote}
[Because] underprivileged groups are not social classes, nor do they ever even potentially represent the mass of the population. Their disenfranchisement and pauperization no longer coincide with exploitation, because the system does not live off their labour. They can represent at most a past phase of exploitation. But they cannot through the withdrawal of cooperation attain the demands that they legitimately put forward.\textsuperscript{153}
\end{quote}

Arguably, the backdrop for the emergence of an ‘underclass’ includes a shift from largely unionized mass-manufacturing work to low-paid intermittent casual service work — those ‘cash-jobs’ existing in a liminal ‘black economy’ — as well as government policies to ‘cut back’ ‘social welfare’ in conditions where ‘big labour’ offered little or no resistance. Hitherto, organized to maintain wage levels and intervene in structural and institutional formation by pressing demands for ‘social security’, such commentary implies many such organizations became ‘irrelevant’. Others — such as, New Zealand Labour under David Lange, the Australian Labor Party under Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, British New Labour under Tony Blair, and the United States’ Democratic Party under Bill Clinton — are seen as adopting ‘neoliberal’ policy.\textsuperscript{154}

Commentary on conditions for the creating of such an underclass might be said to imply an effective ‘loss’ of power to assert demands ‘legitimately put forward’; notably, in relation to the economic and political sphere, and ‘material’ claims for ‘distributive’ justice. Habermas, and Peter Bachrach, at least implicitly, seem to recognize how decreases in the power of those institutions hitherto able to disrupt ‘heavy’ industry might extend beyond the political-economic ‘distributive’ arena, and manifest more generally in liberal-democratic societies. Elsewhere, citing Bachrach, Habermas extends these claims to suggest that Western liberal-democracies undergo something of a transformation amidst the unfolding of the ‘crises’ that began in the 1970s:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{152} Giddens, \textit{The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies}, 292-93. \\
\textsuperscript{153} Habermas, \textit{Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics}, 110, Italics in original. \\
\end{flushright}
[Liberal-] democracy … is no longer determined by the content of a form of life that takes into account the generalizable interests of all individuals. It is now only a key for the distribution of rewards conforming to the system, that is, a regulator for the satisfaction of private interests. This democracy makes possible democracy without freedom. [It] makes possible only compromises between ruling elites. No longer all politically consequential decisions, but only those decisions of government still defined as political are … subject to the precepts of democratic will-formation.  

The emergent nexus between markets and the state that is said to have arisen in the decades following the kinds of institutionalized “legitimation crisis” Habermas describes worked to marginalize or dissolve many of the grounds for ‘claims’ that, like Giddens, he sees as a ‘compromise’. Raising things in this way allows the suggestion that structured and institutionalized changes emerging over recent decades frame qualitative changes in how the engagements of subject-agents may or may not be seen to affect ongoing sociality. At once, the sociality that emerges seems to incorporate potentially all subject-agents within it, as practices and discourses that privilege a particular liberal sovereign individualism come to characterize core societal arenas. Meanwhile, at another level, sociality excludes, as some forms of societal and relational engagements become marginalized. For the present thesis, as sociality seems increasingly to ‘go on’ under the order of a superordinated sovereign liberal individualism, the situations created and reproduced in and through these new conditions can be seen to enframe a kind of hypostatized dominant subjectivity.

While a number of market-oriented and critical social theorists extend Bell’s ‘postindustrialization theses’ in various ways to address such conditions, the present thesis aims to bring in a different approach. This approach links the marginalizing of an underclass to what Harvey and Manuel Castells, for example, describe as the spread of service and ‘consumption’ industries requiring relatively highly skilled, educated, and articulate workforces, and atomized and individuated forms of labour. This means, again, bringing in Hesmondhalgh, and discussing his suggestions that so-called ‘creative’ and ‘cultural’ labour differs from large-scale heavy-industrial manual labour in several ways. I use Hesmondhalgh’s account of conditions within “the cultural

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industries” to suggest how particular conditions might be said to extend across Anglo-American societies in these decades.

For example, Hesmondhalgh argues that labour in ‘creative’ or ‘cultural’ industries, even that which attracts higher wages pro rata, is often infrequent and unreliable. While it may be relatively diverse, “interesting, and fulfilling”, work in information intensive conditions might also be “isolating and contradictory”. Examples might include the computerization of cash registers in retail industries, or, importantly, the proliferation of market-based mannerisms that compel service employees to exhort customers to *Have A Nice Day!* Hesmondhalgh argues that, because closely intertwined with long-standing Western cultural forms, an erstwhile division between “artistic creativity and economic gain” enframes labour in and around contemporary creative, cultural, and service industries. For Hesmondhalgh, labour in such conditions accompanies a decline in collective power that binds whole occupational domains to ‘one-sided’ contractual relations favouring large market-based organizations.

The chapter moves to extend Hesmondhalgh’s theses, and suggest that the uptake across almost all contemporary workplaces of relatively complex technologies and information-processing equipment might be seen as a partial condition of such social and cultural history. Where, it seems, even relatively low-wage and low-skill ‘service sector’ labour involves basic literacy, numeracy and, frequently, articulate dispositions, these seem to ‘go on’ as if the workforce in sum were relatively highly skilled, educated, and articulate. Extending suggestions made in Chapter 7, conditions in the 1980s, 1990s, and into the 2000s, seem to go on as if almost all subject-agents in the Anglo-American societies were well-educated and worldly, autonomous and autarchic ‘knowledge workers’. Arguably, suggestions that Western cultural historical emphases on ‘self-creativity’, aesthetic sensibilities, and ‘immaterial’ or ‘intangible’ aspects of life-experience, for example, have exerted deep influence in the formation of key contemporary industries in such conditions seem to imply a delimiting of possibilities that alternate, critical, or marginal cultures can offer a counterpoint to labour on these terms.

Conditions for an excluded underclass might also include debt-laden low, middle, and even high-income earning subject-agents that are said to be central to the ‘New Economy’. Sociologist Richard Sennett’s account of a “new capitalism” that demands “a pliant self, a collage of fragments unceasing in its becoming, ever open to new experience … suited to short-term work experience, flexible institutions, and constant risk-taking” in some ways help me to focus upon such

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conditions. Further, Barbara Ehrenreich’s ‘1st person’ sociology might help me to describe the scope of “increasing poverty and despair” affecting the “white-collar workforce” in the United States in the 1990s and into the 2000s. In this sense, the stock market ‘boom’ for ‘private investors’ and property market ‘bubble’ in the housing sector in the 1990s may also include increased working hours, especially as wage and salary earners seem increasingly called upon to act as ‘entrepreneurial selves’ or ‘passionate employees’.

Economist Robert Frank’s claim that the commoditization of heterogeneity not only decreases access to mass-produced homogenous but ‘low price’ goods and services but also minimizes the prevalence of ‘budget’ in favour of ‘luxury’ commodities is relevant here. For Frank, this rising demand for luxury goods implies “greater consumption by some people imposes costs on others”. Frank argues it tends to drag-up the commitment to private consumption across society — “The things that [persons] need so often depend on what others have”. Necessities become less prevalent and attain a kind of cultural stigma, as more and relatively more complex ‘value-added’ commodities enter the social field. Frank’s claims, when taken alongside rising real-estate property prices and increased ‘labour market flexibility’ — that is, as housing becomes increasingly expensive and always-on communication provides for ‘24-7 connect-ability’ — might be said to imply longer periods spent commuting and decreasing ‘free-time’. For Frank, suburbanization without public transport infrastructure makes private vehicles a necessity, while Sports Utility Vehicles make small ‘compact’ vehicles dangerous, just as ‘professional’ curriculum vitae advice and expensive work-wear fashions draw other employees into the fold.

Here, Zygmunt Bauman’s descriptions of consumption-dominated spaces, such as “shopping malls so constructed as to keep people moving, looking around, diverted and entertained by endless attractions” are also helpful. For Bauman, where privatized spaces displace common ‘public’ spaces, the promoting of “desire — a volatile and ephemeral, evasive and

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158 B. Ehrenreich, Bait and Switch: The Futile Pursuit of the Corporate Dream (London: Granta, 2006), 232, 34, R. Sennett, The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 133. For Ehrenreich, “[i]t is the insecurity of white-collar employment that makes the demand for passion so cruel and perverse”. She argues that, while it may be that white-collar workers fail to organize collectively because holding “an unwarranted faith in the meritocratic claims of [United States’] culture”, “what sets corporate workers apart and leaves them so vulnerable is the requirement that they identify, absolutely and unreservedly, with their employers”.

capricious, and essentially non-referential phenomenon; a self-begotten and self-perpetuating motive [without] an objective or a cause — the consuming desire of consuming”, point to what I am suggesting are core discursive environments of contemporary Anglo-America.\textsuperscript{160}

In these respects, such sociology helps to link social to cultural practices and discourses in core arenas, and to suggest how these may intertwine with structured and institutionalized conditions. While contemporary Anglo-American sociality sidelines ‘legitimate’ demands issuing from an excluded underclass, I am suggesting that in many respects it might be seen as overshooting its normative premises. Contemporary conditions pass, as if quietly, over almost all forms-of-life not conducive to personal autonomy and sovereign choice as these very modes of being become increasingly central to the job of creating and reproducing Anglo-American social worlds.

These suggestions that core arenas for sociality provide the settings for the emergence of a dominant subjectivity provide background for engaging with Giddens’ work on “modernity and self-identity”. This said, the chapter leaves-off discussing Giddens’ theory of late-modernity until later. Here, the focus is upon Giddens’ theories of individuality, self-identity, and “the reflexive project of the self”. The main suggestion here is that Giddens’ stratification model for explaining subjectivity is too ‘psychologizing’ and, so, requires ‘strong’ empirical claims that imbricate subjectivity within sociality as if a seamless functional unity.\textsuperscript{161}

Giddens describes how intertwining secularization and institutionalization displace primarily localized and face-to-face contexts with complex “abstract systems” that, it seems, mediatize human inter-relations by utilizing formalized symbols and tokens. These “abstract systems affect a ‘disembedding’ of sociality; “a ‘lifting out’ of social relations from local contexts and [facilitate] their rearticulation across indefinite tracts of time-space”. For Giddens, sociality in modernity is endlessly contingent. This implies “institutional reflexivity” such that “social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very


practices, thus constitutively altering their character”. Giddens extends ‘down’ this reflexivity, into the mundane contexts of ‘everyday life’, arguing that “an account of self-identity [in modernity] has to be developed in terms of an overall picture of the psychological make-up of the individual”:

The social conventions produced and reproduced in our day-to-day activities are reflexively monitored by the [individual] agent as part of ‘going on’ in the variegated settings of our lives. Reflexive awareness in this sense is characteristic of all human action, and is the specific condition of [the] institutional reflexivity [that is] an intrinsic component of modernity.162

In fact, for Giddens “the construction of the self becomes a reflexive project”. He suggests that “reflexivity … should be understood not merely as ‘self-consciousness’ but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life. To be a human being is to be a purposive agent”. However, Giddens makes clear that ‘purposive’ here implies neither “methodological individualism”, nor “hermeneutical voluntarism”. The purposive agency that reflexivity implies here is a “process rather than a state”; it is “inherently involved in the competence of agents [and an] ontology of time-space as constitutive of social practices”. Thus, his schema emphasizes reflexive agency as embedded in the body: “Action then, occurs in the spatiality of the present”. His “stratification model of the acting self involves treating the reflexive monitoring, rationalization, and motivation of action as embedded sets of processes”. Alternately, Giddens’ describes a schema of “basic security system, practical, and discursive consciousness” that are embedded in space-time and, therefore, in agents’ bodies.163

For Giddens, “practical consciousness is integral to the reflexive monitoring of action, but it is ‘non-conscious’”. However, unlike Freudian theory, “there are no cognitive barriers separating discursive and practical consciousness, as there are divisions between the unconscious and consciousness taken generically”:

Most forms of practical consciousness could not be held in mind during the course of social activities … Practical consciousness is the cognitive and emotive anchor of the feelings of ontological security characteristic of large segments of human activity in all cultures. The notion of ontological

security ties in closely to the tacit character of practical consciousness — or, in phenomenological terms, to the ‘bracketings’ presumed by the ‘natural attitude’ in everyday life.\textsuperscript{164}

Giddens relates these concepts to ‘trust’. He suggests that the modern basis for the emotional anchor of “ontological security” is ‘trust’, which supersedes the ‘faith’ in Divine Providence or 
\textit{Fortuna} that characterize pre-modern life. Giddens defines modern trust as “confidence in the reliability of a person or abstract system … in the context of (a) the general awareness that human activity … is socially created; [and] … (b) the vastly increased transformative scope of human action” and as “faith in the probity or love of another, or in the correctness of abstract principles”:

The term [ontological security] refers to the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action. A sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security: hence, the two are psychologically closely related. Ontological security has to do with ‘being’ or, … phenomenolog[ical] ‘being-in-the-world’. But it is an emotional, rather than a cognitive, phenomenon, and it is rooted in the unconscious.\textsuperscript{165}

Arguably, it is here that Giddens begins to jettison his theoretical commitment to the embodied ‘spatiality of the present’. I suggest that the way he describes ‘ontological security’ and through the natural attitude, relates it as an emotional phenomenon to trust implies that his schema moves toward a kind of Cartesian dualism. His stratification model effectively implies a permanent ‘always-already’ cognition that overrides embodiment. To describe ‘trust’ as he does is to ascribe a more or less philosophical and abstract definition to emotion, which sits front-and-centre in subjectivity. That is, I am suggesting that Giddens’ use of emotion here implies aesthetic sensibility or judgement, and not the material-physical ‘bindendess’ of embodiment that I want to argue is essential for theorizing subjectivity.

My concerns with Giddens’ schema stem from his assertion that “it is of central importance … to see that the anchoring aspects of such ‘answers’ [to ontological 
\textit{in}securities] are emotional rather than simply cognitive. How far different cultural settings allow a ‘faith’ in the

\textsuperscript{164} Giddens, \textit{Modernity \\& Self Identity}, 36-37, Italics in original.

\textsuperscript{165} Giddens, \textit{The Consequences of Modernity}, 33-34, 88-91, 92.
coherence of everyday life to be achieved through providing symbolic interpretations of existential questions is ... very important".

Although setting out to avoid methodological individualism, using trust and emotion in these ways seems to mean that Giddens’ schema becomes a claim to knowledge about the hermetic qualities of subjectivity. Insofar as ‘practical consciousness is the cognitive and emotive anchor of the feelings of ontological security’, and the ‘sense of the reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust’, what Giddens seems to be claiming for emotion appears to precede what he elsewhere makes clear are the ‘spatiality of the present’ and ‘embedded sets of practices’. His schema is, arguably, casuistic. Representing ‘cultural settings’ as if these allow a ‘faith’ in the coherence of everyday life to be achieved through providing symbolic interpretations of existential questions seems to imply that interpretation and questioning precede physical presence: situatedness in the world. Giddens’ schema seems to imply a subjectivity that ‘believes itself to be in the world’ before ‘being in the world’.

My suggestion is that what Giddens calls continuity, constancy, coherence and reliability do not require feelings of ontological security. These are, I argue, historically bound to human-being that has been, and continues to be, a socialized, always-already embodied condition. In Part III, I want to approach the constancy and continuity of surroundings as affective conditions of material-physical embodiment in the world. The discussion will conceptualize embodiment as ‘somatic’, as physiognomic sensitivity, and discuss this as an analytically separate aspect or ‘layer of affect’ that combines with ‘practical’ consciousness, and reflexive subjectivity. Furthermore, I want to suggest a ‘knock-on effect’ of Giddens’ conceptual schema. Arguably, it reduces the ontic — for the present argument, a totality of binding variables that, in analysis, enframes human-being in the world — to a psychologizing typology. Hence, it makes ontology — for the present argument ‘what can be said about’ such a totality of binding variables — an intra-personal state that is open, not merely to ‘existential reflection’, but to qualitative analytic observation.

Looking at Giddens’ schema leads me to suggest that it effectively makes the reflexivity that he identifies with institutions in late-modernity stand-in for subjectivity. His schema seems to

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166 Even though Giddens stresses that “[t]o investigate such matters on the level of abstract philosophical discussion is, of course, quite different from actually ‘living’ them”, his approach seems to abstract away from embodiment. Hence, it is somewhat odd that his subjectivity turns on a philosophical claim: The chaos that threatens on the other side of the ordinariness of everyday conventions can be seen psychologically as dread in Kierkegaard’s sense: the prospect of being overwhelmed by anxieties that reach to the very roots of our coherent sense of ‘being-in-the-world’. Practical consciousness, together with the day-to-day routines reproduced by it, help bracket such anxieties.

subsume subjectivity under the radical-critical potential of Western “late-modernity”. This becomes apparent as Giddens moves to discuss “life politics” and its source in “the sequestration of experience”:

[T]he sequestration of experience serves to contain many forms of anxiety which might otherwise threaten ontological security — but at considerable cost. [T]he ontological security which modernity has purchased, on the level of day-to-day routines, [because ongoing in and through abstract systems] depends on an institutional exclusion of social life from fundamental existential issues which raise central moral dilemmas for human beings. The agenda of life politics derives from the extension of the internally referential systems of modernity to cover several distinct areas … repressed existential issues, related not just to nature but to the moral parameters of existence as such, press themselves back on to the agenda.\(^\text{167}\)

It seems that, for Giddens, life politics is a reaction to the sequestration of experience. Giddens argues that such life politics manifests when conditions for “emancipatory politics” are more or less satisfied: “Life politics presumes (a certain level of) emancipation … from the fixities of tradition and from hierarchical domination … it is a politics of choice”. Because abstract systems work to codify, regularize, standardize, administer, institutionalize, define, or “table rules” for sociality, they tend to make moral issues meaningless, expunge ‘existential’ problems, and make human relatedness difficult on all but the most individualistic terms. Life politics ‘kicks against’ the bureaucratizing, ordering, and regularizing influences that abstract systems are said to exert upon ‘everyday life’ in late-modern conditions.\(^\text{168}\)

Interestingly, Giddens derives his approach to the sequestration of experience from the way he describes how positivistic thought works in modernity: “Positivism seeks to expunge moral judgements and aesthetic criteria from the transformative processes it helps to set in motion and of which it also provides interpretation and analysis”. For Giddens, sequestration is the “institutional correlate” of positivism.\(^\text{169}\) I want to suggest that the concept of modern artificialism may allow discussion of how positivism works in modernity, but also allows me to move away from Giddens’ ‘psychologizing’ theorization. The concept of ‘modern artificialism’ implies that subject-agents, in Western modernity, bring to the world personal will-objectives that are, in

\(^{167}\) Ibid., 185, 224, 43-44.  
\(^{168}\) Ibid., 214.  
\(^{169}\) Ibid., 155-56, 58. Italics in original.
analysis, the concentration, within subject-agents’ individual wills, of ‘objectively’ true reality. That is, where the self-orienting immediacy of ‘being’ affected in modernity implies that, in analysis, reality is the instance of ‘being’ for a single subject-agent, the order of things becomes what socially created patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses cause it to be. Further, it seems that ‘positivist’ claims about the world, and discussion of it in theory, coincide in secularizing modern conditions.

Arguably, relating positivism and modern artificialism here allows me to maintain a theoretical distinction between, on the one hand, the theory of the formation of subjectivity and on the other hand, speculation about the intra-personal psychological states that subject-agents may or may not bring to sociality. It seems that the ostensible generalizing of ‘modern artificialism’ has, as its tangent, the formation of such patterns of monopoly over and access to materials, practices, and discourses. These imply the social creating of ‘support’ for a high positivism, in and around Natural Law, science, and the art-world, or, engendered less directly, that is, ideologically, in and around capitalistic markets and nation-state institutions, for example. Giddens’ approach tends to blur what I am suggesting is an important distinction between a positivism that ‘upholds’ and is ‘upheld’ in and around socially created but largely ‘abstract’ systems, and a positivism that manifests where conditions seem to enframe the concentrating in a subject-agents’ will of ‘objectively’ true reality.

In these respects, I briefly draw some parallels between Giddens’ work and Habermas’ theses on the “uncoupling of system and life-world”. I then move from Giddens’ work to look at Beck’s somewhat similar discussion of ‘subpolitics’. Arguably, Giddens’ suggestion that abstract systems emasculate self-identity and empty-out ‘existential questions’ — by sequestering the “routines of everyday life from … madness, criminality, sickness and death, sexuality, and nature” — resembles Habermas’ conceptualization of how “amoral spheres of action” characterize ongoing “systemic integration” in complex modern societies. For Habermas, the instrumental imperatives set by “systemic domains of action” consistently undermine efforts to reformulate social inter-relations along the lines of “ideal speech situations”. Based on a social-historical claim that inter-relations ‘go on’ unhindered by past and tradition in secularizing modernity, Habermas argues that these ideal speech situations constitute the normative basis for reformulating sociality in ways that mean ‘steering’ inter-relational situations away from the instrumentalizing affects of systematized imperatives.170

It is here that an important point of difference between Giddens’ and Habermas’ theses appears. On the one hand, Giddens’ account of the almost pan-societal standardization and administration wrought by abstract systems resembles Habermas’ claim that the instrumental logic of systematized social relations “encroach upon the life-world”. However, on the other hand, what Habermas’ describes as conditions that disrupt “life-world contexts” — that is, the shared societal arenas of human inter-relationships — seem, for Giddens, conditions that raise private fundamental existential issues. Habermas traces his ideal speech situation to the unleashing of intersubjective contexts from the past and tradition, by a modernity that de-legitimates positivism at the same time as it makes the capacity to establish positivist claims within sociality the mainstay of social creation and reproduction. However problematic it may be, Habermas’ split between system and life-world sets his critique of modernity apart from any accounts of intra-personal states, consciousness, or subjectivity. For Giddens, it seems, the critique of modernity and his account of consciousness coalesce:

Life politics is a politics of self-actualization in a reflexively ordered environment, where that reflexivity links self and body to systems of global scope. [Life politics] concerns political issues which flow from processes of self-actualization in post-traditional contexts, where globalizing influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realization influence global strategies.\(^{171}\)

At this point, Giddens’ approach to subjectivity seems to ‘internalize’ the affectivity of the sociality he otherwise so keenly theorizes. It seems that Giddens’ subjectivity ‘takes-on’ the radical-critical potential of late-modernity in sum total. This seems to mean that drawing formative claims from Giddens’ ‘stratification model’ requires that analyses seek transcendental justification; if any content is to be derived from analyses based on it, it would require knowledge of intra-personal psychological states. Alternately, Giddens’ reflexive subjectivity ‘accumulates’ capacities to intervene in the world — that is, to deploy agency — in the same way and of the same qualities as do abstract systems in late-modernity.

The present thesis concurs with Carole Smith’s argument that, “For Giddens, the sequestration of experience is the sequestration of morality”.\(^{172}\) Smith’s claim allows me to suggest that Giddens’ subjectivity becomes something of an automaton. The claims of the life politics that

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Giddens associates with the reflexive project of the self are, arguably, of the form that social demands take when emanating from within abstract systemic parameters. Hence, Giddens suggests that “the body can no longer be taken as a fixed — a physiological entity — but has become deeply involved with modernity’s reflexivity”. Yet, this type of claim forces Giddens into something of a compromise later. He claims that, because “the body has become available to be ‘worked upon’ by the influences of high modernity … [t] it has, as it were, a thoroughly permeable ‘outer layer’ through which the reflexive project of the self and externally formed abstract systems routinely enter”.173 The problem here is that the body is a physiological entity. Embodiment is a fixed condition, at least, insofar as being an embodied individual is the predominant way that Anglo-American subject-agents ‘be’ in social worlds. What might change, through the reflexive project of the self, are the ways that fashions, nutritional ‘fads’, or plastic surgery, for example, have become relatively widespread as techniques used by embodied subject-agents as seen, in analysis, to be living-out a self-orienting and projecting dominant subjectivity in particular conditions.

As an alternative, Part III approaches contemporary sociality in ways that do not bring the “reflexive ordering of self-narratives” into analytic focus itself, as Giddens’ schema seems to do. Rather, it treats conditions for the constitution of subjectivity as if these push or extrude reflexivity. Subject-agents are impelled to act, create meanings, or modalize things as if human-being were not anchored in space, time, and amongst others, but in an immaterial world of ‘footloose’ global networks and aestheticized disembodied ‘sensations’. That is, I want to treat the formation of subjectivity in terms of a consistent tension between, on the one hand, the constant monitoring and adjustment of worldly actions that reflexivity implies and, on the other hand, a practical consciousness that facilitates actions and a somatic aspect of being that implies physiognomic limits amidst the conditions and contexts of sociality. I will suggest that the reflexivity which late-modern Anglo-American sociality frequently if not consistently impels or ‘demands’, works to undermine claims that can be made about how subjectivity manifests in norm-forming settings.

This is not to claim that worldly affect works or does not work at an ‘existential’ level. Rather, because subjectivity is a social creation; the shared and communicative condition that human-being ‘is’ in the world, anchored in material-physical embodiment and a peculiar modern artificialism — the analysis needs to limit itself to ‘weak’ empirical claims. Because Giddens’

schema seems to require knowledge of intra-personal states, rather than merely recognizing that existential states, such as anxieties, are possibilities that may or may not be ‘acted upon’, his schema seems to imply ‘strong’ empirical claims about the qualities and preponderances of these anxieties. These are partial grounds for discussing what I argue are conditions for the deferral of almost irreconcilable tensions upon which a dominant contemporary Anglo-American subjectivity turns. This allows the discussion to approach the social formation and constitution of subjectivity without jettisoning analytic commitment to embodiment, or overemphasizing the intertwining of human-being and generalized late-modern conditions. As Giddens otherwise makes clear, engagements within sociality impel agency as if subject-agents are often disembodied or immaterial ‘beings’.

The chapter now relates Giddens’ theses on life politics to Beck’s work on how contemporary ‘individualization’ works to condition a post-materialist ‘subpolitics’. In many respects, Beck extends Ron Inglehardt’s sociological research. Inglehardt argues that shifts away from heavy industries, mass employment, and relatively homogenous personal-use commodities, towards a proliferation of information-centred industries, knowledge work, and a relatively expanded array of heterogeneous personal-use commodities, condition a major schism in Western “value formations”. For Inglehardt, and others, a wide-reaching ‘post-materialism’ has emerged since the 1970s within “advanced industrial society [and] leads to a basic shift in values, de-emphasizing the instrumental rationality that characterizes modern society”.174

Beck claims that such widespread post-materialism centres on an individualism that is, at once, ‘egoistic’ and ‘altruistic’ and central to “subpolitics … based on the defence of life as a personal project” and the “rejection of its adversaries; a powerful market system on the one hand and a communalism that imposes purity and homogeneity on the other”. Beck describes this

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“subpolitical arena” as motivated by calls for “government from below”, and rejects the institutional dimensions of sociality. These calls are incompatible with subpolitical “claims for participation and self-organization”. On the one hand, “political imagination and action are confronted with challenges of a quite unprecedented scale”. On the other hand, individualization “erod[es] the social-structural conditions for political consensus, which until now have made possible collective political action”. Beck points out that “at the centre of the new ethics is the idea of quality of life”:

[C]ontrol over a person’s ‘own time’ is valued more highly than income or more career success. [P]roviding there are basic securities, lack of waged work means time affluence. Time is the key which opens the door to the treasures promised by the [post-materialistic] age of self-determined life; dialogue friendship, being on one’s own, compassion, fun, subpolitical commitment. [T]his marks a shift away from the struggle for distribution of material goods … toward a demand for … scarce immaterial resources which cannot be expressed in the exchange of money. [R]est, leisure, self-determined commitments and forms of working, relationships, family life … these are the values of a self-oriented culture which is sensitive to ecological concerns.¹⁷⁵

Beck appears to implicitly accept, akin to the post-materialist individuality he finds at the centre of subpolitics, the empirical possibility of a timeless and consequence-free desiring form of life. Beck traces the path cut by post-materialist individualism, into the realm of a subpolitical “antipolitics [that] opens up the opportunity to enjoy one’s own life and supplements this with a self-organized concern for others that has broken free from large institutions”. For Beck, a post-materialistic individualism that “calls for life as a personal project” has “broken free from large institutions”, and is no longer about “the distribution of material goods” but, about “scarce immaterial goods that can hardly be offset by (expressed in) money”. Beck conducts his inquiry along these lines because wanting “to open up a mode of thinking and acting for realistic utopian opportunities”. I am suggesting that this is a problem for Beck, because it means he emphasizes, as an alternative to orthodox politics, the very idealistic immaterial paradigm that he identifies, with such acuity, as manifest across core arenas for contemporary Western sociality. In doing so, he risks inferring that contemporary conditions no longer require the material-physical settings that constitute the human world.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, Individualization, 28-29, 160-61, 212.
¹⁷⁶ Beck adopts his approach because he “can’t help feeling bored by the habit of concentrating on the catastrophes ahead”. Ibid., 161, 213. Parentheses in original.
Arguably, Beck loses sight of possibilities for questioning how particular legitimizing dynamics might frame evaluations of values, or forms of authority, for example, such that erstwhile ‘immaterial’ claims can hegemonize political domains. Because he seems to recognize post-materialistic subpolitics as being actually about ‘immaterial goods’, Beck limits his analyses to an account of the ‘legitimate’ demands commensurate with what the present thesis suggests are the operational imperatives of sociality in core societal arenas. Many conditions for Giddens’ life politics of the reflexive project of the self, and Beck’s subpolitical arenas, do seem central to sociality across contemporary Anglo-American settings. However, as will become clear, these are largely indistinguishable from the ‘stakeholder’ politics that, through a series of illustrative examples in Parts IV and V, seem closely bound up with emphases on ‘maximizing shareholder value’ rising to prominence over decades of neoliberalization and financialization. Within such a paradigm, ‘creative’ labour becomes life-work, and self-creation is returned to subject-agents, liberated, as it were, from ‘clock-watching’ full-time employment. At the same time, such possibilities for self-realization and ‘options’ for personal autonomy seem to circumscribe the job of ‘being’ human under a particular normative order: that of almost ever-increasing flexibility and ‘entrepreneurial selves’.

While pointing to lived societal and relational phenomena, analyses that place post-materialistic individualism, life politics, and subpolitics, at the centre of their approach, nevertheless, seem not to differentiate between claims made achievable within norm-based and relational contexts, and those made achievable within large-scale structured and institutionalized conditions. Post-materialist theories of life politics and subpolitics might help to describe a situation-specific formation of ‘enlightened’ liberal individualism. However, such analyses do this by obscuring what is the ongoing material abstraction of ‘immaterial goods’ and extension of inter-relations that embodied subject-agents carry-on in space, over time, and through institutions. As Chapter 6 suggests, services or information, for example, might attain ‘values’ as commoditized things and, therefore, ‘act’ in material-like ways. Contemporary conditions do seem to frame subjectivity amidst myriad elaborations of personal desiring and creative self-development, which tends towards prioritizing so-called ‘immaterial goods’, as conditions also privilege occupational flexibility and casualization. However, the suggestion here is that such immaterial ‘goods’ need to remain as abstract material or material-like ‘things’ in analysis. Humans create and reproduce them and in doing so, give them values and rank them within the particular social-historical conditions.
and certain material-physical contexts they also create and reproduce. Regardless of what might be the phenomenal immateriality of such ‘things’ — leisure time and creativity are two examples — the present thesis suggests that these are socially ‘given’ values, which link their holders and handlers to social power in different ways and, so, need to remain open to discussion as material-like things. That is, the approach developed here is required to ‘hang onto the world’, even though the particular conditions under discussion might mean that ostensibly ‘immaterial’ goods are relatively more important to the creating and reproducing contemporary social worlds.

Recognizing ways that contemporary conditions also seem to create an excluded underclass allows me to suggest how, indeed, contemporary core societal arenas effectively ‘filter out’ modes of engaging that do not fall under the aegis of a dominant form of life. Arguably, recognizing such an underclass suggests a ‘raising of the bar’, such that the basic unit of labour in core arenas for sociality effectively leaves unskilled ‘hand’ power beneath the minimum levels of literacy, numeracy, and ‘cultural capital’ required for the least valuable productive inputs. Hence, as Habermas, Bachrach and, for example, Fraser suggest, such groups lose purchase in the political sphere. My discussion of conditions for such an underclass also implies that conditions such as casualization and flexibility regimes extend across sociality. Organizational practices that Sennett and Ehrenreich so accurately depict — such as those which ‘go on’ casual employment, high labour mobility, and employment flexibility predominate in organizational domains, for example — seem to extend across sociality. As I suggest throughout Parts IV and V, flexitime, the no-collar workplace, and work-from-home initiatives imply that subject-agents work ‘on their own time’ and, to an extent, present and self-present ‘in their own ways’. Conditions for such a ‘return’ of time and the body to Anglo-American subject-agent’s ‘control’ seem also to render freedom and autonomy inalienable duties.

It is in this sense that I begin to suggest that a pervasive ‘wholism’ seems to obscure almost all modes of engagement ‘in the world’ not conducive to those of a dominant subjectivity enframed within core societal arenas. As will be suggested in Part IV, contemporary conditions seem to displace citizenship ‘rights and duties’ with what seem to be instrumentalist stakeholder ‘contributions and benefits’. Through a series of illustrative examples, the chapters therein will suggest how structural changes that economists label neoliberalization and financialization, and the erstwhile Info-Tech Economy these are said to create conditions for, might frame what Geoff Sharp describes as “technologically extended forms of the social”. These are taken to be social forms that imbricate “intellectual forms of life” within key arenas for creating and reproducing sociality. They
imply that a “new level of individuation … is readily grafted onto the individualism of expanding desire” central to market-oriented Anglo-American liberal-democracies.177

Such conditions may bring particular cultural discourses — centering on relative affluence and ‘personal-use’ commodities, privatist concerns with lifestyle, vocational holism, and, ostensibly, post-materialist ‘demands’, such as for ‘quality-of-life’ or ‘green consumerism’, for example — to the fore in Anglo-American settings. In core arenas, where technological complexity and widespread affluence foster relatively high levels of education and articulate dispositions, a dominant subjectivity appears to offer possibilities for unprecedented subjective realization of personal ‘freedom’. These are at once liberating and circumscribing. Freedom within core arenas for sociality seems, in many ways, limited to consumption and aesthetic forms of liberty, such as held out by personal-use commodities, or which ‘passionate’ terms of employment offer. These are conditions for the heightened satisfactions, the jouissance, that I argue makes deployments of capacities for enjoyment central to a dominant subjectivity. These are also conditions for the enervated dissatisfactions, the lassitude, that I suggest make world-weariness, languor, and jadedness — the tepid obverse of satisfaction — an erstwhile disinterest redeemable almost only in stakeholder choices to enact capacities or undertake obligations, central to the same dominant subjectivity. These are some of the grounds for my central argument that, a dominant contemporary subjectivity turns on almost irreconcilable tensions that sustain a deferral of worldly dilemmas.

III: Research Problems & Methodology
9 Research problems

This chapter summarizes the discussion so far, reflects upon issues raised in Part I and discussion of Anglo-American social conditions and theories of subjectivity in Part II. The chapter raises these issues as methodological concerns, in order to set out the research problems that will guide development of a framework for analysis in the following chapters. This chapter identifies the project’s key research problem as one centred on developing an approach to theorizing a dominant Anglo-American subjectivity that avoids ‘strong’ empiricism. Describing the problem as a theoretical and methodological issue in this way means raising a number of points that relate directly to the thesis’ applied inquiry. The chapter clarifies the epistemological groundings for my central argument that a dominant subjectivity has emerged in contemporary Anglo-American societies that moves between relatively heightened satisfactions and enervated dissatisfactions, an important consequence of which is that persons are often bound to defer existential and ethical dilemmas that social worlds might raise for them as socialized subject-agents. The chapter concludes with an outline of the steps Chapters 10, 11, and 12 take. In these ways, the chapters in this Part of the present thesis background a series of illustrative examples, which are discussed in Part IV.

… … …

To recap briefly, the present thesis begins by suggesting how, since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the relatively increased importance to job of creating and reproducing Western societies of material things, as well as the knowledges and techniques associated with their uses, might have affected a modern subjectivity. Combining engagements with Mukerji’s and Dumont’s historical anthropology, Chapter 2 focuses upon how modern materialism and Occidental Judaeo-Christianity intertwined amidst emergent and expanding capitalistic markets, large-scale industrialization, and representative nation-state government to valorize individual exemplarity and personal uniqueness in worldly affairs. The chapter uses concepts of ‘materialism’, ‘Western
individualism’, and ‘modern artificialism’ to describe modernization in terms of societal and relational engagements where conditions came to privilege a self-creating and asserting, relatively autonomous and autarchic form of life. It sets out a provisional definition of subjectivity as the ‘immediate’, self-orienting and self-projecting condition that human-being takes in modernizing Western conditions. Chapter 2 also uses these discussions to look at Western modernization in terms of changing practical and discursive ‘normative’ conditions and shifting material-physical ‘ontic’ contexts.

In particular, the chapter uses Dumont’s concept of ‘modern artificialism’. The concept describes a generalizing of the application by persons to worldly affairs of private will-objectives that are, in effect, the socially conditioned concentrating within their personal ‘wills’ of ‘objectively true’ reality. As a historiographic claim, Western ‘individuals’ act, create meanings, and modalize things such that the world corresponds with and, so, responds to their individual wills, rather than the traditionally ordained Truth of a definitive cosmology. In the sparest sense, I define modern artificialism as the ‘art of making’ reality. Modern artificialism implies that humans ‘encounter’ or ‘experience’ the (socially created) ‘world as it is’. Modernization frames the world as reality — ‘all there is’ — such that the world can only ‘be’ for a single human in the ‘act’ of ‘being’. Recognizing subjectivity on these terms also implies that sociality itself be seen to legitimize the Natural order of things. Discussing subjectivity in these terms means looking at sociality in terms of humans acting within and conceiving of the world as subjected to ‘material forces’. This means taking modern ‘secularization’ to mean that humans create and reproduce the social world within a field of material-physical binding variables that encompasses in sum total.

Using these concepts, Chapter 3 discusses subjectivity in political terms, that is, in relation to a dynamic conception of social power. Habermas’, and Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner’s work allows discussion of Western modernity as an unstable social world that can be said to ‘be’ what it is created and reproduced ‘as’. In this sense, the creating and reproducing of structured and institutionalized patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses might be said to historically privilege particular milieux. Moving to consider social power as such means that subjectivity brings into generalized contention what the world ‘is’ while also ‘concretizing’ what it can be. However, insofar as such modernizing Western forms of authority and value criteria are seen as contingent and arbitrary effects of the dynamics of social power —

of practical and discursive conditions that humans create and reproduce amidst material-physical contexts — these also endure in space, over time, and through institutions. This is to say that normative conditions predominant in particular social worlds ‘go on’ amidst an ontic ‘context’ that is, itself, always-already socially created and construed in relation to the socialized and embodied job of being human.

The provisional definition of a dominant subjectivity — as ‘immediate’, self-orienting, self-projecting and, so, self-creating and self-asserting — implies it is the social creation of, but also socially created by humans ‘being’ in particular ways. Chapter 2 also raises a requirement that inquiry delineate between subjectivity and individualism. These discussions point to the predominance of a particular formation of individualism, as a situation-specific aspect of a dominant subjectivity. The Chapter looks at how particular patterns of monopoly over and access to materials, practices, and discourses, amidst certain material-physical contexts, can be said to privilege a predominant form of life. For the present thesis, subjectivity is the form taken by human-being in modernizing (Western) conditions. This means discussing human-being in its ‘material-physicality’ and its manifest ‘situation-specificity’. Subjectivity is the socially created and reproduced ‘limit’ of arbitrariness and contingency, as well as the source of forms of authority and value criteria that ‘go on’ in particular conditions.

As the thesis brings it in, however, the term ‘legitimacy’ demands a two-sided definition. On the one hand, it warrants definition in relation to what goes on within society. In this sense, the present thesis takes ‘legitimacy’ to have meaning in reference to a particular society’s forms of authority and criteria for establishing values. Where this meaning is used, the term will be written in single inverted commas. On the other hand, legitimacy also warrants definition from within inquiry’s analytic perspective. Legitimacy in this sense may or may not concur with a society’s norms or values, such as justice, equality, or liberty, for example. Without inverted commas, legitimacy has meaning in relation to the enduring continuities and commonalities that humans create and reproduce in time, over space, and through institutions. Social worlds involve legitimacy because they endure and recur in ways that mean inquiry can re-present them in theory.

In this sense, the material-physicality of subjectivity — enduring in space, over time, and through institutions as an always-already embodied and socialized condition — implies that human-being be seen as the limit of contingency and arbitrariness. Looking at subjectivity as the ‘immediacy’ of human-being — ‘being’ human in a world that encompasses in sum total: in reality — allows the present thesis to focus upon a situation-specific form of life, and the dynamics of social power that humans create and reproduce because ‘going on’ amidst an arbitrary and
contingent ontic field. The forms of authority and value criteria conditioned in and through the dynamics that social power takes in modernity imply patterns of monopoly over, and access to materials, practices, and discourses that endure in space, over time, and through institutions. Chapter 2 begins to suggest an approach to subjectivity as a condition of ‘shared’ space and time, and institutions, as well as of interanimate relational forms held in-common: which subject-agents ‘carry’ with them, and communicate with each another. That is, the present thesis sets out to discuss a dominant Western subjectivity as a social-historical condition that ‘goes on’ in relation to what might be seen as the norm-based and relational condition that is human-being.

Taking subjectivity to be an ‘immediate’ and self-orienting condition — human-being as ‘self-consciousness’ in a ‘total’ social world that turns on autonomous self-creation and self-projection within ‘objective’ reality — implies discussing the job of creating and reproducing social worlds as if contingency and arbitrariness are made particular in particular ways. Hence, the present thesis recognizes a dominant subjectivity in a way that also means recognizing the particular situations in and through which liberal individualism creates and reproduces contemporary Anglo-American sociality.

However, looking at subjectivity in this way also means avoiding references to a (transcendent) point ‘beyond’ the world, while explanation remains ‘external’ to embodied — therefore, ‘psychologically’ inaccessible — subject-agents. On the one hand, recognizing material-physical totality as the (social-historical) enframing context for subjectivity — because created and construed in sum total as reality — implies a need for inquiry to focus upon arbitrariness and contingency as enframing contexts. On the other hand, recognizing subjectivity to mean that subject-agents ‘bear’ enduring commonalities and continuities — because creating and reproducing materials, practices, and discourses that constitute social worlds in sum total — implies a need for inquiry to focus upon normative conditions. Furthermore, taking human-being to be a norm-based and relational condition implies that inquiry itself make clear its relation with these two ‘ontological’ and ‘normative’ registers.

Chapter 2 suggests how a modern Western subjectivity can be seen as dominant in conditions where milieux of bourgeois private citizens that, by virtue of their control over wealth and power, arose to assert themselves politically against milieux defending the authority of faith and validity of ancestry. That is, Chapter 2 recognizes a dominant subjectivity as ‘being’ deeply individuated in particular ways. The bourgeois private citizens, which Habermas describes as

‘propelled by their drives as free men’ amidst an ostensibly self-evident Natural Order, might be seen as milieux that acted within structured and institutionalized conditions which privileged a particular form of life. Alongside other formations of individualism, the liberal sovereign individualism such milieux represent in practice might be said to have become central to the job of creating and reproducing sociality. This raises concerns with what Habermas calls a ‘bourgeois culture of arts and letters’ that, although similarly antipathetic to religious dogma and hereditary privilege was, nonetheless, opposed the predominant individualism of the liberal-democratic bourgeois ‘public sphere’ based in restricted franchise, Natural Law, and representative government. In practice, modern Western subjectivity might be said to impose upon the world what the world ‘is’ and ‘can be’ because particular actions, meanings, and things come to be ‘privileged’ as situations in relation to the job of creating and reproducing it.

These elements in Chapter 2 inform discussion in Part II, Chapters 5 and 6, concerned with Anglo-American ‘countercultural’ individualism since the 1960s and 1970s and Chapters 7 and 8, which develop the concept of ‘core arenas for sociality’. However, this emphasis on how social worlds can be said to ‘endure’ in space, over time, and through institutions, might call to mind that strand of nostalgic conservatism which sees modernization as a force that undermines the coordinating and constraining effects of traditional hierarchies and ancestral values. Briefly pausing to consider how such conservative theory might account for modernization and social change distances the present thesis from such a perspective.

François Furet seems to adopt such an order of conservatism where arguing that, “With the French Revolution … the notion of erasing the past bespeaks modern artificialism, the obsession with constructing society rather than considering it as given by the Natural or divine order of things”. Furet appears to observe materialism, Western individualism, and modern artificialism, but to leave un-reflected upon the normative and ontic ‘ramifications’ that subjectivity would seem to imply. While large-scale radical movements, such as those of the French Revolution, might aim in one way or another at ‘erasing the past’, it also seems the case that modernization, of itself, demands ‘construction’.

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The present thesis suggests that, contra Furet, it is modern artificialism that bespeaks erasing the past. At least, insofar as subjectivity implies orienting the self in relation to reality and projecting the self in relation to society in sum total, which might include a culturally defined relationship with ‘the divine’ or Nature. What might have once been ‘given by the Natural or divine order of things’ becomes, in Western modernity, an impossible scenario. To look at things in this way seems to demand of inquiry a shift across analytic registers. In one register, materialism and individualism, modern artificialism, and subjectivity point to an unstable and risky condition that the world ‘is’ what humans create it to be. In another register, such conditions mean that the world ‘as is’ demands intervention and reflection because humans ‘be’ within it as material-physical ‘beings’. Conservatism’s appeals to the given-ess of a Natural order would again seem, in practice, to work as a justification for existing forms of authority and value criteria. Subjectivity, in its barest philosophical meaning as ‘self-consciousness’ — and as used here to mean the ‘immediate’ self-orienting, self-asserting, and creating condition that human-being takes in modernity — would seem to mean that modernization demands critical reflection upon the creating and reproducing of itself, as an encompassing totality.

Elements of Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, extend Chapter 2’s approach, which takes formations of individualism to be situation-specific aspects of a dominant subjectivity. These chapters develop a concept of ‘core arenas’ to suggest how contemporary ‘globalizing’ conditions across Anglo-America might be said to privilege particular patterns of access to and monopolies over materials, practices, and discourses. These chapters take up Giddens and Sharp to suggest that, amidst relatively complex abstract systems and technologically extended forms of the social, conditions in ‘core arenas’ might be said to privilege a particular form of life. The concept of ‘core arenas’ focuses discussion upon the intertwining of structured and institutionalized conditions with social and cultural practices and discourses, and sees these in relation to recent Anglo-American social history. Taking core arenas to be the ‘sites’ for a dominant subjectivity in particular means linking the industrialization of culture over recent decades — including the widespread imbricating of hitherto ‘countercultural’ individualisms into the ‘mainstream’ — to the predominance of relatively well-educated, articulate, worldly, and ‘creative’ forms of life. Looking at individualism as a situation-specific aspect of a dominant subjectivity in these ways points toward possibilities for inquiring into modernizing conditions without stepping beyond them, or evaluating culture from within an implicitly determined hierarchy of cultural forms.

In these respects, the present thesis aims to avoid theory that, since ‘the events of September 11 2001’, would evoke ‘the moral order’ or ‘true values’ as if requiring little or no
appraisal as to their sources within human sociality. In addition, the present thesis aims to aver from theory that, at the ‘end of the Cold War’, seems based in the kinds of ‘post-materialist’ individualism which might ultimately carry inquiry upon the wave it describes, in a direction that partially elides critical reflection upon its own foundations. The present thesis uses these discussions to distance itself from those kinds of “romantic ruthlessness” that, in practice, might work in support of unjust uses of power to assert the naturalness of a ‘given order’. These discussions also orient inquiry away from those kinds of “self-abnegating romanticism” that, because ‘forgetting’ the always-already material-physical and socialized state that is human-being might, in practice, point to an unbinding of social power that leads to deepening economic inequity.181

This said, Chapter 3 suggests that early modern Western philosophy of the subject might retrospectively be seen to reflect upon the human condition based in ‘strong’ empirical claims. The chapter looks at Kantian and Hegelian philosophy, as well as Marxist theory, in order to suggest how these seem to unify analyses around something beyond the world itself: a transcendent, metaphysical, or utopian principle. The chapter suggests an odd meeting point between some types of Marxist theory, and liberal-conservative rational action theory. On the one hand, it might be said that certain Marxist theories ‘aggrandize’, while on the other hand, rational action, or game, theory seems to ‘trivialize’ inquiry. It is suggested that a pre-theoretical universal constant, such as species-being or rational action, unifies analyses because interceding upon what both approaches otherwise recognize as the secular radicalization of human-being in modernizing Western conditions: as ‘immediate’ self-orienting and self-projecting subjectivity.

Chapter 3 takes up Delanty’s and Pippin’s suggestions that Kant and Hegel might provide the groundwork for taking things in another direction: that is, away from a ‘strong’ empiricism which make the ‘immediacy’ of being in reality the basis for claims about the world and ‘being’ in it. This is not to suggest that ‘strong’ empiricism is not, but that it is the discrete moment of ‘being’ in reality. Hence, the present thesis’ emphases on moving away from claims about reality, while recognizing that being ‘immediately’ in reality is the social-historical and material-physical condition

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181 Here, I draw upon Alfred North Whitehead’s point that “romantic ruthlessness is no nearer to real politics than is romantic self-abnegation”. See, Whitehead, Science & the Modern World, 135.
for ‘subjectivity’. Delanty and Pippin suggest that both Kant and Hegel indicate possibilities for non-metaphysical theories of subjectivity. For Delanty, Kant makes clear that judgement concerning an aesthetic dimension of human-being need to be seen as affairs of ‘public sense’; lest these be taken for objective, an illusion. Meanwhile, for Pippin, Hegel sees ‘the empirical sciences’ as being based in reflection upon human-being and not, merely, the facts so found and so experienced.

In this light, it might be said that Kant and Hegel recognize ‘strong’ empiricism as a problem for making claims about the world. Adopting ‘strong’ empiricism might mean things could readily be taken for objective, an illusion, and implicate within inquiry facts as (subjectively) found and experienced. The present thesis takes Delanty’s and Pippin’s insights to mean both Kant and Hegel, in distinct ways, pointed to a need for inquiry to be based in a perspective upon human-being as ‘lived-through’ in the world as a norm-based and relational condition radicalized by modernization.

These philosophical discussions — insofar as they deal with subjectivity as the human condition in (Western) modernity — help to orient my approach around human-being as an ongoing and dynamic condition. Looking at things in these ways implies a need to develop an approach to social conditions, ongoing sociality, and subjectivity that recognizes the irreducibility to ‘strong’ empiricism of claims about social worlds. This suggests a need for an approach that rests in a ‘weak’ empiricism that does not unify analyses within a perspective that assumes the world ‘is’ for other than a single human in the act of ‘being’. By ‘weak’ empiricism, I mean tracing links between claims about the empirical world through normative conditions to material-physical contexts — that is, through inquiry’s ontic commitments — and back again. On the one hand, the present inquiry needs to look at normative conditions as what humans create in order to ‘go on’ in shared material-physical contexts. On the other hand, it needs to look at material-physical contextuality as a totality of binding variables, which humans ‘be’ amidst because ‘going on’ springs from the normativity that humans create and reproduce as embodied ‘beings’ in space, over time, and amongst others.

Describing material-physical reality in terms of the ‘immediate’ moment of ‘being’ implies a commitment to ‘weak’ empirical claims, it requires a kind of agnosticism characterize inquiry.

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123 The concept of the ‘ontic field’ as a ‘totality of binding variables’ that presses upon inquiry a need for ‘ontic commitment’, and the idea that such work can be carried through using ‘ontological categories’ are discussed in detail in Chapters 11 and 12. These chapters bring in these motifs through engagements with Willard van Orman Quine’s and Jan Westerhoff’s philosophy and Paul James’ and Carol Gould’s social theory.
Inquiry itself goes on in relation to reality as what encompasses the ‘immediacy’ of being human and to human-being as a norm-based and relational condition. Hence, Chapter 3’s suggestion that subjectivity might be seen as having difference that precedes identity (qua self-recognition) because human-being is an embodied material-physical condition. Gaining iteration as difference, or identity, is said to be a condition of ‘being’ an embodied subject-agent, in space, over time and amongst others. Again, this raises a need for the present inquiry to work across analytic registers. In one register, subjectivity manifests because subject-agents ‘are’ embodied beings in space, over time, and amongst others. In another register, patterns of subjectivity mean that subject-agents can be said to make (material-physical) reality ‘real’ in particular ways, and to create and reproduce affective worldly social ‘orders’. For the present thesis, a dominant subjectivity is ‘being’ amidst the peculiarly modernizing and globalizing societal structures and institutions that humans create and reproduce as (contemporary Anglo-American) social worlds. In this sense, it might be said that the social-historically conditioned qualities of ‘immediacy’, self-projection, self-orientation, self-assertion, and self-creation seem manifestly to ‘go on’ in tension with the norm-based and relational condition that human-being can be said to ‘be’.

While Chapter 3 relates this provisional definition of a dominant subjectivity to early modern Western philosophy of the subject, Chapter 4 brings in, in a limited way, Durkheim and Weber. Chapter 4 uses Durkheim’s account of individuation and Weber’s discussion of vocation and authority in mass democracies to frame discussion of conditions for an ‘immediate’, self-orienting and self-projecting, self-creating and asserting dominant subjectivity.

Chapter 4 looks at conditions that Weber identifies with Western modernization — in particular, the tendency for large-scale structured and institutionalized inter-relations to turn upon ‘instrumental’ forms of rationality — as if, in key respects, it is antithetical to a definition of human-being as a norm-based and relational condition. In these respects, the present thesis does not use these sociologists’ work to calibrate its account of modernizing and globalizing conditions in relation to an absolute, constant, or ‘objectively desirable’ condition. Rather, its critique is conducted in relation to a claim that takes human-being to be what ‘goes on’ at the level of material-physicality — humans ‘are’ because being human is an embodied, norm-based and relational condition, which ‘goes on’ in space, over time, and through institutions. Where the
contemporary Anglo-American West is taken to ‘go on’ amidst ‘globalizing’ conditions, it is arguably the case that interanimate situatedness and inter-relational proximity remain the stuff of human sociality.

A dominant subjectivity might be said to manifest amidst relatively expanded productive forces, societal complexity and abstractedness, extended forms of inter-relating, and deeply individuating conditions that, amongst other things, mean a messy totalization of forms of authority and value criteria which partially obscure or annul aspects of human-being as a ‘lived’ condition. The chapter uses Durkheim and Weber to suggest how a dominant subjectivity may manifest in relatively complex, abstract, and extended conditions, where particular practices and discourses seem to impel relatively high levels of formal education, articulateness, and individual autonomy. In these respects, the claims for mass democracy and challenges to authority that Weber sees as part of industrial and capitalistic (Western) modernization might be seen in terms of core societal arenas and particular situation-specific formations of Western individualism.

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The chapters in Part II use these exegeses to background discussion of relatively recent social conditions and public affairs alongside contemporary social theories of subjectivity. A summary of key points that these chapters raise will serve as a guide for development of an approach to inquiry in Chapters 10, 11, and 12.

(1) The first point concerns theory that reaches beyond the boundaries of the human social world, for an extra-worldly motif that might be said to work as a universal constant. Theory of this order may ‘go too deep’, and obtain explanatory force by opening inquiry up a utopian future. Or, it may make a hermeneutic project, itself, analyses’ heuristic device, in which case subjectivity becomes a kind of gnostic device that is set-off in pursuit of an ever-receding horizon. Maintaining analytic distinction between, for example, difference and identity in this case becomes appraising subjectivity in relation to sociality conceived as a common hermeneutic project. Theory of this order seems to bind inquiry to claims that subjectivity is on a trajectory ‘away from’ or ‘towards’ the achievement of an idealized future-perfect or ever-expansive ‘utility’ or, that an inauthentic subjectivity always fall just short of some ultimate authenticating anchor point.

(2) A second point implies theory may ‘be too shallow’, and assume that the world is of a pre-social Natural Order. This second theme concerns theory that establishes an arbitrary logical
pre-supposition, such as rational self-interest or, alternately, a fallen state and that in the job of social analysis is transformed into an empirical claim. Embedding, for example, a rational actor within theory in this way might imply that inquiry cannot but find empirical conditions for either limitations upon or a profusion of rational actions. Similarly, embedding a claim that humans share a fallen state, or essentially sinful nature, within theory implies that inquiry cannot but find empirical evidence for unconstrained sinfulness, or strong safeguards against such action.

(3) Alternately, a third point concerns theory that may substitute ‘means’, such as social power for ‘ends’, such as a form of authority or criteria for determining value. This third point seems to disallow specific claims as to the relationship between human-being as a ‘lived’ condition and being human as ‘living’ amidst a particular state of affairs. In practice, such theory might assert the rather bland truism that power is ‘everywhere’ sociality, while eliding that demands are placed upon individual subject-agents by ‘others’. Because seeming to conflate social power with what the ‘physical’ sciences might describe as force or inertia, such theory appears to frame inquiry in a way that makes asserting personal will-objectives over the world the primary strategy for avoiding the vicissitudes of social power. Such theory constructs ‘power’ in such a way that it eclipses possibilities for thinking about human-being as a shared and communicative condition: ‘power-as-ends’ means a wholesale subsuming of the terms by which it is deployed by humans as they ‘go on’ in social worlds.

(4) A fourth point arises with theory that seems to imbricate its topic, subjectivity, so neatly within the society it sets out to explain that analysis seems to jettison its commitment to the material-physicality of ‘being’ human, such that inquiry loses its critical edge. This fourth point concerns theory that describes conditions that may be relatively complex, abstracted, socially extended, and intensive, yet allows its account of subjectivity to follow the same trajectory. In a way similar to theory that it might be said ‘goes too deep’, such theory seems to require ‘strong’ empirical claims that unify reality in ‘psychologizing’ claims. A point of difference between these first and fourth points is, however, that the latter seems to involve reducing subjectivity to a kind of replica of conditions in the relatively complex, technologically extended, abstractly mediated, and largely systematized sociality it theorizes. Such theory discusses engagements within contemporary sociality as if human-being were, itself, a post-materialistic condition of constant ‘self-creativity’: a project of self-emendation where there are only ‘players’; that is, relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate ‘winners’ and those who wait, as it were, on post-materialist society’s margins as potential ‘winners’.
Therefore, the present thesis aims in the next chapters to discuss an approach to inquiry that (1a) and (2a) avoids theory that goes ‘too deep’ or ‘too shallow’ by accounting for subjectivity as a socialized creator of social worlds that are norm-based and relational and, also, a reality that is the artifice which individual subject-agents make ‘real’. Discussion in the next chapters also works to develop an approach to inquiry that (3a) avoids transposing ‘means as ends’ by recognizing that humans create and reproduce forms of authority and value criteria, and the means for sustaining and developing challenges to their legitimacy. Therefore, the developing approach recognizes society’s normative contents are bound up intimately with the actions, meanings, and things that humans create and reproduce as part of the job of ‘going on’ in material-physical world that endures in space, over time, and through institutions. Furthermore, the next chapters discuss an approach to inquiry that (4a) works to avoid imbricating a dominant subjectivity within sociality in ways that mean it closely resembles a functioning unit of a system-like social world. In this sense, the developing approach maintains commitment to material-physical embodiment across ontological and normative registers in relation to a claim for human-being’s ‘normativity’ as a norm-based and relational condition.

To conclude this chapter, I outline the steps that Chapters 10, 11, and 12 take to develop a framework for inquiry based around these themes. Chapter 10 discusses anthropological theories of societal dynamics that focus upon the creating and reproducing of social structures and institutions that, in part, establish enduring yet contestable forms of authority and value criteria. Chapter 10 also discusses anthropological theory of relational dynamics that focuses upon what are seen as the commonalities and continuities that humans create and reproduce because they ‘go on’ within in-common and enduring material-physical social worlds.

This discussion begins to conceptualize subjectivity in terms of the imagining of ‘real’ worlds, which subject-agents materialize as material-physical reality. The chapter begins to define the impetus for ongoing sociality in terms of a ‘weak’ empirical claim that human-being is a norm-based and relational condition. Chapter 10 suggests that what is ‘kept out’ of sociality is an important focal point for inquiry. In relation to contemporary Anglo-American societies, the chapter suggests that what is ‘kept out’ of the inter-relations that create and reproduce forms of authority and value criteria is, of itself, the liberal individualism central to the job of creating and
reproducing Anglo-American societies. The chapter suggests such individualism might be seen as a situation-specific aspect of a dominant subjectivity. Looking at societal and relational dynamics in these terms allows a conceptual separation between the dynamics of ‘legitimation’ and the ongoing legitimizing of the order of things that ‘goes on’ because sociality is an enduring human creation. This means orienting inquiry towards a critique of the structures of authority and value criteria, and the modalities of institutionalization that mean these can be seen as enduring and extending, in space, and over time; as giving form and content to affairs in-common; and, as marking out the continuation, perpetuation, and propagation of social relations.

Chapter 11 uses engagements with current philosophy and social theory to develop a schematic approach to inquiry that takes modernity to be a pervasive ‘wholism’ of binding variability. This discussion develops a set of ‘ontic commitments’ that frame the inquiry over an ontological register, recognizing ontology “entails a normative component”.183 The chapter sets out a framework for analyses that discusses ‘ontological categories’ of spatiality, temporality, embodiment, and institutionality as making possible ‘states of affairs’. The chapter suggests these ‘categories’ can be said to enframe the social formation of subjectivity. It then combines engagements with current social theory and social philosophy to discuss the social constitution of subjectivity where conditions can be said to affect sensing, perceiving, and imagining layers of ‘being’. Chapter 12 links the ontological categories of temporality, spatiality, institutionality, and embodiment with this schema to conceptualize the social constitution of subjectivity in terms of three coeval layers of somatic, ‘practical’, and reflexive subjectivity. It concludes by setting out an approach to inquiry that brings these two levels of analysis within an ontological register to inquiry over a normative register. The chapter approaches inquiry over a normative register that, on the one hand, discusses normative conditions that ‘go on’ in and through the creating and reproducing of social and cultural practices and discourses. On the other hand, it uses the claim that human-being is a norm-based and relational condition to draw inquiry over ontological and normative registers together. The chapters in Part IV take up inquiry on these terms through a series of illustrative examples.

This chapter develops a theory-based approach to societal and relational dynamics through engagements with Maurice Godelier’s and Annette Weiner’s social anthropology. In terms of societal dynamics, I use these authors’ work to frame my approach to social power and value. These authors help me to look at humans as creating forms of authority and value criteria as they reproduce social structures and institutions and, in so doing, privilege patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses that might be said to enframe a dominant subjectivity. In terms of relational dynamics, I use these authors’ work because it helps me to set out an approach to human interrelations that focuses upon how humans can be said to relate as they engage in time, in space, through institutions, and amidst things as embodied subject-agents. These authors’ work helps me to ground my argument in appeal to a normative claim that human-being is, of itself, a norm-based and relational material-physical condition.

Engaging work by Godelier and Weiner allows the inquiry to discuss social conditions and subjectivity while maintaining commitment to embodiment, and ‘weak’ empiricism. However, this raises a distinct theoretical-conceptual problem. That is, approaching sociality through a lens that focuses upon the dynamics of social power, and of inter-relational commonalities and continuities diminishes the importance of analyzing symbols and signs. Because the analysis of signs and symbols is sometimes taken to be a primary concern in theories of subjectivity, notably those based in psychological or psychoanalysis, I take this issue up briefly in the second part of the chapter, insofar as it has a bearing on the direction of my argument. In the next chapter, I bring this normatively grounded approach to societal and relational dynamics to theory of contemporary modernity to set out a framework for analysis of the formation of a dominant subjectivity that traverses normative and ontological registers.

184 N. B. My use of the term ‘dynamics’ here is not intended to mean diachronic or synchronic ‘functioning’, or a combination of these in some ‘functional order’. Rather, I use the term to mean that the societal, ‘in-common’, and inter-relational, ‘communicative’, aspects of social worlds at which inquiry looks, ‘from within’, are ongoing and endure in space and over time.
For Godelier, society “is brought into existence and sustained only by the union, by the interdependence of … two spheres and by their difference, their relative autonomy. [C]ontractual exchange, on the one hand, and non-contractual transmission on the other … both of which are equally necessary and exist only by means of one another”.

On the one hand, “alienable things” are open to exchange, through reciprocity, contract, commoditization, sale, and trade, or gift-giving and, therefore, to determination and symbolic representation as items of value. On the other hand, “inalienable things, which are not governed by contract … not negotiable, which are located outside or beyond the domain of reciprocity”, which “individuals or groups keep for themselves”, such as “narratives, forms of thinking, specific, or abstract objects” are “anchored in the nature of things” because ‘transmitted’ as humans engage, interact, and relate in material-physical settings.

In Western modernity, a vast multitude of actions, meanings, and phenomena are ‘alienable’. Primarily, it is a universal medium for exchange, which take the form of money and its ‘financial’ permutations, such as consumer or investment credit, for example, which facilitates the ‘alienability’ of things. In Godelier’s terms, money and its permutations serve as stand-ins for what is ‘alienable’ in modernity: it signals socially created ‘values’ of ‘things’. Godelier suggests, “The possession of money has become the necessary condition for a physical and social existence” in globalizing modernity. However, he also recognizes that, even though “everything, or nearly, is for sale” as a condition of so-called neoliberalization, this seeming universal exchangeability — apparently reducing almost all aspects of sociality to economic calculation as “alienable things” — does not, for him, constitute the “universal fact” of human sociality.

In this sense, Godelier militates against both ‘crass’ Marxist and utilitarian materialisms. In the light of Godelier’s thesis, the constituting of sociality appears more than the effect or sum total of a nexus between the contract-like establishing of exchange-values and the creating of norms framing use-values. Theorizing societal dynamics in terms of the intertwining of “twin spheres of exchange and transmission” facilitates analyses of how subject-agents ‘create’ sociality, yet also facilitates discussing what subject-agents ‘bring’ to exchanges in order that they attribute value to

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186 Ibid., 33, 34, 35-37.
187 Ibid., 204.
things. To operationalize his thesis, Godelier engages Annette Weiner’s argument that a central feature of societal dynamics is the manifesting of “inalienable possessions”, or things, through social practice, cultural discourse, and worldly phenomena. Godelier, with Weiner, argues it is the social creating of ‘inalienable’ things that facilitates the valorizing of exchanges, by serving to stabilize forms of reciprocity, contractual bartering or, the cash-mediated commodity trading predominant in globalizing modernity;

"[T]here is always, in every human activity, if it is to be constituted [in the material world], something that precedes exchange and in which exchange takes root, something that exchange both alters and preserves, extends and renews at the same time. Beyond the sphere of exchanges lie other domains, another sphere constituted of all that humans imagine they must withhold from exchange, reciprocity, and rivalry, which they must conserve, preserve and increase … which partakes of (imaginary) continuity, which is rooted in time, in the blood, in the soil, and, so on. But [this] imaginary cannot transform itself into the social, it cannot manufacture ‘society’ by existing on a purely ‘mental’ level. It must be ‘materialized’ in concrete relations which take on their form and content in institutions, and of course in the symbols which represent them and cause them to send messages back and forth, to communicate. When the imaginary is ‘materialized’ in social relationships, it becomes part of social reality." \(^{188}\)

For Godelier, a consequence of human engagements within sociality is the transmission of commonalities that “affirm deep seated identities and their continuity over time … affirm the existence of differences of identity between individuals, between the groups which make up a society or which … situate themselves respectively within” different societies. \(^{189}\)

Godelier uses the term ‘myth’ to describe continuities and commonalities that humans ‘imagine’ and, in action, ‘materialize’, thus, ‘transmit’ though and between each other in spatial and temporal, socio-cultural and institutionalized contexts. Importantly, Godelier does not argue the mythical realm is itself society, or that myths create social reality. His notion of ‘myth’ in these respects is incommensurate with and, indeed, antithetical to philosophical idealism or transcendental metaphysics. In this sense, I am taking Godelier to imply sociality is a phenomenal reality where actions, meanings, and things emanate particular configurations of practices and discourses, and material-physicality, because humans ‘are’ in time, in space, and amongst others. It is in these respects that Godelier’s thesis begins to make possible a mode of analysis that would

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\(^{188}\) Italics, emphases and parentheses in original. Ibid., 27, 35, 36, also, 133-38, 66.

\(^{189}\) Ibid., 33, also, 171-75.
recognize ongoing sociality as the enframing of particular ‘forms of life’ and as an arena in which socialized subjects, as meaning-creating agents, ‘go on’ in the societies they create and reproduce.

I now turn to address Weiner’s work directly. Weiner discusses how “inalienable possessions” might be said to manifest in and through the job of creating and reproducing particular practical and discursive conditions and material-physical contexts:

The work of keeping relationships, possessions, and cosmological [or secular] authentications dynamic and vital, given the natural and cultural propensity for loss, entails the creation of difference that activated nodes of power and domains of authority while delimiting constraints against hierarchy. It is against these opposing forces that difference is established so that the power that difference generates is, simultaneously sought after, yet submerged; proclaimed, yet disguised; nurtured, yet defeated.\textsuperscript{190}

Weiner suggests the socio-cultural creation of “inalienable possessions” affectively generates power, validates control, verifies difference, or supports the evaluation of phenomena, while also framing potential restraints upon authority, difference, hierarchies, or value criteria. Through sociality and, therefore, in the commonalities and continuities ‘materialized’ in it by socialized, embodied, subject-agents they themselves appear to construct and construe the “inalienable possessions” that “color the styles, actions, and meanings that create the exchange-ability” of “alienable” actions, meanings and things. For Weiner, “inalienable possessions are embedded with culturally authenticating ideologies … that give shape and drive to political processes” and “project political potential onto every essential exchange”.\textsuperscript{191}

Weiner’s argument means that, to look at the transmitting of commonalities and continuities as materialized in space, over time, upon bodies, and through institutions is to look at what binds sociality as an ongoing affair fraught by a problematic world. Her thesis implies that, in shifting socio-cultural and material-physical environments, inquiry into ongoing sociality might discuss metamorphosing and violable normative and material criteria for authenticating power, establishing value, as well as for challenging authority, resisting hierarchy, or expressing similarities and differences. Hence, for Godelier, “Beyond the realm of economic exchange and symbolic representation, of contract and reciprocity, there remains all that goes into the bonds between

\textsuperscript{190} Weiner, \textit{Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping While Giving}, 150.

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 33, 34, 149-53.
individuals, all that comprises their relationships ... all that means that human beings live in society but that they must also produce society in order to live”.192

... ... ...

This approach to societal dynamics, however, might raise comparison with three different theoretical perspectives, which discussion pauses briefly to examine here. First, Godelier’s and Weiner’s theses might be seen as moving close to a kind of pragmatic contractual liberalism, because taking up what might be called an ‘agency’ perspective on inalienable things. However, I suggest that this would involve arguing that ‘inalienable possessions’ directly assert the value of things or empower human agents because they preternaturally subscribe to some inherent ‘Natural law’ or univocal symbolism. Therefore, Godelier’s and Weiner’s theses are taken to imply that nature, as well as any symbolic references that may emanate from the world as natural environment, is a continual social ‘innovation’ and not ‘a given’, as contractual liberalism might be said to assume.

Second, focusing upon societal dynamics in these terms might call to mind the concept of ‘biopower’ in governmentality theory. Arguably, as Chapter 7 suggests, these approaches appear to cast ‘power’ as if an end in itself. While they might make it possible to classify, or taxonomize, examples of ‘sovereignty over bare life’, governmentality theory relativizes inquiry because not differentiating between conditions for the creating and maintaining of ‘legitimate’ normative orders and overstepping or obfuscating them. In these respects, Godelier’s and Weiner’s theses are taken up because offering a perspective on the creating of social power and norms that is critical about how sociality and subjectivity might ‘legitimate’ power and actualize value in the absence of references to embodied human-being, in space and time, and amongst others. It offers a purview on practical and discursive conditions that generate forms of authority and criteria for verifying differences in value that also opens potential constraints upon them to analysis in relation to the job of ‘being’ human.

Third, and in a slightly different way, Godelier’ and Weiner’s theses might call to mind Bourdieu’s extensive discussions of “symbolic alchemy”, “symbolic violence” or “symbolic capital”. While Chapter 12 discusses Bourdieu in more detail, his concept of “symbolic violence”,

which explains the social creating of sources of “symbolic capital” in terms of the accumulation of power amidst “individual self-deception sustained by a collective self-deception, a veritable collective misrecognition inscribed in objective structures … [that] excludes the possibility of thinking otherwise [about power in society]” is interesting here.\footnote{See, for example, P. Bourdieu, \textit{Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action}, trans. G. Sapiro, et al. (London: Polity Press, 1998 [1994]), 95, 99-103.} Arguably, while “inalienable possessions” might be cast in this way — as if translucent repositories for “symbolic capital” — doing so would be to imply these activate “nodes of power and domains of authority” without also “activating possibilities”\footnote{Weiner, \textit{Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping While Giving}, 150.} for brinkmanship or for politicizing modes of exchange, beyond what might arguably be seen as cynical acts of ‘capital’ accumulation. In these respects, because casting societal dynamics in terms of shared and communicated — ‘norm-based’ and relational contexts — Godelier’s and Weiner’s approach allows social power \textit{and} value criteria to be seen as always and already within the (potential) control of humans. The questions raised by the possible or probable appropriation of these by single subject-agents remains beyond the scope of the present thesis’ inquiry.

To return to the main thread of this chapter, the discussion looks at how Godelier’s and Weiner’s theses open possibilities for inquiry from a perspective that sees committing actions, creating meanings, and modalizing things as ‘materializing’ a \textit{reality} that, of themselves, appear to “\textit{legitimize} the order of the universe”:

What is produced and reproduced through the establishment of the personal bonds [constituting sociality] is all or part of the social relations which constitute the foundations of the society and which endow it with a certain overall logic that is also the source of the social identity of … groups or individuals. [What] individuals and groups which make up a given society [manifest] is not only their personal [or corporate] wills but a-personal or impersonal necessities having to do with the nature of their social relations, which spring up again and again in the process of producing and reproducing them.\footnote{Godelier, \textit{The Enigma of the Gift}, 33, 102, 72, 77. Italics in original.}
In this sense, sociality is seen as the ongoing constituting of particular yet consistently metamorphosing and violable normative conditions amidst material-physical ‘worldly’ contexts that encompass in sum total. However, the term ‘legitimation’ raises a conceptual issue that requires further clarification. Insofar as the term is central to Habermas’ theory of modernity and modernization, “Legitimacy means that there are good arguments for a political order’s claim to be recognized as right and just; a legitimate order deserves recognition. Legitimacy means a political order’s worthiness to be recognized. This definition highlights the fact that ‘legitimacy’ is a contestable validity claim; the stability of the order of domination (also) depends on its (at least) de facto recognition”. Hence, I take Habermas as offering a political account of ‘legitimacy’ and ‘legitimation’: “Only political orders can have and lose legitimacy; only they need legitimation”.196

Here, discussion points up a difference between Habermas’ use of ‘legitimation’, and Godelier’s and Weiner’s use of the term. Based in a perspective that implies to commit actions, create meanings, or modalize things is to materialize a phenomenal reality that, of itself, “legitimizes the order of the universe”197, the thesis takes Godelier’s and Weiner’s use of legitimation to imply the existence of analyzable states of affairs, in societies, which involve social power. That is, Godelier’s and Weiner’s use of legitimation here implies that sociality ‘goes on’ in ways that, in analysis, imply the creating and reproducing forms of authority and value criteria within delineable, because ‘held’ in common and continuing, spatial and (epochal, or linear historical) temporal contexts. As such, Godelier’s and Weiner’s theses orient the present inquiry towards a focus upon what subject-agents might be said to “crystallize and reproduce” as conditions for the ongoing formation of subjectivity. By opening to discussion actions, meanings, and things as what socialized subject-agents have “in common … by the fact of belonging to the same society”,198 in space and over time, the suggestion is that these are open to inquiry because they effect lasting structures and institutions. These engagements with Godelier’s and Weiner’s theses help to orient analytic focus towards ways that sociality may privilege particular practices and discourses, other others, within a pervasive societal context. Moreover, these imply my inquiry into the formation of subjectivity might focus upon the ongoing creating and reproducing of particular normative conditions within a field of structured and institutionalized ‘ontic’ contexts. Hereafter, the present

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198 Ibid., 33, 35, 177.
thesis takes ‘legitimate’ to mean the worthiness, as just or right, of a social order, and legitimate to mean the lasting or enduring qualities of a social order.

Discussion now revisits the discussion of Godelier’s and Weiner’s theses, and brings them to bear more directly upon inquiry into conditions in the contemporary Anglo-American West. I want to link these engagements to my suggestions in Chapters 2 and 3 that modernizing structured and institutionalized conditions seem to privilege a particular formation of liberal individualism as a situation-specific ‘aspect’ of a dominant subjectivity. This discussion relates Godelier’s conceptual schema more directly to the present thesis’ argument and, as such, moves away from his term ‘myth’.

Godelier uses Jean-Joseph Goux’s commentary on passages from Marx’s *Capital* to discuss the ‘paradoxical’ constituting of capitalistic societies in which almost everything is possibly ‘for sale’. Godelier looks upon Marx as describing how money, manifestly ‘inalienable’, is also the means for exchanging what is ‘alienable’, where “in principle, a person could obtain immediately and without restriction, gold coins in exchange for the banknotes or other monetary signs in circulation … [because] paper money represented gold”. Godelier takes Marx’s argument that, “as the standard of value, gold is merely nominal money and nominal gold; purely as a medium of circulation it is symbolic money and symbolic gold; but in its simple metallic corporeality gold is money or money is real gold”. Godelier wants to look upon gold as both money, the motor for exchange, and the anchor point for monetary value:

[I]n the midst of a market economy, of universal currency, and generalized competition … something needs to be kept out of circulation … withheld from the sphere and the movement of exchange in order for the mass of the market and bank exchanges to be set in motion, for everything that can be bought or sold to begin circulating. [Money appears to] occupy two places at the same time, one at the very heart of the exchange process … as a medium of payment, the other prior to or beyond exchange, where it constitutes a stable reference point for measuring the value of whatever circulates in these exchanges.

199 Ibid., 26-29.
Godelier argues, in retrospect, that Marx represents ‘real’ gold as the ‘inalienable’ aspect of money: both motor and anchor point for “industrial capitalist” society because subject-agents ‘imagine’ it to be such. Godelier argues that, for a mode of exchange, for “a currency (symbol) to circulate and serve as wealth or capital, it must be authorized, as it were, by its ties with some reality which does not circulate, which is kept out of the exchange sphere and which appears as the true source of exchange value”. Godelier uses Marx’s thesis to argue that, in modernizing ‘capitalistic’ conditions, sociality might be said to go on as if socialized subject-agents collectively ‘imagine’ the power and value of money, which they materialize in the job of creating and reproducing capitalistic societies.\footnote{Parentheses in original. Godelier, \textit{The Enigma of the Gift}, 33-37, 163-64.}

However, Godelier also recognizes that reading Marxist theory in this way fails to characterize sufficiently the ‘totalizing’ quality of modernity. In this sense, Godelier suggests that taking Marx’s thesis to relate the value of money to ‘real’ gold might be to point to an “inalienable possession” in particular historical conditions, but not sufficiently to explain the ostensibly ‘mythical’ terms of inalienability in contemporary conditions. Godelier points out that the collapse of the “gold standard” — to which Nixon’s moves to end US dollar ‘convertibility’ might be added\footnote{H. Kuroda, "The "Nixon Shock" And The "Plaza Agreement": Lessons from Two Seemingly Failed Cases of Japan’s Exchange Rate Policy," \textit{China \& World Economy} 12, no. 1 (2004): 3-4.} — raises empirical problems for Goux’s take on Marx’s work.

It is here that Godelier takes a pointed step towards clarifying his rather muddy concept of ‘myth’ in contemporary settings. He recognizes that modernization institutes a structural “differential” in Western societies; between those for whom money imbricates within productive sociality and those for whom (lack of) money excludes, marginalizes, and disenfranchises. Godelier argues that the structural composition of this “permanent deficit of solidarity” rests in the political institutionalization of the liberal-democratic nation-state, which enshrines and defends positive freedoms and “equal status before the law”.\footnote{Godelier, \textit{The Enigma of the Gift}, 204-06.}

What Godelier argues is that Western representative democracy, via the binding articles of constitutions, juridico-legislative machinery, and parliamentary governance, enshrines “the \textit{individual}, the corporeal person” as the “inalienable thing”, which works to generate power, validate control, verify difference, and support value criteria for things in the world. However, at this point, I want to aver from uncritically accepting this aspect of Godelier’s thesis. It is too static:
[That] the individual, the person, may not be bought or sold by a third party … an individual’s body remains their own property; this is guaranteed by law, and this property can never be turned into a commodity. Individuals … as corporeal and spiritual singularities, cannot be put on the market as commodities, whereas everyday they can deal in the market as economic agents.\(^{204}\)

To support this claim, Godelier argues that the inalienability of the Western individual person is so because the parliamentary, liberal-democratic constitutional “legal system in which it is rooted does not belong to the sphere of market relations”.\(^{205}\)

Here, the chapter turns to set out some differences with Godelier, and then discusses the way the argument will move on move on. I first deal with the notion that the corporeal person is inalienable and, then, the way Godelier distinguishes between the Western nation-state (politicized juridico-legal system) and the market (capitalistic economic system). Presented in Godelier’s terms, ‘economic’ inequities — injustices consequential upon spheres of production, consumption, or distribution — cannot manifest ‘legitimately’ “before the ‘law’” because Western liberal-democratic constitutional ‘law’ recognizes persons as free and equal individuals. Yet, extending away from Godelier’s thesis, I suggest that the ‘law’ he points to intertwines and combines with a range of structured and institutionalized conditions. These are, notably, capitalistic markets and the liberal-democratic political domain. Conditions might be said to privilege engagements on particular terms: those of individual exemplarity and equalitarianism, and do not always rely specifically on (juridico-legislative) ‘law’, but also on economic differentials and ‘legitimated’, that is, un-contested modes of authority.

Godelier argues that, in Western societies, it is the corporeal person as legally protected ‘individual’ that is the “inalienable possession” which subject-agents “keep for themselves” and ‘transmit’ and, as such, works as both motor and anchor point within sociality. However, a few empirical examples may serve to mitigate setting up the inviolability or non-sale-ability of the corporeal person in law as the source of the inalienable possession of contemporary Western societies. Most visible are prostitution, the sale of one’s corporeal body for the pleasure or use of others; pornography, which may be considered prostitution-in-abstraction, in some respects at least; and techno-scientific research, which may co-opt and utilize human, albeit, embryonic

\(^{204}\) Ibid., 205. Italics in original.

\(^{205}\) Ibid., 206.
bodies. Arguably, all or some of these examples exist in the Anglo-American nation-states under the auspices of ‘law’.206

However, more importantly in this sense, if less immediately discernible is the manner by which wage labour itself is the sale of human bodies. More contentiously, forms of micro-credit that involve garnishee-rights over wages and salaries earned over several decades might be seen as a kind of postmodern resuscitation of Medieval penury ‘schemes’. Where such monies are borrowed for ‘necessities’, such as higher education, accommodation, or means of transport, for example, these seem to imply the inveigling of embodied subject-agents into a web of life-long subjection. In these respects, Godelier’s thesis does not take into account the effects of abstraction and mediation that market-oriented modernity seems to bring. His thesis appears to recognize secular institutionalization but also imbricates this into analytic perspective by eliding the mediatized qualities of sociality in market-oriented liberal-democratic settings.

Godelier argues that the inalienability of the Western “individual, the person” is so because the nation-state parliamentary, liberal-democratic constitutional “legal system in which it is rooted does not belong to the sphere of market relations”.207 However, the political nation-state itself may arguably be cast as an institutionalized complex that may cause individual corporeal persons to be “exchanged”; soldiers in war are exchanged for the ‘national good’, hostage exchanges are rare but occur, for example. In a more complex way, many aspects of the law, such as ‘three strikes you’re out’ legislation may result in subject-agents imprisonment for what, in many respects, may be slight misdemeanours. The death penalty might also be judged appropriate for psychologically or psychiatrically disabled or improperly defended persons. Nonetheless, these ethical-moral considerations aside, the death penalty might amount to ‘exchanging’ one corporeal individual for ‘public safety’. Furthermore, some Commonwealth or, at least, British persons might, in the strictest legal terms, be Royal subjects and not citizens.

As such, the thesis looks beyond the entrenching of the individual as a corporeal person, ‘before the law’, as key source for the commonalities and continuities that anchor and impel sociality. Instead, it turns from the individual corporeal person, protected by the ‘law’ in Godelier’s thesis, because it seems to imply the political system stands apart from sociality per se, rather than capitalistic markets based in individual exemplarity and equalitarianism. Instead, I want to set out a

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perspective on the ‘inalienable thing’, which might be seen as both anchor point and motor for contemporary Anglo-American sociality on less formalistic terms, by employing the dynamism that I take Godelier’s and Weiner’s theses to imply.

Therefore, my argument looks to the liberal individualism that, because seen as a situation-specific aspect of a dominant subjectivity, can be said to manifest as both motor and anchor point for the ongoing job of creating and reproducing Anglo-American sociality. I take liberal individualism to be the dynamic ‘lived’ form of life that the particular patterns of access to and monopolies over materials, practices, and discourses within these societies privilege. That is, such individualism is seen as the predominant form of life manifest in and through, the key way of ‘going on’, within core arenas for sociality. The forms of authority and evaluation criteria that manifest in Anglo-American societies do so in relation to a predominant form of life, a liberal individualism that subject-agents ‘live’ and, so, embody in space, over time, and amongst others.

In these respects, the distinction between individualism and subjectivity is important. In the next chapter, this delineation frames conceptualization of the approach as a method for inquiry. It means that looking at the same thing — subjectivity — requires three registers of inquiry. An ontological register attuned to the pervasive qualities of modernization, a normative register that recognizes social conditions are human creations, and a critique of normativity that relates being human in conditions that might privilege a particular form of life, to ‘being’ human as the ‘human condition’.

However, approaching societal dynamics in this way also implies a particular approach to relational dynamics, which I now pause briefly to discuss. Reflecting upon how my discussion in this chapter implies a particular way of conceptualizing (inter-)relational dynamics is important because, while maintaining analytic ‘weak’ empiricism, this comes at the cost of raising a relatively vexing theoretical issue. The discussion touches on this issue, because approaching sociality and subjectivity in the terms suggested here seems to problematize theory that conceives of the primacy of a ‘symbolic order’ in societal and relational dynamics.

On the one hand, using these anthropologists’ work as the basis for theorizing societal and relational dynamics implies the primacy of an imaginary-‘real’ nexus that subject-agents ‘bring’ to reality. In effect, it implies that subject-agents ‘are’ a material-physical and, so, embodied imaginary-
‘real’ nexus. In these respects, because humans are said to act, create meanings, and modalize things in time, in space, and through institutions, the ‘imaginary’ can be seen as that (embodied) aspect of human-being in social worlds. As such, the ‘real’ can be seen as the (embodied) locus for conscious ‘being’ in the world, over time, and through institutions, and the font of reflexive ‘adjustment’ to a world where nature and culture change, fall apart, and wear out. Hence, I use the imaginary-‘real’ nexus here as the motif for human-being as a specific somatic state of existence. It is analytically inaccessible to my inquiry, yet a part of reality and, moreover, the source of the ‘phenomenal’ universe. This is to take an agnostic view of things. This view of societal and relational dynamics implies a perspective that sees subject-agents imagine ‘real’ worlds and, so, (re-)constitute and (re-)affirm relational ‘identities’ in space, over time, within bodies, and through the institutions that ‘going on’, of itself, creates and reproduces.

Socialized, embodied humans materialize common and continuing ‘real’ worlds; that is, ‘being’ human is effectively making reality. It might be said that humans share and communicate (within) reality in order to ‘go on’, but do not share, nor do they communicate reality. Embodied subject-agents ‘live’ particular continuities and ‘hold’ particular commonalities with others, which means that sociality involves structured and institutionalized ways of doing things within reality, but also that reality as such can be seen only as the ‘field’ in which arbitrary and contingent possibilities manifest. Identifying such arbitrariness and contingency made particular would, then, seem to imply not so much identifying a form of life — as is the job of ‘being’ human itself, of ‘living a life’ — as justifying identification as such in relation to what is in-common; the material-physicality of ‘being’ human. Such an approach involves moving away from the duality, ‘identity – difference’, and towards a tripartite schema, ‘identity – difference, and particularity in relation to the enframing of identity – difference’.

On the other hand, looking at sociality as such seems to demand that inquiry relegate concepts of the primacy of the ‘symbolic order’ in inter-relations to a subsidiary role. This approach contrasts with such theory; that is, an approach that discusses inter-relationality in terms of human-being as the interpretation(s) of symbols and signs. This approach suggests an analytically inaccessible nexus between imaginary and ‘real’ comprises subject-agents’ relationships within reality. For Godelier, “inalienable things” manifest a “visible synthesis … [that] combines and unifies the contents — imaginary, symbolic, and ‘real’ — of all social relations”. Bound within subject-hood, subject-agents constitute sociality, but transmit commonalities and continuities that “condense and unify the imaginary and ‘real’ components of social reality”, but this remains off-limits to my inquiry. In this sense, the symbolic order “merely makes the system visible … The
symbolic logic is a logic of relations but these cannot be reduced to their symbols. And, as these symbols are polysemic, the content of these relations cannot be directly deduced from or reduced to the analysis of their symbols”. As such, the symbolic order works as static ‘signposting’ for action by more, or less, affectively “stating the order that should prevail in society”.

In the light of these engagements, conceiving of relational dynamics from a perspective based in, for example, ‘symbolic exchange’ might seem limited to pointing out the possible intentions that a symbol’s creator might hold, or cognitions that a symbol’s exchanger might make. In these respects, focusing on the primacy of ‘symbolic exchange’ would seem to require that a particular symbolic Code or Order stand beyond, preternaturally ordaining symbols or signs with meaning and value. Alternatively, such a focus would seem to imply an analytic capacity to intervene upon intra-subjective states. Chapter 5 suggests that certain structuralist and post-structuralist theories might be said to work in this way: they seem to objectify societal and relational dynamics by setting ostensible ‘principles’ beyond sociality itself — a symbolic Code, or psychoanalytically derived constant — and, as it were, reading symbolic relations ‘back off them’.

In these respects, the approach might call to mind Wittgenstein’s philosophy: subjects-agents imagine ‘real’ worlds and, in action, creating meanings, and modalizing things, create and reproduce an ongoing reality that emanates signs and symbols which are manifestly ‘sign-posts’ for a form of life. As such, a symbolic order, such as the code by which traffic signals operate, might imply a particular form of life: that of drivers, for example, because symbols signal human’s ‘re-cognition’ of them. Yet, these do not necessarily open to discussion the contents of any relation between cognition and signs, which might be to ‘sublime the logic’ of signs (as a kind of language). This implies that the present inquiry should recognize that humans represent ‘to each another’, and that such representations attain ‘justification’ in relation with others because they ‘are’ embodied, in space, over time, and amongst others. Moreover, in these respects, the argument takes reality and not the ‘real’ to be the important “indivisible remainder”: the ‘real’ or the imaginary-real nexus are merely the conceptualized groundwork for inquiry into societal and relational dynamics that requires its own justification in relation to human-being.

208 Ibid., 104, 21, 27, 34, 74.
209 Again, I take up Wittgenstein here to help clarify how focusing upon a symbolic Order might be a problem for the direction these engagements with Godelier and Weiner imply I take things. Discussing ‘certainty’ Wittgenstein suggests, “Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end:— but the end is not certain propositions’ striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game”. In addition, “If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, nor yet false.” In the light of my discussion here of relational dynamics, and Wittgenstein’s comments, it might be the case that theorizing an “elusive link between signifier and signified”, or a “kernel of the real that resists signification” because constituting an “indivisible remainder” that belies the never complete
Godelier’s and Weiner’s work is used here to imply analysis is always ‘indirect’; it aims to bring into view the affectivity of a reality that subject-agents materialize as the job of creating and reproducing social worlds. Therefore, my inquiry springs from ‘weak’ empirical claims about the world. Reality is an environment or atmosphere in which normative and material social existence ‘goes on’. In this sense, these engagements mean that inquiry focuses upon a reality where socialized subject-agents, as it were, imagine along similar lines and, therefore, create particular worlds. Focusing on ways that social and cultural practices and discourses emanate commonalities and continuities because embedded in material-physical contexts implies a framework for analysis that recognizes subjectivity as the social enframing of subject-agency for a particular world.

In conclusion, this chapter suggests how discussing relational dynamics in these terms implies a focus upon socialized subject-agents that imagine ‘real’ worlds and materialize these to constitute reality through actions, meanings, and things. This opens the formation of subjectivity to inquiry as a socio-cultural condition, while avoiding implicit or explicit intervention into intra-personal states and, so, unifying analysis in ‘strong’ empiricism by extending reality beyond that of a single subject-agent in the act of being. Moreover, it suggests approaching analysis in this way implies sociality and subjectivity is taken as a norm-based and inter-relational ‘affair’ that involves the creating and reproducing of plastic and violable forms of authority and value criteria, as well as challenges to authority, resistance to hierarchies, and expressions of similarity and difference in material-physical contexts.

As Chapters 2 and 3 suggest, modernity can be seen as implying that reality is ‘presence’, and subjectivity the self-orienting ‘immediate’ form that human-being takes amidst modernization. Bringing in the device of ‘modern artificialism’ here suggests a perspective upon sociality as, simultaneously, the creating and reproducing of a world that is a tergo concrete and ‘objectively true’, yet plastic and violable; where forms of authority and value criteria can be said to manifest in particular ways. For the present thesis, this means that what happens when embodied humans in space, over time, and through institutions, create and construe a material-physical world that embrace the “symbolic order” would be superfluous. Arguably, such an approach might ‘lead back’ to the ‘critique of mass society’ and the problems of theories of ‘totalitarian domination’. For example, this issue arises where Slavoj Žižek argues, “The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic real kernel”. Here, it seems he draws implicit reference to a place where there is no ‘trauma’, or to a possibility that subject-agents can escape embodiment in the material-physical world to a place where the ‘traumas’ that ideology offers to ‘tickle’ them with are not as attractive as it. L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. N. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. D. Paul and G.E.N. Anscombe (New York: Harper & Row, 1969 [1950]), §204, 05, Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, esp. §65, 87, 94, 97, 105, 98, 432, S. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, ed. E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Phronesis* (London: Verso Books, 1989), 45.
encompasses in sum total, leaves sociality open to monopolization through forms of authority and value criteria, but never to total domination.

Therefore, engaging with Godelier’s and Weiner’s work here means looking to liberal individualism as a form of life that might be said to both anchor and impel the job of creating and reproducing contemporary Anglo-American sociality. Discussing a situation-specific aspect of a dominant subjectivity as such, means that inquiry focuses upon actions, meanings, and things as humans create and reproduce, which in space, over time, and through institutions, privilege patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses. That is, these engagements help to approach sociality as the producing of normative conditions for particular forms of life because human-being is a norm-based and relational condition that ‘goes on’ amidst binding and encompassing material-physical contexts: wherein, as Weiner suggests, there exist ‘natural and cultural propensities for loss’. Looking at societal and relational dynamics on these terms implies a framework for inquiry which looks at sociality as an in-common and enduring affair, which encompasses human-being in sum total. The next chapter sets out the approach to inquiry over an ontological register that focus upon the social formation and constitution of subjectivity. Chapter 13 sets out the approach to inquiry over a normative register that focuses upon the creating and reproducing of normative conditions as these can be said to privilege a particular form of life and in relation to a critique of normativity that springs from a claim that human-being is a norm-based and relational condition.
11 The social formation of subjectivity

This chapter briefly discusses recent debates over how philosophical inquiry should take up and apply ‘ontology’. Initially, it discusses Jan Westerhoff’s contribution to these debates, and sets up a bridge between philosophical concerns to justify the concepts that structure reflecting on the world, and social theory concerns to justify an account of worldly conditions as humans can be said to create and reproduce them. Apropos the problem of avoiding ‘strong’ empirical claims, the chapter takes ‘ontology’ to mean the job of explaining, or ‘theorizing’, the material-physical totality of binding variables, the ‘ontic field’ that always and already enframes human-being within social worlds. Westerhoff’s work is used to distance ‘ontology’ from essentialist positivism and idealist metaphysics, and as a way into developing an approach to inquiry over an ontological register that recognizes analyses always contain epistemological and normative components.210

On the one hand, the chapter ‘looks back’, and uses these discussions to ground the epistemological assumptions that have remained implicit in Parts I and II. On the other hand, the chapter also ‘looks forward’, and uses the caveats that Westerhoff places on ‘ontology’ as bases for operationalizing the approach as a contribution to the critical social theory of subjectivity in the contemporary Anglo-American West. In these respects, it then discusses Paul James’ suggestions that critical social inquiry needs adequately to recognize how social-historical formation effects the ordaining of “ontological categories”. The chapter takes up James’ account of ‘ontology’ — as a concept that refers to “the basic framing categories of social existence … modes of being-in-the-world, [which are] historically constituted in the structures of human interrelations”,211 — in order to develop my approach to the formation of subjectivity over an ontological register.

210 I take ‘always’ here to mean ‘in all contexts’, and ‘already’ to mean ‘prior to perception, but not to human sensation’. Hence, I take it that ‘ontology’ seeks to explain the ‘ontic’ or, moreover, the ‘ontic field’. In these respects, I take up Westerhoff’s thesis in the light of Quine’s arguments, to suggest that ‘ontology’ involves an *Ontic Commitment* which has the form of a general principle that to ‘be’ is to be the ‘value’ of a bound variable. Hence, all human ‘things’, including ‘ideas’ such as mathematical logic are, in one sense or another, ‘empirical’ by virtue of ‘always’ and ‘already’ being in a relationship to the material-physicality of human existence. See, Quine, *Word & Object*, 238-43, Westerhoff, "The Construction of Ontological Categories," 619.

211 James, *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism: Bringing Theory Back In*, 324.
The chapter then turns to Pierre Bourdieu’s anthropological sociology. It revisits and extends discussion of Bourdieu’s theses on the ‘shared misrecognition’ or repression of ‘symbolic violence’ said to motivate sociality through a dynamics of ‘symbolic capital’. Nevertheless, those aspects of Bourdieu’s work that centre on the concepts of *habitus*, *bodily hexis*, and ‘practical’ consciousness help to shift from inquiry over an ontological register focused upon the formation of subjectivity and to a focus upon its social constitution. The chapter again brings in Wittgenstein to help clarify the direction Bourdieu’s concepts are taken. Hence, the chapter develops and schematizes what Chapter 9 describes as a need for inquiry to range across and unify analyses over an ontological register, normative register, and in relation to normativity as a ‘lived’ condition in particular (modernizing Anglo-American) social settings.

... ... ...

Westerhoff’s thesis is helpful here because it allows definition of material-physical contexts for sociality, the ‘ontic field’, in a way commensurate with the main research problem identified as a need for ‘weak’ empiricism. Westerhoff addresses an important problem in contemporary Western philosophy, which concerns attempts to use ontology to delimit or define the “essences of things”, arguing that “ontological claims about essences inexorably involve epistemology” and, therefore, do not stand as justified of themselves. Westerhoff’s central claim is that “ontological categories” need to be set out in terms of what they frame, rather than as defining the unifying or irreducible properties — the essences — of objects:

[Philosophers] have to give up the idea that information about ontological categories supplies us with information about the essences of objects … since what things there are in the world is a contingent matter, claims about ontological categories cannot have the modal force attributed to them when it is claimed that they provide us with information about the essential properties of things. Ontology systematizes information about how objects can go together to form states of affairs … it provides us with a unified account of how objects in this world fit together into states of affairs.\(^\text{212}\)

For Westerhoff, “ontology looks much more epistemological than ontologists would like to think” because, to claim that “information about ontological categories supplies information”

about “the essences of objects” is to fail to recognize that, of necessity, ontology includes epistemological categorizations.\textsuperscript{213}

In this way, Westerhoff approaches ontology as a means for conceptualizing an arbitrary and contingent ontic field in which states of affairs may or may not arise meaningful, normative conditions. Westerhoff’s thesis implies that ‘states of affairs’, particular normative conditions, can be seen as manifesting amidst a totality of binding (material-physical) variables: an ontic field. That is, ontology can explain the ontic field as a material-physical context which holds forth possibilities that social conditions ‘be’ in particular ways, and recognizes that to explain conditions, as such, is to assume some relation with them. That is, ontology makes it possible to explain situations as arbitrary and contingent possibilities which may or may not give rise to particular state of affairs, while recognizing that the ontic field always(-already) gives rise to some kind of state of affairs. It might be said that recognizing the arbitrariness and contingency in and through which social conditions manifest cleaves the job of claiming that things ‘be’ in a way that means such claims require three interlinked perspectives. Rather than attempting to obtain an ‘ought’ from an ‘is’, while maintaining a position ‘outside of either’, Westerhoff’s argument implies that to claim something ‘is’ is to establish a relationship between arbitrariness and contingency — the perspective from which inquiry takes place, and the material-physicality of ‘being’ human in space, time, and a social context.

Using the way that Westerhoff ties ontology to arbitrary and contingent possibilities that states of affairs manifest allows the setting aside of ‘strong’ empiricism, \textit{qua} the argument, but not to jettison possibilities that subjectivity has ‘strong’ empirical qualities. Arguably, the emphasis throughout Part I on the concept of ‘modern artificialism’ raises this matter as a social-historical claim. As such, Weber’s injunction that ‘disenchantment’ and ‘intellectualization’ do not mean “an increased and general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives” but, moreover, “the knowledge that if one but wished, one \textit{could} learn it at any time” offers some direction.\textsuperscript{214} In the light of Westerhoff’s thesis, it might be said that Weber’s claim means that subjectivity makes the \textit{reality} that enframes human-being recognizable in sum total, not from within (individual) ‘being’ itself — even though ‘Western individualism’ may imply \textit{reality} be taken this way, ‘psychologically’ — but, in relation to human-being as a ‘lived’ and, so, shared and communicative condition. Hence, I take Westerhoff’s suggestions to mean that inquiry needs some account of the universe

\textsuperscript{213} \textit{Ibid.}: 619.

as it can be said to be in relation to being human within in it, in order to avoid the ‘strong’ empiricism that would merely posit how the world is or should be from within a single ‘being’.

Westerhoff opens ontological categories to discussion as aspects of the phenomenal world and, thus, shifts ontology away from metaphysical speculation, and the polarity between positivist Realism and relativism. On the one hand, discussing ontological categories as contingencies through which states of affairs may manifest in particular ways dissociates inquiry into worldly human affairs from metaphysics, because making explicit a need for inquiry to clarify the perspective it assumes and relate this to the arbitrariness and contingency of possibilities that mean things manifest around it in particular ways. On the other hand, such an approach dissociates inquiry from essentialist positivism — which would imply that Nature is identical to that supposed to enframe worldly human affairs, or that Human Nature is of a fixed specificity — because loading onto inquiry a need to justify itself in relation to its ‘position as claimed’.

Ontology indicates that a state of affairs can ‘be’ (in variable ways), while also indicating that claiming the world ‘is’ in particular ways requires substantiating in a different register. That is, while the sheer arbitrariness and contingencies of possible manifestations of states of affairs and things ‘is’, affairs and things do manifest in particular ways that hold, and do so in relation to the job of ‘being’ human. At issue here, alongside saying what particular affairs and things manifest, is the situation from which spring claims about what ‘is’. Westerhoff’s thesis effectively ‘de-mystifies’ ontology by delimiting, as part of inquiry, to the job of rendering how ontic contextuality might be said to enframes states of affairs. As such, Westerhoff’s work on ‘ontology’ allows inquiry to step from philosophy to social theory by offering a way into the job of doing it that ‘hangs onto’ material-physicality and the norm-based and relational condition that is human-being.

These engagements imply that ontology contains epistemological ‘references’ and, so, indicates possibilities for a normative project; the ‘generative and unifying principle’ is the job of socialized embodied human-being, in space, over time, and amongst others. Hence, ontological references to material-physicality merely supply information about how a state of affairs may manifest, or ‘fit together’, and requires inquiry consider the always-already societal and inter-relationl qualities of the world. Based on these suggestions, inquiry might ‘step around’ metaphysics and positive ‘foundationalism’ and approach the world in terms of the shared and communicated, creating and reproducing by socialized embodied humans of particular states of affairs. Therefore, to discuss ontology is to bring to light material-physicality, as a totality of binding variables that also requires explanation in terms of both practical and discursive normative conditions and ‘normativity’: the societal and inter-relational condition that is ‘being’ human. This
means the approach inquires over an ontological register, focused upon how the ontic field can be said to enframe actions, meanings, and things, over a normative register, where materials, practices, and discourses manifest, and that relates these to what Weiner suggests is the ‘problematic nature’ of the world that subject-agents materialize as they ‘go on’. That is, where human-being ‘is’ in ways that mean questions about what ‘ought’ to be arise. Ontological inquiry offers a way of setting out to explain how a totality of binding variables might be said to enframe subjectivity as what ‘going on’ can be said to be, where actions, meanings, and things come to be as particular historical, socio-cultural, and material-physical states of affairs, or situations.

To reiterate in the light of Westerhoff’s work, it might be said that subjectivity requires explanation in terms of both ontological and normative commonalities and continuities that humans materialize as part of the creating and reproducing of sociality, because human-being is an embodied condition that, itself, ‘goes on’ in space, over time, and amongst others. Discussing ontology in this way means emphasizing the inseparability of inquiry over an ontological register from that of a normative register in relation to a critique of normativity.

To operationalize Westerhoff’s concept of ‘ontology’ — as supplying information about how states of affairs might ‘fit together’ in the world — the chapter now turns to aspects of James’ comprehensive approach to social theory. James builds upon and extends work by Hinkson, Sharp, Simon Cooper, and others associated with the ‘constitutive abstraction’ approach to theory, aimed at developing historical materialism in ways useful for social critique in ‘globalizing’ conditions. For James, contemporary social theory needs adequately to consider its own points of reference in relation to the “levels of analytical abstraction” it operationalizes, as well as those it operates under and within. James suggests that moving in this direction “tak[es] away the innocence of those abstract presumptions that, of necessity, are part of social inquiry”. It makes explicit “how the analytical, political, and the ethical are interconnected”. James’ work is used here to focus inquiry upon an arbitrary and contingent totality of binding (material-physical) variables that can be said to enframe embodied subject-agents as they create and reproduce social worlds.215

For James, ontology “refers to the most basic framing categories of social existence … modes of being-in-the-world, historically constituted in the structures of human interrelations”. James defines these “ontological categories [as] … embodiment, spatiality, temporality, and epistemology”. In the light of Westerhoff’s thesis, James’ ‘categories’ might be seen as offering a way to discuss what goes into how states of affairs may fit together in the world. Construed in this way, ontology works as a means for discussing the enframing of human-being in relation to material-physical contexts. This is important because the way James relates ontology, as a tool in social theory, to social-historical form(-ation) avoids ‘bogging down’ inquiry in the epochal abstractions it explains. James’ approach is used here because it makes legible what the present thesis labels the ‘ontic field’; the ‘immediate’ material-physicality that is reality, yet avoids traducing reality to claims about ‘being’ in it. James’ approach means conceptualizing differently reality, as the ‘platform’ for human-being; social conditions, as subject-agents ‘materialize’ the world; and sociality, where practices and discourses intertwine amidst material-physical contexts in ways that mean subjectivity manifests as the form of life that human-being takes in modernizing conditions.

The discussion here first looks at James’ ‘ontological categories’ of spatiality and temporality. It then discusses James’ categories of epistemology and embodiment, again bringing in Wittgenstein to help clarify the direction taken. James takes up Giddens’ thesis that “the separating of time and space and their formation into standardized, ‘empty’ dimensions” are consequences of the relatively complexity of globalizing modernization. For Giddens, tied up with the reflexivity that he identifies as a structural and institutional condition of modernization is the “separation of time and space and their recombination in forms which permit the precise time-space ‘zoning’ of social life; the ‘disembedding’ of social systems”. However, using Sharp’s work on “constitutive abstraction”, James takes Giddens’ work in a different direction. James moves away from a concept of ‘time-space distantiation’ and, instead, suggests modernity’s effects upon temporality and spatiality can be seen as a social-historical totalizing of conditions for “time-space extension [and] abstraction”. In the light of James’ and Sharp’s re-thinking of Giddens’ work, it might be said that modernization extends, across the globe, forms of spatiality and temporality —

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216 Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity, 26, 27. Italics in original.
empty and measurable space and time — such that sociality ‘goes on’ in abstract and extended ways, in relation to the embodied, in-common condition that is human-being.217

Through Sharp, James offers a means for recognizing the pervasive qualities of modernization, in relation to subjectivity and the social conditions enframing it, but ‘stops short’ of imputing these to the universe beyond human-being and reflection upon it. That is, approaching spatiality and temporality as ontological framing categories does not concretize these as reality but recognizes temporality and spatiality to be aspects of the reality that humans socially create and reproduce. By looking at spatiality and temporality as ontological categories manifest because modernization is a globalizing (social-historical) formation, James offers a view that, contra Giddens, sees the emptying out of temporality and spatiality and their totalization as symptomatic of a social-historical formation that happens to be ‘totalizing’ in particular ways. The implication here is that inquiry focuses upon the arbitrary and contingent as made particular in particular conditions rather than, as seems the case in Giddens’ schema, upon particular conditions made particular because arbitrariness and contingency enframe them.

Modernization involves, among other processes, the standardizing of ‘empty’ clock-time and ‘measurable’ space. In addition, with the extension of these across social worlds, spatiality and temporality are ‘emptied out’ by globalizing modernization, as well as being ‘totalized’ across the world as measurable and empty categories of ‘time’ and ‘space’. It might be said metaphorically that modernity’s future rushes towards subjectivity, as subjectivity rushes ‘headlong’ into it, conferring upon actions in the present pressure to ‘choose’; modern ‘time’ brings the future itself into the present. What is described here as the self-orienting ‘immediacy’ of subjectivity implies the continual onrush of the future over subject-agents, and a piercing of this future by embodied subject-agents as they imagine ‘real’ worlds, and act to create reality. In a similar way, categorizing space as empty and measurable means recognizing it as open to appropriation, not merely in relation to (normative) notions of ‘property’, but in relation to individuated sovereignty over space that manifests as if ‘consumed’ by being in it. Recognizing modern spatiality and temporality in ontological terms, as such, means discussing subject-agents as an ‘autonomous’ unity of soma and psyche; that is, as corporeal, conscious, and reflexive ‘beings’.

The account James gives of epistemology as an ontological category offers a similar means for approaching inquiry. As with spatiality and temporality, James sets up possibilities for comparison between different ontological formations, in and through which epistemology can be

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217 James, Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism: Bringing Theory Back In, 60-61. See, Sharp, "Constitutive Abstraction and Social Practice."
said to delineate dominant modes of human ‘knowing-of’ the world. James also refers to epistemology in terms of a predominant “mode of enquiry”. James’ method makes it possible to discuss pre-modern tribal analogical ‘re-tellings’ as overlaid by traditional sacred textualized Truth, as well as by modern positivistic and systematized, analytically-derived ‘knowledge’, and postmodern relativized informational data.  

Before moving on, I want here to generalize James’ concept of ‘epistemology’ and, in addition, bring in an ontological category of ‘institutionality’. To use institutionality as an ontological category might imply a somewhat slippery addition to James’ more definite concept ‘epistemology’. At least, insofar as the term ‘institutionality’ may seem more or less a normative, rather than ontological condition. Nonetheless, it is arguably possible to discuss institutionality as an aspect of the ontic field and not stretch the scope of ‘ontological categories’ too far. The present thesis makes this move because its inquiry into the formation and constitution of subjectivity is considerably narrower in scope and, arguably, faces inwards, in relation to James’ comprehensive social theory of social-historical formation in modernizing and globalizing conditions. Durkheim is again helpful here, at least, insofar as his definition of ‘institutions’ might be seen, not only as sources of “social constraint”, but also as facilitating sociality:

[The socially constraint that institutions supply] merely implies that collective ways of acting or thinking have a reality outside the individuals who, at every moment of time, conform to it. These ways of thinking and acting exist in their own right [but, of] course, the individual plays a role in their genesis. Since this joint activity takes place outside each one of us (for a plurality of consciousnesses enters into it), its necessary effect is to fix, to institute outside us, certain ways of acting and certain judgements which do not depend on each particular will taken separately … [T]he word ‘institution’ well expresses this special mode of reality … all the beliefs and all the modes of conduct instituted by the [social] collectivity.

In relation to the present thesis’ focus upon subjectivity, institutionality might be seen as an aspect of the material-physical totality of binding variables, the ontic field. This is because, along with temporality, spatiality, and embodiment, and in relation to these and the normative conditions created and reproduced therein, institutionality might also be ‘materialized’ in and throughout the job of creating and reproducing sociality. The present thesis takes it that

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institutionality is always and already a part of the societal and relational dynamics that socially enframe the formation of subjectivity. In the Durkheimian sense, institutionality might be seen as partially constraining, but also as partially facilitating the job of creating and reproducing subjectivity. Moreover, the present thesis takes another step, and divides Durkheim’s meaning here over an ontological register as well as over a normative register. It takes institutionality to imply analytic focus upon the socially, or ‘collectively’, ordained constraint or facilitation that ‘goes on’ in and through the carrying on of societal and relational dynamics. Following Westerhoff and James, institutionality, like spatiality, temporality, and embodiment, can be seen as a material-physical ‘limitation’ that means arbitrariness and contingency enframe ‘states of affairs’ in particular ways. Again, as James argues, taking ontology as such also implies social inquiry exists in a relation to its topic.

Hence, ontological ‘categories’ always and already have a normative dimension, which requires explication. Partial motivation for this move comes from Wittgenstein:

> ‘What the names in language signify must be indestructible; for it must be possible to describe the state of affairs in which everything destructible is destroyed. And this description will contain words; and what corresponds to these cannot be destroyed, for otherwise the words would have no meaning.’ I must now saw off the branch on which I am sitting.\(^{220}\)

Here, it seems, the ‘indestructible’ thing that for Wittgenstein the ‘names in language signify’ is embodied human-being. Similarly, what ‘corresponds’ to description containing words and, as such, ‘cannot be destroyed’, might be seen as the shared and communicative, embodied condition that human-being ‘is’. In a state of affairs where everything that is destructible is destroyed, language would end because human-being does. Wittgenstein’s apparent irony might be seen as aiming to show how the institutionality (in this case, of language) is a material-physical condition that exists in the bodies of subject-agents, because human-being is a spatial and temporal, interanimate condition.

In this sense, where Wittgenstein suggests, “A name signifies only what is an element of reality. What cannot be destroyed; what remains the same in all changes”, he seems to view human-being as an always-already shared and communicative, embodied condition.\(^{221}\) Seeing institutionality as an ontological category would be to see sociality in its always and already sense

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\(^{221}\) Ibid., §59. Italics in original.
— that is, indestructible, insofar as its destruction would require humanity’s destruction — but, as arbitrary and contingent because humans create and reproduce the forms that institutionality might take. What remains the same in all changes is the material-physicality of human-being as an embodied condition, shared and communicated institutionally: in-common and enduring, in time, and over space because subject-agents imagine ‘real’ worlds and ‘materialize’ them as reality. Wittgenstein’s point that a name signifies only what is an element of reality might be taken to mean that signifying (signaling, pointing to) an element of reality — by using a ‘name’ — means making reality ‘real’, and acting such that an element of it is shared and communicated along particular lines. In this sense, institutionality might be said to manifest, not ‘out there’, but ‘out there inside’ socialized subject-agents.

Interesting here is Wittgenstein’s point that, “Thought is surrounded by a halo:—Its essence, logic, presents an order, in fact the a priori order of the world: that is, the order of possibilities, which must be common to both world and thought”. The logic, the a priori order of the world is inextricable from human-being in the world, because its logic is the condition of embodiment, in space, over time, and amongst the ‘others’ that partake of the institutionality which substantiates ‘being’ in a particular social world. The always and already institutionality of subjectivity means it is ‘thinking for’ a particular world: its essence, logic, springs forth because human-being is ‘being’ for particular (modernizing) social worlds. At the ‘centre’ of societal and relational dynamics lay human-being, an analytically inaccessible socialized embodied imaginary—‘real’ nexus that in practice materializes ‘real’ worlds. Material-physical contextuality binds human-being ‘to’ reality in particular, which means to ‘go on’ is to imagine ‘real’ worlds, and to materialize them in space, over time, and amongst others. Subjectivity is ‘being’ for particular worlds; what ‘goes on’ at the nexus of embodiment and modernizing social worlds, making reality ‘real’.

Institutionality means that actions, meanings, and things always and already have illocutionary force and perlocutionary contents. For the present thesis, ‘illocution’ means that actions or things have meaning, by virtue of (simple) existence in social worlds. In addition, ‘perlocution’ means that subject-agents take on meanings as a condition intrinsic to their ‘being’ human. Institutionality means the (social) world offers-up meanings for subject-agents while, because subject-agents ‘be’ in space, time, and amongst others, subject-agents generate meanings ‘for’ particular (social) worlds. For the present thesis, an ontological category of institutionality does not point exclusively to language, the institution of the ‘speech-act’, but — because to be

222 Ibid., §97. Italics in original.
human is to be embodied, in spatial and temporal contexts, as well as amongst others — to the manifest interanimacy of socialized, embodied, and imagining ‘being’ in a material-physical world replete with illocutionary force and perlocutionary contents.

It might be said that institutionality means ‘states of affairs’ manifest in particular ways. The ontological category ‘institutionality’ offers a way into discussing the enduring commonalities and continuities that manifest as subject-agents act, create meanings, and modalize things. Discussing institutionality where recognizing subjectivity to be the ‘immediate’, self-orienting and self-projecting form that human-being takes in Western modernity, and to involve the predominance of a particular liberal sovereign individualism and modern artificialism, means focusing upon how an always-already illocutionary-perlocutionary aspect of being human might be seen to propagate and perpetuate (normative) forms of authority and value criteria. An ontological category of institutionality allows inquiry to focus upon the ‘institutionalization’ of normative conditions amidst a reality that, because materialized by subject-agents as they imagine ‘real’ worlds, also involves the creating and reproducing of challenges to these.

... ... ...

While this emphasis upon subjectivity as an embodied, so, ‘empirical’ condition in time and space might call to mind Bourdieu’s sociological work, I remain with James here, and take up Bourdieu in the next chapter. This is because James’ approach to ontology offers a way into analyses that demands inquiry makes clear both perspective upon, and position in relation to, its topic in a way that Bourdieu’s theory might not allow. Adapting aspects of James’ schema to inquiry into the social formation of subjectivity over an ontological register means not concretizing theoretical assumptions about the essences of states of affairs. Put differently, it means that inquiry involves reflecting upon its own abstractions in order to clarify its claims. In particular, it avoids concretizing epochal abstractions, such as between modernity and postmodernity, for example, within theory. Rather, a key implication of taking up these aspects of James’ schema is that social worlds are seen as part of the formative groundings for social theory, to which theory may be a contribution to the social construction of predominant ways of abstracting from the world in order to ‘go on’.

To clarify, for James, conditions formed in the predominance of non-modern ‘tribal’ social forms mean that ‘lived’ temporality are seen as based in ‘nature’s cycles’, the seasons and the
weather, for example. It is only by *fiat* of social-history that temporality, as ‘lived’ in such non-modern forms, is said to have been of the past. Although modernization encompasses the entire globe, and in many areas threatens to annul ‘tribalism’ as a social form *tout court*, modes of ‘living’ temporality based in ‘nature’s cycles’ remain in existence. Moreover, the seasons and weather themselves are not of the past, nor are ‘lived’ experiences of these aspects of the ontic field. James’ schema allows inquiry to view contemporary modernization as something that envelops and subsumes non-modern social forms within its own predominant orders: which turn on ‘empty’ clock-time and measurable space. Non-modern ‘tribal’ forms may no longer predominate in social worlds and, so, can be said to have gone on in the past, but this is not to say these are of the past. Similarly, in relation to epistemology, it might be said that analogical and telling, as predominant forms of wisdom, of knowledge-ability, did manifest in the past as dominant ways of ‘living’ epistemology. Yet, to claim that globalizing modernization or postmodernization dissolves these as aspects of the human condition seems to concretize an epochal abstraction over sociality; such that face-to-face and ‘folk’ epistemes suffer in analysis the same un-reflected upon fate as these so frequently encounter in contemporary conditions. For the present thesis, analogy, telling, and folk wisdom, as modes of inter-relating, remain important aspects of human-being, even in amidst allegedly all-encompassing hypermodern conditions.

Just as with temporality and spatiality, or embodiment, institutionality might be said to manifest differently if seen as ‘transmitted’ through the kinds of things humans materialize in modernizing an globalizing conditions. The relative complexity, extensity, and intensity that seems a pervasive conditions in contemporary sociality might be said to enframe subjectivity in ways that make institutionality relatively more structured, or concrete than, for example, in conditions predominated by face-to-face ‘presence’, or where visual and auditory cues manifest as parts of ‘nature’ relatively unmodified by human intervention. For the present thesis, ‘real-time’ interaction, or ‘virtual being’ are seen as augmentations within the predominance of modernizing conditions. Moreover, institutionality as an enframing category for forms of authority and value criteria might be seen to manifest more comprehensively in scope and reach in contemporary conditions. In relatively small-scale pre-modern social formations, informal ‘moral codes’, or ‘in-kind’ exchanges may predominate. Amidst the predominance of modernizing conditions, formal juridico-legislative ‘law’, or contractually mediated money exchanges, for example, yet be augmented by near-omniscient postmodern techno-science support for surveillance techniques or ‘hedging’ and ‘futures’ trading schemes. Similarly, printed text might be seen as the vehicle for concretizing and
formalizing language or, symbolic cues, in relation to the ‘art of the hand’, for example, which postmodern computing power amplifies and digitizes.

This is not to suggest that contemporary subjectivity does not manifest under the orders of pre-modern or postmodern ontic contexts. The pre-modern categories of analogical wisdom, or seasonal temporality, for example, as well as postmodern categories of relativized temporality, spatiality and embodiment, made possible by technologically assisted communicative instantaneity, for example, do affect subjectivity across the contemporary Anglo-American West. While it might be said that disembodied postmodern forms of being, such as Artificial Intelligence or ‘cyborg’ embodiment exist in contemporary Anglo-American sociality, from the present thesis’ perspective upon subjectivity, what is important are what James labels ‘rationalized’ and ‘self-reflexive’ embodiment. These are taken to be the predominant formations that the ontological category of embodied ‘being’ manifests in contemporary Anglo-American conditions.

As such, what James refers to as cyborg and relativized embodiment, as well as analogical and mythical pre-modern embodiment are seen as intertwining predominantly rationalized and self-reflexive contexts for subjectivity. For the present thesis, such pre-modern and postmodern categorizations of the ontic field need to be seen as encompassing being-the-world because these interweave with modernization’s predominant ‘rationalized’ ontology. As such, James’ work frames the present thesis’ inquiry into a globalizing social formation in particular; where spatiality, temporality, institutionality, and embodiment are said to be ‘lived’ under the predominance of modernizing conditions. Using James’ schema in this way means raising the need to think about how ‘living’ can be said to ‘go on’ in relation to human-being. The relatively concentrated and intensive information-handling capabilities of ‘personal-entertainment’ devices or, the near-simultaneity that draws different regions of the globe through the world-wide-web, for example, are here considered as abstracting and extending conditions for human-being. Subjectivity ‘is’ being for particular worlds, which for the present thesis manifest in terms that James’ calls ‘modern’, and involve the predominance of ontological categories of empty and measurable time and space, and rationalized embodiment and institutionality. Recognizing the extended and abstracted qualities of social contexts means, therefore, bringing into question the kinds of a priori orders of the world that modernization creates, because embodied subject-agents, in space, over time, and amongst others, create and reproduce enframing categories for human-being. Using the aspects of James’ work in these ways

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223 James, Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism: Bringing Theory Back In, 80.
means gearing the present thesis’ approach to inquiry to analyses of socially created and reproduced abstractions and extensions ‘from’ a claim about human-being as a normative condition. It means approaching inquiry into a dominant contemporary subjectivity in ways that avoid romanticizing a pristine past or utopian future state-of-being while mooring social critique to the material-physicality of human-being as a norm-based and relational condition.
This chapter brings in aspects of Bourdieu’s anthropological sociology that deal with the theory of subjectivity. The chapter takes discussion of James’ schema for analyses of ‘of departure for discussing Bourdieu’s interlinked concepts of 'habitus' and the ‘social field’. However, the chapter does not adopt directly Bourdieu’s schema, instead engaging Carol C. Gould’s work on social ontology and ethical norms. The chapter uses Gould’s work to reflect upon Bourdieu’s conceptual nexus between *habitus* and the social field through the anthropological approach to societal and relational dynamic discussed in Chapter 10. The chapter considers ongoing sociality to be created and reproduced by humans imagining ‘real’ worlds and materializing them — making reality ‘real’ — in order to ‘go on’ in problematic practical-discursive conditions and material-physical contexts. Setting-up the discussion in this way means that the chapter uses Chapter 11’s focus upon the social formation of subjectivity as a way into approaching the social constitution of subjectivity using a concept based in analyses of intertwining somatic, practical-ethological, and reflexive ‘layers of affect’. The second half of the chapter links these two levels of inquiry over an ontological register to inquiry over a normative register. The chapter briefly revisits theory by Giddens and Habermas to explain the approach to inquiry over a normative register, and link the overall framework for analyses to the thesis’ critique of normativity discussed earlier. The chapter concludes by mapping out the approach to inquiry in schematic terms.

For Bourdieu, social conditions enframe “social agents” in action, as socialized examples of ‘*habitus*’ in a particular “social field”. It might be said that Bourdieu’s work focuses upon conditions for the socializing of “social agents” into a kind of *faux* or crypto- self-sufficiency that is both embodied and institutionalized:

[The *habitus* is] this generative and unifying principle which retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position into a unitary lifestyle, that is, a unitary set of choices of persons, goods
and practices … *habitus* are differentiated, but they are also differentiating … generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices … classificatory schemes, principles of classification … of vision and division, [of] taste. The *habitus* fulfils a function … it is a socialized body, a structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world — a field — and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world.\footnote{Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, 8, 81. See, also, L. McNay, "Meditations on Pascalian Meditations," *Economy and Society* 30, no. 1 (2001): 139-54.}

Bourdieu looks at “social agents” as actors engaging in the “social field”, in order to say something about the enframing of the *habitus*, the “generative and unifying principle” that points to embodied position or ‘situated-ness’ within the “social field”:

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operation necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product other orchestrating action of a conductor. [*Habitus*] could be considered as a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures.\footnote{Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 72, 86, McNay, "Meditations on Pascalian Meditations," 140.}

*Habitus* frames being-in-the-world, it gives of order and, as such, is the specific-universality that “brings about a unique integration … of [statistically common] experiences”, which are said to manifest as and where “social agents” act in the “social field”. While arbitrary and contingent, in relation to the forms it might take, *habitus* might be said to represent the ‘potential’ inherent in the socializing or acclimatizing of embodied subject-agents to particular social worlds. For Bourdieu, *habitus* delivers to subject-agents particular preferences for social objectifications, because “every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness”.\footnote{Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 87, 164. Parentheses in original.}

Because “social agents” are bound to engage amidst particular social, cultural, economic, and political orders, Bourdieu’s “social field” emanates ‘rationality’. The *habitus* has ‘rationality’ — following Wittgenstein, it may be thought’s essence, logic, that presents an order that is the *a priori*
order of the world — that, it might be said, Bourdieu seeks to uncover and explain. Rationality, as such, underlines and qualifies “judgements of taste” as rational or irrational: as charming or gauche, for example. In analysis, Bourdieu’s “social agents” are bound to produce and reproduce habitus in distinctive ways because inhabiting, ‘living’, a form of life that is bound to a particular social field’s rationality: for the present thesis, sociality’s structured instituionality. These aspects of Bourdieu’s schema allow ongoing sociality to be seen as the ‘channeling’ of arbitrariness and contingency in particular ways. Bourdieu’s schema helps the present inquiry to focus upon the job of creating and reproducing patterns of access to and monopolies over materials, practices, and discourses while recognizing human-being as an embodied condition that ‘goes on’ in space, over time, and amongst others.

However, Bourdieu takes the conceptual nexus of habitus and the social field further. He seems to use it to locate and specify the impetus for societal and relational dynamics as the rationality it represents’ “naturalization of its own arbitrariness”. For Bourdieu, the habitus necessarily implies doxa, the orthodox way of ‘being’ in a social world that prompts “shared misrecognition”. This chapter now extends suggestions made in Chapters 6 and 10 that these aspects of Bourdieu’s schema might be inappropriate for this inquiry. However, moving on, it is important to again point out Bourdieu’s explicit rejection of ‘rational actor’ theory. Rather, for Bourdieu, social agents act out habitus in the social field and, in doing so, produce and reproduce doxa, which works as a social point-of-reference for “symbolic differences”. “Doxa is a particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal point of view — the point of view of those who dominate by dominating the state and who have constituted their point of view as universal by constituting the state” or, universities, or art industries, for example. In relation to “the family”, Bourdieu sees habitus as the basis for social agents’ acceptance as normal of “pre notions of common sense and the folk categories of spontaneous sociology … [that] help to make the reality that they describe. In the social world,

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227 N. B. Bourdieu argues that habitus does not simply ‘exist’ in the world, but is a theoretical notion, one of the “functions of [habitus] is to account for the unity of style, which unites the practices and goods of a single agent or a class of agents”. Moreover, Bourdieu makes the categorical statement that it “does not make sense … saying that the driving force of all human behaviour [is] the search for distinction”, and flatly rejects Veblen-esque theory that would turn on concepts of ‘status seeking’ or ‘competitive consumption’ represented as Human Nature. Hence, I take Bourdieu’s argument to be that the “the ideology of natural taste”, which habitus is said to ‘refract’ before inquiry, implies merely that “to exist within a social space, to occupy a point or to be an individual within a social space, is to differ, to be different” in a material-physical social world. Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 83, 138-40, Bourdieu, Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action, 8-9.
words make things, because they make the consensus on the existence and the meaning of things, the common sense, the *doxa* accepted by all as self-evident”.

Hence, Bourdieu’s *habitus* is now seen as manifesting at the interstices of social agency (as subject-hood) and the social field’s *doxa*:

[T]he incorporation of a social structure in the form of a quasi-natural disposition that often has all the appearances of innateness, *habitus* … the potential energy, the dormant force, from which symbolic violence, and especially that exercised through performatives, derives its mysterious efficacy. In practice, it is the *habitus*, history turned into nature, i.e. denied as such, which accomplishes practically the relating of *habitus* in and through the production of practice. [Moreover,] the economy of symbolic exchanges rests not on the logic of rational action or of common knowledge … which leads one to think of the most characteristic actions of this economy as contradictory or impossible, but rather on *shared misrecognition*.

Bourdieu describes social sources of “symbolic capital” and “symbolic violence” as the products of the accumulation of power amidst “individual self-deception sustained by a collective self-deception, a veritable collective misrecognition inscribed in objective structures … [that] excludes the possibility of thinking otherwise [about power in society]”. It seems that, for Bourdieu, the point is that symbolic difference begets symbolic violence, which are immanent in the “logic of symbolic goods and the alchemy which transforms the truth of relations of domination”. Shared misrecognition affords an occlusion that imparts to sociality the mysterious efficacy that means it and, so, domination ‘go on’. The mysterious efficacy that appears to motivate societal and relational dynamics springs from a matrix-like complex of shared misrecognitions:

The form par excellence of symbolic violence is the power which … is exercised through rational communication, that is, with the (extorted) adherence of those who, being the dominated products of an order dominated by forces armed with reason (such as those which act through the verdicts of the educational institution or through the diktats of economic experts), cannot but give their acquiescence to the arbitrariness of rationalized force.

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Moreover, Bourdieu situates shared misrecognition and repressed symbolic violence in the “bodily hexis”. For Bourdieu, thinking about the socializing of agency means focusing upon “the relation [of a social agent] to the world is a relation of presence in the world, of being in the world”. Bourdieu extends Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology to open to inquiry the socialization of individual humans as social agents by recognizing that, in analysis, humans can be seen as an embodied “principle of practical comprehension [that] is not a knowing consciousness … but the practical sense of a habitus inhabited by the world it inhabits”. For Bourdieu, the bodily hexis is the material-physical abode for that “practical sense”, which “enables one to act, as one ‘should’ … without positing or executing a Kantian ‘should’, a rule of conduct. [C]ognitive structures are not forms of consciousness but dispositions of the body” that ‘express’ situatedness in the social field:

Practical belief is not a ‘state of mind’, still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of instituted dogmas and doctrines (‘beliefs’), but rather a state of the body. Doxa [therefore] is the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a habitus and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense. Bodily hexis is political mythology realized, em-bodied, turned into a permanent disposition.231

For Bourdieu, to be an embodied social agent is to share in the misrecognitions that society enacts and, as it were, reproduce them. “Doxic submission of the dominated to the structures of a social order of which their mental structures are the product … in fact belongs to the order of belief, that is, to the level of the most profound corporeal dispositions”, which Bourdieu sees as accruing because social agents ‘go on’ in particular social worlds. However, making social agent’s self-deception, shared, or collective misrecognition the central feature of the nexus between habitus and social field means that it becomes the locus for a repressed, misrecognized, or denied symbolic violence that legitimizes and, as such, ‘legitimates’ domination, which might be to pre-empt analyses by implying that to ‘be’ human is to be dominated. For this reason, the present thesis avers from identifying or locating the impetus for sociality in repressed symbolic violence, and its apposite societal and relational motive, symbolic-cultural capital.232

232 “Misrecognition, or forgetting, of the relation of immanence to a world that is not perceived as a world, as an object placed before a self-conscious perceiving subject … is no doubt the original form … of the scholastic illusion. The principle of practical comprehension is not a knowing consciousness … but the practical sense of a habitus inhabited by the world it inhabits, pre-scupted by the world in which it actively intervenes, in an immediate relationship of involvement … which
In the light of this account of aspects of Bourdieu’s schema, the present thesis brings in Gould’s work, which links “social ontology and ethical norms”. Gould’s work helps ground Bourdieu’s schematic nexus between *habitus* and social field in the theory of societal and relational dynamics discussed in Chapter 10. As such, engaging Gould allows the developing approach to inquiry to move away from specifying or locating the impetus for ongoing sociality in ‘strong’ empirical claims. Gould’s social philosophical reflections are helpful because they allow the drawing of a thread through inquiry over an ontological register into inquiry over a normative register in a way that leaves open possibilities for a claim that human-being be seen as a norm-based and relational condition.

For Gould, society is an ethical totality that does not require the positing of “transcendent or external ground beyond the human” or “a fixed human nature”. In addition, Gould avers from basing inquiry’s “conception of value or of right on any immediate, apodictic, and incorrigible moral intuition”, or assertion that “the grounding of a social ethics” requires a “naturalistic … deriving [of] *oughts* from *is’s* or values and rights from nonmoral facts”. Partially following Gould, the present thesis suggests, it is not that some “moral reality exists or subsists …” in itself, to be “read-off by reason or intuited by moral feelings”. Rather, it is the “capacity for self-transformation in [human] activity” that can be said to ‘ground’ forms of authority and value criteria, and their ‘legitimation’ or challenges to them, because ongoing sociality legitimizes the order of the universe. Gould argues that “human beings create and transform their own natures in the course of their activity”, and that this means human-being is a “self-transforming condition”. Conceptualizing humans as ‘being’ (with)in an ethical totality means discussing “social reality [as] constituted by intentional and interacting human beings” that imagine ‘real’ worlds, and materialize them as *reality* in order to ‘go on’. Using Gould in this way means looking at “the genesis of value constructures the world and gives it meaning”. Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 139, 41, 42. Italics in original. Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, 8, 54, 55. Elsewhere, Bourdieu argues that practical consciousness is not the same as moral consciousness, because at this level of analysis, “ethos is merely necessity made into a virtue”. See, Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 77. Italics in original.

and the ground of rights …” as always and already co-dependent with the material-physicality of human-being; its ‘normativity’ as a norm-based and relational condition.234

Rather than adopting Bourdieu’s more broad concerns with how misrecognition may be said to animate forms of ‘cultural capital’, or ‘distinction’ that might mark out how, to a greater or lesser degree, social agents may act out a ‘feel for the game’, the present thesis takes a different direction. Bringing in Gould’s work means that forms of authority and value criteria are seen as being embedded in patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses, which manifest amidst certain material-physical contexts. Looking at sociality through Gould, rather than Bourdieu, allows for a ‘weak’ empiricism that situates the impetus for societal and relational dynamics in a claim that the world is a problematic place for humans to ‘be in’. This approach avoids what Bourdieu seems to decry as the radical-romantic assertion that the universe of existence can be transcended, without jettisoning human-being itself. On the one hand, the thesis takes up Bourdieu’s suggestions that critical social theory is intrinsic to modernity, insofar as it can “rationally analyze domination … and the de facto monopolization of the profits of universal reason”, which in ‘daily life’ are otherwise so often taken to be ‘legitimate’.235 However, on the other hand, the thesis departs from Bourdieu’s line of argument, and does not aim to specify or define the locus for ongoing sociality, other than suggesting that human-being ‘goes on’ as a shared and communicative — norm-based and inter-relational — condition in a problematic reality.236

The present thesis takes the social-historical claim that modernizing social formation is secular, or worldly, to mean that reality is an arbitrary and contingent enframing context in and through which humans create and reproduce particular conditions that, as Weiner suggests, mean that ‘going on’ is “replete with natural and cultural propensities for loss”.237 This means taking sociality to be an in-common and enduring affair that ‘goes on’ in particular, often, difficult and problematic ways because ‘going on’ as such is a norm-based and relational condition in an encompassing reality. Combining Bourdieu’s schema and Gould’s social philosophy allows the present thesis to maintain some of the job that Bourdieu attributes to the nexus between habitus and social field, but means cleaving it over ontological and normative registers. Cleaving the job

234 Ibid., 129.
235 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 83-84.
236 In addition, this approach differs from what might be the conservative assertion that humans, as beings, confront a universe of a-human good and evil forces.
237 Weiner, Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping While Giving, 150.
that Bourdieu attributes to the nexus of habitus and social field over ontological and normative registers allows inquiry to develop its critique in relation to a ‘weak’ empiricism, which draws upon a claim that human-being is a shared and communicative condition that ‘goes on’ in a problematic world.

Societal and relational dynamics ‘go on’ because subject-agents create and reproduce a material-physical reality that emanates commonalities and continuities and, amongst other things, involves situating and prioritizing affairs, persons, and things in relation to others and social worlds. In these respects, reality, said to be re-presentable in analysis as the ‘immediacy’ of ‘being’ limits inquiry to ‘weak’ empirical claims about it. Recognizing humans as imagining ‘real’ worlds, and materializing reality in order to ‘go on’ in this way might displace a need to specify the impetus for ongoing sociality, beyond Weiner’s ‘natural and cultural propensities for loss’. Rather, inquiry can traverse ontological and normative registers of analysis, in order to make claims about how reality’s arbitrariness and contingencies ‘come together’ to mean that states of affairs ‘go on’ in particular ways. Subject-agents might be said to ‘go on’ amidst certain material-physical ‘ontic’ contexts, and to create and reproduce practical and discursive ‘normative’ conditions that enframe a form of life ‘in-dominance’: a dominant subjectivity.

In order to operationalize this discussion as the basis for setting out an approach to the social constitution of subjectivity, discussion again brings in Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein helps to pick up from that place in Bourdieu’s schema that points to the bodily hexis and, instead, to set out from the ‘weak’ empirical claim that human-being is a norm-based and relational condition that ‘goes on’ in a problematic world. The present thesis uses Wittgenstein, like Bourdieu, as offering a way into inquiry that sees embodied ‘being’ as a socially constituted, in space and time, and amongst others, form-of-life. Bourdieu’s “social agents” embody ‘their’ “practical sense” because seen as ‘living’ socialized “dispositions of the body”. Interesting here is Wittgenstein’s point that, “I know only what I call that”; which is to say, “I could not apply any rules to a private transition from what is seen to words”. Wittgenstein seems to suggest that to ‘be’ is to embody a private condition that is nevertheless always and already in-common, as if prior to private ‘knowing’. Wittgenstein seems to point to the material-physical condition that is ‘being’ an individual (an ‘I’) by conceptually separating embodied sensation from embodied perception. It might be said that, for Wittgenstein,
being human means that sensations ‘are’ perceptions because human-being is a shared and communicative condition. Sensation complements perception because, as well as ‘being’ in space and time, humans ‘be’ amongst others.238

This is to take at face value Wittgenstein’s claim that, “To see this aspect of the triangle [as opposed to another, possible one,] demands imagination”. Subject-agents may empirically sense, that is, look at a picture or a printed word, or feel an action or a movement, whereas “to see … demands imagination”. By evoking a truism — that sensing and perceiving are ‘immediate’ biological-somatic affairs — Wittgenstein offers an approach to inquiry that separates sensation, as such, from perception, as self-consciousness in practice. Wittgenstein’s allusions to “mastery of a technique” and inductively “knowing how to go on” seem, therefore, to point to sensing and perceiving as an embodied ‘being’ that ‘goes on’, in space and over time, amongst others: that is, imagines ‘real’ worlds. The motif supplied by sensing, perceiving, and imagining ‘being’ might be combined with an expanded definition of subjectivity, as the ‘immediacy’ of ‘being’ amidst the in-common and enduring reality that humans materialize as Western modernity. As such, conceptualizing subjectivity in terms of an imaginary–‘real’ nexus might now mean recognizing the reflexive practicing of an embodied ethology: subjectivity as ‘being’ normatively so-disposed in a material-physical context. Following Wittgenstein, to ‘be’ human (in space and time) means sensing, ‘empirically feeling’, perceiving, ‘having language’, and imagining, using ‘these’ as tools and techniques in order to ‘go on’. This means setting out a tripartite schema that, through Wittgenstein, allows sensing, perceiving, and imagining ‘being’ to be discussed as what ‘goes on’ at the nexus of habitus and social field. Inquiry might now conceive of the social constitution of subjectivity as the affecting of sensing, perceiving, and imagining ‘being’ for particular modernizing social worlds. In these respects, the present thesis moves to approach the social constitution of subjectivity over an ontological register by delineating three coeval layers of affect: somatic, practical-ethological, and reflexive subjectivity.239

The discussion now uses these suggestions to explain how inquiry over an ontological register combines these two levels of analysis, by drawing together and discussing links between ‘categories’ and ‘layers of affect’. For the present thesis, somatic subjectivity means physical embodied sensation. Somatic subjectivity is seen as the embodied ‘hub’ of sensations. Focusing

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239 Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 160c, 78c, 92c, §99, §397.
upon a somatic layer of affect in the social constitution of subjectivity allows inquiry to discuss the body as one ‘layer’ at which ‘being’ and social worlds can be said to intertwine. Somatic subjectivity also provides a bridge into inquiry at the level of ontological categories. A somatic layer of affect is, in this sense, the affective ‘site’ for embodiment. Combining these two levels of analysis means discussing how ontological categorizations of embodiment, as well as of spatiality, temporality, and institutionality, might be said to affect (material-)physical embodied sensation as part of the condition that is ‘being’ in the world.\(^{240}\)

The thesis takes practical-ethological subjectivity to mean perception: socialized ‘consciousness in practice’ in- and of-the-world. Practical-ethological subjectivity is seen as the perceptive ‘hub’ of action and meaning for imagining ‘real’ worlds. Taking up suggestions that social worlds have illocutionary force and perlocutionary contents, practical-ethological subjectivity is seen as the (embodied) locus of particular forms of societal and relational engagements. As such, focusing upon a practical-ethological layer of affect requires discussion make explicit a link to ontological ‘categories’. Moving from the suggestion that to ‘be’ human is always and already to exist in material-physical reality now means discussing socialized ‘consciousness in practice’ as that ‘constituent’ of subjectivity which ‘makes’ spatiality ‘space’, temporality ‘time’, embodiment ‘rational’, and institutionality socially structured ‘rationalizing’ and ‘economizing’ institutions in modernizing social worlds. Focusing upon practical-ethological subjectivity shifts inquiry away from intervention into self-consciousness and towards a focus upon ‘consciousness’; what happens because ‘being’ is a somatic condition that ‘goes on’ amidst spatial, temporal, and institutional contexts in particular social worlds.

For the present thesis, and pace Giddens, reflexive subjectivity means the monitoring and adjustment of ‘being’ in social world. Reflexivity is inexorably tied to somatic and practical-ethological subjectivity because to ‘be’ is to ‘go on’ in space, over time, and amongst others as

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\(^{240}\) Relating this concept of somatic subjectivity to the one of ‘the body’ often used in governmentality theory might help clarify further. Chapter 7 suggests that, in analyses, governmentality theory can seem to regard means, social power, as an ends. Where the ‘biopolitized’ body is said to go on under ‘surveillance’, governmentality theory seems to explain subjectivity as being engaged in ‘care of the self’. However, explaining subjective ‘care of the self’ in these terms seems to risk describing societal and relational engagements as matters of becoming more strategically adept at negating normative conditions tout court. While governmentality theory links material-physical embodiment with a concept of ‘being’ as a socialized condition, it also seems, because ambivalent about socially created ‘limits’, to narrow-down subjectivity to a sovereign ‘will-to-power’. In these respects, the present thesis moves to consider sensibility and perceptivity as different modalities — layers of affect — in the social constitution of subjectivity. This means taking somatic subjectivity to mean ‘being’ as sensing embodiment amidst a totality of binding material-physical variables, and perceptive subjectivity to mean ‘uniqueness’ for particular normative formations amidst such conditions. In a way resembling governmentality theory, the present thesis discusses subjectivity as the universal receptacle for particular encounters, yet also works to explain subjectivity in relation to a conception of human-being as a norm-based and relational condition: that is, in relation to a critique of normativity that implies social power manifests in particular ways in a world fraught with problems.
imagining ‘real’ worlds. In analysis, reflexivity is ‘going on’, both on the world’s and on embodied-being’s terms. However, contra Giddens, the present thesis does not posit a separation between “practical consciousness: what actors know (believe) about social conditions … but cannot express”, and “discursive consciousness: what actors are able to say, or to give verbal expression to, about social conditions … awareness which has a discursive form.”

Subjectivity, seen as the form of life that is created and reproduced as subject-agents imagine ‘real’ worlds, and ‘materialize’ them in order to ‘go on’ in space, over time, and amongst others, implies a methodological perspective that differs from Giddens’ approach. Because Giddens’ schema seems to extend from ‘psychological’ claims about intra-personal states — rather than merely recognizing that existential, ethical, and material states, such as anxiety, or stress, for example, are worldly possibilities that may confront subject-agents in particular social worlds — he seems to make ‘strong’ empirical claims about the qualities and preponderances of such states. This is not to claim that worldly affect does not work at a ‘psychological’ level but that claims springing from ‘strong’ empirical claims, which explain intra-personal states, are not suited to the present thesis’ aims.

Rather, the present thesis uses a division between levels of inquiry over an ontological register to frame an approach that delineates between somatic ‘sensation’, practical-ethological ‘perceptive consciousness’, and reflexivity, that is, after Wittgenstein, ‘imagining’ subjectivity. For the present thesis, the suggestion is that ‘being’ lay not so much in self-identity and difference as created by a reflexive (self-)consciousness — a (Hegelian) thinking-of-being — but in the job of making reality ‘real’, such that modernization seen as legitimizing the order of the universe as well as the problematizing of sociality’s ‘legitimation’. Because subjectivity is seen as ‘enacting’ a private subject-hood amongst others — an ‘immediate’ self-orienting and projecting form of life that senses, perceives, and imagines ‘real’ worlds, and makes reality ‘real’ — this means thesis’ critique of normativity is based in the ‘weak’ empirical claim that ‘being’ human requires situations in and though which norm-based and relational claims might effectively ‘legitimate’ sociality.

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241 See, for example, Giddens, The Constitution of Society: An Outline of the Theory of Structuration, 374-75.
The discussion now pauses to explain the normative-justificatory aspect of the overall thesis’ argument. The discussion briefly revisits Giddens’ work, focusing upon his theory of the institutional reflexivity of modernity. It then turns to Habermas’ account of the forms ‘legitimation’ takes amidst the relatively complex, abstract, and extended, structured and institutionalized conditions characterizing sociality in the contemporary West. These aspects Giddens’ and Habermas’ theories of modernity are used to link the present thesis’ modes of inquiry over ontological and normative registers to its critique of normativity. Giddens’, and Habermas’ work helps to suggest how in relatively complex, technologically developed Anglo-American liberal-democracies, structured and institutionalized patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses enframe a dominant subjectivity that oscillates between heightened satisfactions and enervated dissatisfactions because these work to privilege a particular formation of liberal individualism.

Giddens discusses modernization as juggernaut-like and processual. While this aspect of his work might seem to imply some kind of functional system, ongoing ‘over people’s heads’, the present thesis takes Giddens’ work to mean that the job of creating and reproducing modernizing society can be construed ‘from within’ as social conditions that ‘go on’ without reference to ‘other-worldly’ abstractions. Giddens’ thesis implies modernity is ontological: it is potentially all encompassing. Globalizing Western modernity imbricates the binding variables enframing it within ongoing sociality as, albeit, material-physical ‘properties’. The ontic contextuality that enframes sociality is naturalistic yet, manifestly a human creation, because, in the absence of cosmologically ordained, or positive Truth, reality encompasses in sum total. Giddens makes clear, in a specific way, that modernity involves “the susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and material relations with nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information or knowledge”. For Giddens, “the reflexivity of modernity” means potentially all that ‘is’ and ‘can be’ becomes part of modernization. This aspect of Giddens’ approach casts light on an important condition of modernization; from within the perspective of reflection upon it, modernity is ‘set free’ from transcendentally ordained doxa. Giddens combines Marx, Durkheim, and Weber to explain what happens as myth and history, or past and tradition, give way to relatively complex structured and institutionalized conditions that — sustained in and through extensive “expert systems” (elsewhere, “abstract systems”) and abstract “symbolic tokens” — endure under the very ordering of affairs and things that sociality, itself, creates and reproduces.242

Giddens conceives the workings of institutional ‘reflexivity’ in the terms of a “double hermeneutic”, whereby “sociological knowledges” work as a ‘metalanguage’ that is “appropriated within social life” and influences “first-order concepts”. For Giddens, “Sociological knowledge spirals in and out of the universe of social life, reconstructing both itself and that universe as an integral part of that process. Modernity itself is deeply and intrinsically sociological”. Giddens suggests that the structured institutionalized qualities of modernity mean the taking up of ‘information’ about social worlds ‘goes on’ through the filter of sociological knowledges — such as sociology itself, economics, or, the ‘life-sciences’, for example — which combine and intertwine as the bases for future inputs into the job of creating and reproducing sociality. However, Giddens also argues that, “No knowledge under conditions of modernity is knowledge in the ‘old’ sense, where ‘to know’ is to be certain”; neither the social sciences nor the natural sciences support “the equation of knowledge with certitude”. Constituting ‘always uncertain’ modern knowledges, sociological knowledges enter and re-enter sociality as part of a reflexive “feedback loop”. Sociological knowledges are seen by Giddens to be “part of the very tissue of modern institutions” and, therefore, the “reflexivity of modernity”. For Giddens, “sociological definitions of phenomena”, such as the concepts “capital, or investment” are specialist-institutional concepts.243 Nonetheless, because these constantly intertwine with the actions and discourses of “lay actors” — for example, he suggests most (in the West) hold savings accounts with banks and, so, possess rudimentary knowledge of specialist-institutional concepts like ‘capital’ or ‘investment’ — institutional reflexivity is seen by Giddens to involve “continual mutual involvement between economic discourse and the activities to which it refers”: 244

[Sociological concepts such as these, and the theories and empirical information linked to them, are not merely handy devices whereby agents are somehow more clearly able to understand their behavior … [t]hey actively constitute what that behavior is and inform the reasons for which it is undertaken.

The pivotal position of sociology in the reflexivity of modernity comes from its role as the most generalized type of reflection upon modern social life.245

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245 Ibid., 40-41.
While sociological knowledges in the field of economics may be seen as working in the ways that Giddens describes it, picking up Chapter 8’s line of argument again here means raising issue with the concept of ‘trust’ in his theory. To reiterate, Giddens argues that, as “disembedding mechanisms, both symbolic tokens and expert systems, depend on trust”. Indeed, “the separating of time and space and their formation into standardized, ‘empty’ dimensions”, on the one hand, are seen as consequences of modernity’s relative complexity, abstractions, and extensive, system-like conditions. Yet, on the other hand, these are said to depend upon the embodied and subjective “notion of trust [that] is basic to feelings of ontological security”.246

For the present thesis, Giddens appears to argue that ‘trust’ works with precisely the same modalities in relation to relatively large-scale and complex structured and institutionalized conditions as it does where less structurally complex, institutionally concretized, inter-relationally mediated and technologically extended engagements constitute the predominant ways of ‘going on’ in social worlds. As Chapter 8 suggests, in relation to his theses on subjectivity, Giddens’ concept of ‘trust’ seems to work as an avatar that imports methodological transcendence into his theory. It seems that, for Giddens, modernization requires the ‘trust’ of all involved, at every conjuncture. Giddens’ schema seems to contain no means for ascertaining a degree of relative societal and relational complexity at which institutional reflexivity might cast ‘trust’ into irrelevance. Arguably, the notion of ‘trust’ introduces a fuzziness that means Giddens treats sociological knowledges alongside ‘sociological knowledges-as-subjective-knowledges’; it is as if these were the same thing. Giddens seems to treat of the pivotal position of sociology, as the most generalized type of reflection, as if inquiry could discuss institutional reflexivity and subjective reflexivity in the same ways. That is, Giddens seems to treat the intertwining of sociological knowledges and institutional reflexivity as if these were of the same order as what are, for the present thesis, somatically bound practical-ethological ‘knowledges’ and the reflexivity that intertwine as ‘being’. The present thesis takes ‘institutional’ reflexivity to be something different from subjective reflexivity.

This raises a need to re-pose the intertwining of institutional reflexivity and the double hermeneutic towards a focus upon what goes into the creating and reproducing of normative conditions because structured and institutionalized along particular lines. Rather than following Giddens’ suggestion that modernity is “deeply and intrinsically sociological”,247 the present thesis

approaches modernization, and institutional reflexivity, as ‘intrinsically normalizing’ of particular practical and discursive conditions. A brief example helps to explain the direction taken here. Contemporary communications-entertainment industries consistently imbricate sociological knowledges into the (re-)productive domain in and through both practices and discourses. In Giddens’ terms, as contributors to the overall job of creating and reproducing sociality, these industries might be seen as an example of the institutional reflexivity that means sociological knowledges spiral in and out of social life. However, while these industries might incorporate sociological knowledges in the ways that Giddens suggests — through the statistical ‘ratings’ data used to sell audiences to advertisers, for example — other forms of knowledge that contribute to the communications-entertainment industries do not seem to sit so well with sociological knowledges so-defined. For example, the so-called ‘star-system’, various ‘cults of personality’, promulgations of ‘urban mythology’, as well as many promotional appeals purported to inform potential consumers of commodity’s use-values, amongst other things, do not seem commensurate with Giddens’ definition of sociological knowledges. Nonetheless, these do seem to spiral in and out of social life, in important and ways, and seem to affect the ongoing job of creating and reproducing sociality, at least, across the contemporary Anglo-American West.

This differs from Giddens’ approach, which seems to involve a kind of positivist assumption that the double hermeneutic effect is, itself, hermeneutical; that is, Giddens’ model of the reflexivity of modernity seems to imply that ‘modernity’ involves an (ever increasing) understanding of ‘itself’. Giddens seems to use the concept of ‘reflexivity’ as something of a reason-unto-itself for modernization: a kind of principle that, once posited, obscures critique of its effects. Instead, the present thesis focuses upon the forms of authority and value criteria that institutional reflexivity might be said to ‘normalize’. Recognizing that modernization involves relatively complex systems and institutions that take in information about the world — or, rather, take in the world as information; as ‘data’ — and adjust actions accordingly, allows inquiry to move away from a tendency to see modernization as a ‘juggernaut’248 that, arguably, resembles a closed functional system. Looking at reflexivity in this way means saying more about the dynamics of authority and value that might be said to coincide with the relative societal complexity and intensity, and abstraction, and extended inter-relational forms central to ongoing modernization. This concept of the ‘intrinsically normalizing’ effects of reflexivity allows discussion to look at a broad range of practices and discourses — many of which may be trivial or, indeed, ‘false’ in

comparison with sociological knowledges — as affecting the kinds of forms of authority and value
criteria that ‘go on’ within sociality. This approach recognizes that knowledges do spiral in and out
of sociality yet, do so because amenable to particular orders of affairs and things. Whether
knowledges that are said to spiral in and out of social life actually constitute sociological
knowledges or otherwise is less important to the present inquiry than the degree to which, as social
and cultural practices and discourses, these contribute to the job of creating and reproducing
normative conditions.

Reflexivity, seen as a condition of relative societal complexity, can be linked to a dominant
subjectivity. Amidst an arbitrary and contingent ontic field that is “conceived as material forces”,
reflexivity implies a wide-reaching, but not absolute, ‘normalizing’ of particular practical and
discursive conditions, such that certain forms of authority and value criteria are taken as nature-
like. Recognizing reflexivity to mean that some conditions of modernization can be seen as
‘inextricably normalizing’ means inquiry can set out to discuss sociality on both Godelier’s terms,
as if legitimizing the order of the universe and on Habermas’ terms, as if requiring political
‘legitimation’.249

Indeed, to take these suggestions further, discussion now turns to Habermas’ aspects of
thesis on ‘legitimation’. Habermas’ work is interesting here because his account of the “social
evolution” of modernization allows links to be drawn between the historical development of
(Western) societal complexity and claims about how such conditions might enframe subjectivity as
a form of life. While the present thesis does not take up directly his extensive thesis on the
“uncoupling of system and life-world”, Habermas’ work on ‘legitimation’ in relatively complex,
modernizing conditions allows suggestions about how institutional reflexivity might be seen to
work in relation to the normalizing of forms of authority and value criteria.250

Seeing them as historical conditions of expanded industrial production, capitalistic market
relations, and nation-state representative government, that is, of “modern bourgeois society”,
Habermas devotes particular attention to the secularization and systematization of abstract and
‘universal’ law and morality. In modernizing conditions — arising, it might be said, as proliferating
objects, and knowledges and techniques associated with their uses, intertwined with Occidental
Judeo-Christianity — intermittent yet ongoing crises of social integration, cultural ordination, and
intersubjective contestation become increasingly reliant for redress upon ever-further codified and

systematized ‘law’. For Habermas, codified modern (Western) law takes hold where relatively increased societal complexity also involves the extension throughout societal and inter-relational dynamics of commodity-based market relations — said to turn on that “special exchange mechanism that transforms use values into exchange values” — and as the particular milieux these empower demand authority’s ‘legitimation’.251

Like Giddens, Habermas argues that, where codified law manifests as a condition of modernity’s secularization, Truth in the cosmological sense falls-away as a unitary societal and relational “steering mechanism”. For Habermas, an important effect of the codification of law in such conditions is the manifesting of an external, nature-like ‘objective’ arbiter for (many) private moral decisions. Once embedded together with (cosmologically ordained) ethico-legal norms in traditional customary law, private morality in modernity becomes a matter of orienting the self in relation to society as an aggregate of moral individuals. Conditions arise that “shift the burden of social integration more and more from religiously anchored consensus processes [and towards] general action orientations”:

Whereas civil society is institutionalized as a sphere of legally domesticated, incessant competition between strategically acting private persons, the organs of the state, organized by means of public law, constitute the level on which consensus can be restored in cases of stubborn conflict. [However, the] problem of justification is both displaced and intensified. Inasmuch as law becomes positive, the paths of legitimation grow longer. The legality of decisions, which is measured by adherence to formally unobjectionable procedures, relieves the legal system of justification problems that pervade traditional law [appearing as law and moral code united]. On the other hand, these problems get more … intensive where the criticizability and need for justification of legal norms are only the other side of their positivity — the principle of enactment and the principle of justification reciprocally require on another. The legal system as a whole needs to be anchored in basic principles of legitimation … these are, in the first place, basic rights and the principle of popular sovereignty; they embody postconventional structures of moral consciousness … they are in the bridges between a de-moralized and externalized legal sphere and a deinstitutionalized and internalized [privatistic] morality.252

Discussing Habermas here allows modernization to be seen as ‘going on’ under the twin pressures of relative societal and inter-relational complexity and a self-orienting and projecting

251 Ibid., 171.

252 Ibid., 178. Italics omitted, added by AS.
subjectivity that creates and reproduces sociality as a totality that enframes it. Where increasingly complex, abstract, and extended, conditions ‘go on’ on such terms, the intrinsically normalizing aspects of modernity might be seen as, themselves, extending further and further from their ‘ultimate’ bases in the norm-based and relational conditions that human-being ‘is’. Modernization creates and reproduces normative conditions for a dominant form of life that legitimizes the order of the universe as if by default, while the paths of ‘legitimation’ grow longer as consequences of ‘being’ human as subjectivity, making reality ‘real’. Amidst the predominance of a liberal ‘sovereign’ individualism that is both motor and anchor point within sociality, the structuring of institutional per se becomes ‘positive’ — a parody of exemplarity and equalitarianism obtains — while the paths of ‘legitimation’ that draw on norms-based and relational contexts grow longer.253

To conclude this chapter, and Part III of the thesis, I schematize these theoretical and methodological suggestions as the framework for approaching inquiry. The chapters in Part IV then discuss a series of examples that test conditions using the approach, to argue that a dominant contemporary subjectivity presents itself in Anglo-American societies that turns on a sustained a deferral of existential and ethical dilemmas.

The discussion so far suggests an approach to analyses that combines two registers (N) and four levels (x) of inquiry. This approach inquires over (1ab) an ontological register that deals with ‘ontic contextuality’, the material-physical enframing context for human-being that is the reality in and through which (1a) the social formation and (1b) the social constitution of subjectivity are said to ‘go on’. The approach to the social formation of subjectivity over an ontological register bases its analyses on the ‘categories’ of spatiality, temporality, institutionality, and embodiment. The approach to the social constitution of subjectivity over the same ontological register bases its analyses on three coeval layers of affect: somatic, practical-ethological, and reflexive subjectivity. Suggestions made in Chapters 11 and 12 for inquiry over an ontological register that combines two levels of analysis — ‘ontological categories’ and ‘layers of affect’ — bring the developing approach to a conjuncture with inquiry over a normative register. This is because, as both Westerhoff and

253 Ibid., 171, 78-80, 367-70.
James help to suggest, the present thesis recognizes ontology as a mode of inquiry that always involves epistemological-normative claims.

As such, the approach links the two levels of inquiry over (1ab) an ontological register with inquiry over (2cd) a normative register, which works over two analytic levels. These focus upon (2c) the creating and reproducing of ‘normative’ conditions in and through which social and cultural practices and discourses ‘go on’ and (N) a critique of normativity. Inquiry over a normative register that looks at practical and discursive conditions is itself broken down into three main perspectives (2c-xyz). The first (2c-x) focuses upon structured and institutionalized patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses that frame or privilege a particular form of life. Here, the focus is upon how the dynamics of power and value intertwine and combine amidst structured and institutionalized conditions. The second (2c-y) focuses upon the actions, meanings, and things that subject-agents ‘materialize’ — as materials, as practices, coordinated forms of action, and as discourses, meaningful representations — as they ‘go on’ within sociality and, as such, mobilize, propagate, and perpetuate, a dominant subjectivity. Here, attention is directed at metamorphosing and violable normative criteria for authenticating power and establishing value, as well as for challenging authority and resisting hierarchy, or normatively ordained similarities and differences. The third perspective (2c-z) focuses upon situations that are seen to ‘go on’ in practice in relation to the two levels of inquiry over an ontological register, and (N) the thesis’ critique of normativity, which relates the inquiry to the claim ‘being’ human requires situations in and though which norm-based and relational contexts might affectively ‘legitimate’ sociality.
IV: Discussion – Subjectivity & Liberal Individualism
The chapters in Part IV of the thesis discuss a series of examples as evidence for the claim that a new dominant subjectivity presents itself in contemporary Anglo-American societies. The aims of Part IV of the thesis are to look at what happens in practice in relation to the claims made in Parts II and III. These chapters use the theory and method developed earlier to frame discussion of a series of illustrative examples that support the thesis’ central argument. That is, a dominant subjectivity has emerged in contemporary Anglo-American societies, which oscillates between relatively heightened satisfactions and enervated dissatisfactions, an important consequence of this being that persons are often bound to defer existential, ethical, or material dilemmas that social worlds might raise for them as socialized subject-agents. These chapters operationalize the suggestion that conditions within globalizing modernization involves relatively complex, abstract, and extended societal and relational dynamics.

Discussion here springs from Part III’s claim that contemporary Anglo-American sociality can be seen as the job of creating and reproducing practical and discursive ‘normative’ conditions and material-physical contexts, or what I have been calling ontic contextuality. The examples are used to highlight how particular normative patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses, appear to situate a distinct liberal individualism as both motor and anchor point within contemporary Anglo-American sociality. The examples offer a means for discussing the ontological structuring of institutionality, spatiality, temporality, and embodiment, and affecting of somatic, practical-ethological, and reflexive layers of subjectivity. The chapters discuss these examples in relation to the overall project’s critical perspective, which springs from a claim that ‘being’ human is a norm-based and relational condition.

The examples in Chapter 13 have been chosen as a means for examining contemporary social conditions through inquiry over a normative register. The examples used in Chapter 13 also allow sociality to be tested in relation to inquiry over an ontological register, with a primary focus upon the category of ‘institutionality’. Chapter 14 takes up from this discussion, and brings in further examples that concentrate upon testing conditions through inquiry over an ontological register. The examples in Chapter 14 allow inquiry to look at sociality in terms of what Part III
categorizes as spatiality and temporality. In Chapter 15, examples have been chosen to examine sociality through inquiry over the ontological category of embodiment, and in terms of the social constitution of subjectivity.

This, Chapter 13, picks up from Part II’s discussion that conceptualizes ‘core arenas for sociality’ amidst globalizing neoliberalization and financialization, and looks at examples of normative conditions within contemporary Anglo-American political, productive, occupational, and civil domains. Initially, this chapter discusses stakeholder politics and corporate sustainability as partial products of a synthesis, between government’s “engage[ment] in a process of restructuring … with a decisive effort at deregulation, privatization, and the dismantling of the social contract between capital and labour”, and market-based efforts to “maximize shareholder value”. Examples of contemporary government policies and business strategies are used to emphasize appeals to ‘stakeholders’ and calls for ‘corporate sustainability’. These are said to motivate, propagate, and perpetuate a liberal ‘stakeholder’ individualism because addressing an ‘immediate’, self-orienting and projecting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ subjectivity within core societal arenas across contemporary Anglo-America. The chapter then discusses examples of moves by some non-governmental organizations to support publicly ‘responsible’ businesses, and the ‘shareholder activist movement’.

The examples support the claim that where engagements within such core arenas involve relatively widespread yet uneven affluence, high levels of education, and articulate dispositions, societal and relational dynamics that ‘go on’ therein can be seen to emphasize sovereign satisfactions and dissatisfactions. This is especially the case in relation to the domestic polity, occupational domains, and civil spheres, around public concerns like environmental or employment conditions, for example. The examples are used to suggest that, as engagements on terms other than those based in individuated desires’ satisfaction or dissatisfaction become relatively difficult to sustain, political parties, employers and commodity producers, as well as some civil society groups, appeal to a dominant subjectivity that sustains a deferral of problems raised in social worlds. It is in and

around such conditions that the thesis recognizes the social enframing of a dominant Anglo-American subjectivity, largely cut-off from contexts that might work to ameliorate them, instead, sustains a deferral of such worldly dilemmas.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Reaganite calls to “the moral majority” and Thatcherite “assertions of the moral superiority of the independence of the individual from reliance on others” engage the polity in distinct ways. While similar appeals permeate George Bush Senior’s calls in the early 1990s “all Americans”, it is in Bill Clinton’s later “ubiquitous town meetings” and Tony Blair’s appeals for an “opportunity society” that explicit calls are made to citizens as ‘stakeholders’. George Bush Junior’s “heartland populism”, said to “combine patriotism with ‘homespun’ common sense views”, carries appeals to a competitive individualism that appositely mixes eager pleonexy with moral rectitude into the 2000s. Similar themes pervaded Australian Labor’s 1980s corporatist Wages Accord, and its more recent combining of “bread and butter issues” with appeals to “aspirational voters”, while the Liberal’s embrace of “upwardly mobile Howard battlers” has reinvigorated a more ‘rugged’ culturally conservative liberal individualism as the motif for its economic growth-oriented “relaxed and comfortable society”.

Although the United States’ Republican and Democratic, British New Labour and Conservative, and Australian Liberal and Labor parties differ in many important respects, what is important here are the similar gestures they make to Anglo-American subject-agents as an internationally and interpersonally competitive “community of stakeholders”. These parties seem to draw upon and re-present a liberal-democratic individualism that combines ‘traditional’ appeals to Anglo-American citizens, as bearers of individual ‘rights and duties’ yet, overlays these with appeals to stakeholders, as actuators of personal ‘capacities and obligations’, or ‘capabilities and responsibilities’. Alex Callinicos describes public appeals to such ‘stakeholders’ as casting large, medium, and small market-based, nation-state, and civil institutions, as well as localized groupings, and individuals themselves, as holders of the same interests, to the same degree. These rhetorical gestures and associated policies both appeal to and construe subject-agents as atomized monads, while situating Anglo-American nation-states, the local communities, and individuals they encompass, as competitors in an irresistible, juggernaut-like globalizing Stakeholder Capitalism.


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More recently, political parties have appealed to “enlightened stakeholders” based in a perceived “new politics of well-being”, which is said to accompany relative increases in employment, education, skills, and affluence. This set of appeals becomes important in subsequent chapters, which discuss an array of social and cultural practices and discourses that address concerns with ‘global’, social and personal ‘well-being’.256

Commentators discussing British New Labour’s public justifications for “promoting stakeholding as a key tenet of its so-called ‘Third Way’ and ‘partnership’ initiatives, and the Employment Relations Act 1998 (‘Fairness at Work’)” recognize in them, appeals to “the twin instrumental views of the need for more social cohesion and inclusion and its associated benefits of competitiveness”. Such justifications are said to engage the polity via rhetoric and policies that propagate and animate a “stakeholder inclusiveness that is both economically and socially more desirable than its alternatives”: Old Labour’s emphases upon public ownership, Keynesianism, and universal welfarism. New Labour’s 2002 Sustainable Consumption and Production Strategy is one example here: it is “[d]esigned to help empower consumers and improve the environmental impacts of goods and services (e.g. with better information right through the supply chain to end consumers)”. Creating and extending conditions for enlightened personal autonomy and sovereign consumer choice, the Strategy seems directly to respond to and engender practices and discourses amenable to liberal ‘stakeholder’ individualism.257

A similar rationale also appears to inform United States’ Republican government 2004 decisions to increase “government-sponsored private voluntary programs …” — notably, the Department of Energy’s Climate Challenge and Energy Star Program for domestic consumer appliances, and the chemical industry’s Responsible Care Program — while making “deep cuts to

256 Chapter 7 discusses how certain strands of governmentality theory comments on the Third Way. It looks at Dean’s suggestion that “Third Way social democracy” is a source of “sovereign instruments bind[ing] those receiving pastoral care to paternally defined collective obligations”. While the links that Dean, or Hartman, for example, set up between the Third Way and neoclassical economic thought are helpful, the present thesis suggests that the governmentality approaches adopted by these authors inadequately delineate between welfare-statism and neoliberalism as nation-state policy and social-democracy and the Third Way as groupings for political claims. Recognizing that a key premise of the so-called ‘neoliberal reform agenda’ was to ‘rollback’ welfare payments, employment regulations, and public spending because these undermined the tendency towards equilibrium assumed to be inherent in the ‘free-markets’ such policy idealizes might offer a way into inquiry that is better suited to the present thesis’ argument. Regardless of normative claims about the justness of welfare-statism, which are nonetheless also important for this inquiry, using a methodological commitment to governmentality that works to conflate nation-state policy and political claims offers ‘no way out’ for the present thesis’ argument. Z. Bauman, The Individualized Society (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), esp. 36-64.

the Environmental Protection Authority regulatory budget”. In Australia, assumptions that competitiveness generates greater social cohesion and inclusion seem to inform the Liberal-National government’s public justifications for re-regulating industrial relations. Its 2006 Work Choices legislation seems based in appeals to an autonomous and autarchic individualism that demands conditions for greater self-orientation and assertion, in preference to collective representation, in negotiations over employment. Work Choices is “a new, national workplace relations system that will provide more choice and flexibility for employees in the workplace. The system will offer better ways to reward effort, increase wages and balance work and family life”. Along similar lines are Australia’s “voluntary program to encourage the current 5.5% rate of staff with part-ownership of the firms they work for doubled to 11% by 2009”, and New Zealand’s Equal Opportunity Trust’s “recommend[ations] employers voluntarily devise policies that support non-work as well as workplace relationships, and train managers to recognize the value of healthy personal relationships”.258

While, on the one hand, these policies may be seen to spring from an allegedly ‘neoliberal’ policy agenda that sets to the creating of conditions for market competition on the assumption that these generate a spill-over, which socially shapes natural environments in ‘responsible’ ways. On the other hand, and more importantly here, in actions, such policies seem to engage and animate individuals and businesses responsibly as enlightened monads, while, at the same time, relieving the polity as represented by government of its collective power to ensure that social agents per se act ‘responsibly’. These examples seem to take their cue from the kinds of voluntarism that might characterize Western individualism in norm-based and relational contexts. Yet, while such enlightened ‘informed’ voluntarism might characterize sociality in such contexts, these government policies appear to extend such context’s dynamics into situations where relatively complex forms of structured institutionality work to overlay norm-based and relational claims with instrumental convenience and efficiency criteria.

Of course, such prestations to the Anglo-American polity have been described in terms of contemporary parties and government’s efforts to represent “economic growth” as the sole condition for social goods, and individual benefits. In this view, on the one hand, government’s

close management of markets and market relations to generate economic growth are measured and publicized as direct sources of social goods that benefit all stakeholders:

Individuals well endowed with economic and social capabilities will be more productive; companies that draw on the experience of all of their stakeholders will be more efficient; while social cohesion within a nation is increasingly seen as a requirement for international competitiveness.259

While, on the other hand, social goods and stakeholder benefits are measured and portrayed as individual and generic rights and freedoms created by economic growth. In this sense, benefits are represented as the products of government’s management of markets in ways that channel the ‘trickle-down’ of opportunities, for stakeholders, to develop capacities and participate in ‘the economy’ through employment, training, or investing:

The model of wage labour that held sway during the industrial era — in which a worker abdicated a degree of freedom in exchange for a certain amount of security — is no longer applicable today. [T]he question [today] involves not simply the codification of the individual worker’s rights but rather the creation of professional conditions for people such that, over the long term, their capabilities and economic needs are sufficiently assured to allow them to take initiatives and shoulder responsibilities. The key terms within this perspective are not jobs, subordination, and social security, but work (understood in all its forms, not just as wage labour), professional skills, and economic security.260

The present thesis suggests that such a shift in the rhetoric and practices of the stakeholder politics can also be seen in terms of a dominant subjectivity. These appeals seem to address a dominant subjectivity in conditions that Vaughan Higgins argues, work to “de-centre the nation-state’s capacities to govern in the name of the social”. Stakeholder politics emerges in the lacuna created by a broad-based shift to ‘post-industrial’ conditions. Moreover, calls to stakeholders seem grounded in what Chapter 8 suggests are the erstwhile ‘immaterial’ claims of a post-materialist subpolitics. These characterize a domestic realpolitik that, as Bauman suggests, turns upon


“procla[iming] the dismantling of the welfare state ‘as we know it’ to be an issue ‘beyond left and right’, as once upon a time the creation of the welfare state used to be”.261

These contemporary Anglo-American parties seem to engage the polity as if a combination of Knowledge Economy technologies and ever-further rounds of marketization, privatization, and re-regulation will bring societies out of a largely depressing, dirty, heavy-industry based, socially homogenous, and culturally conformist past, which offered little opportunity to ‘creatively-minded’ stakeholders. Charles Leadbeater explains some of the thinking behind this embrace of the Information Revolution and its, peculiar, “new egalitarian agenda” by paraphrasing economist Robert W. Fogel:

The modernist egalitarian agenda was based on material redistribution. The critical aspect of a postmodern egalitarian agenda is not the redistribution of money income, or food, or shelter, or consumer durables. Although there are still glaring inadequacies in the distribution of material commodities that must be addressed, the most intractable maldistributions in rich countries such as the United States are in the realm of spiritual and immaterial assets. Self-esteem cannot be redistributed in the way income can … assets of the spirit have to be personally produced; they cannot be delivered by the state.262

This strange “synthesis of the free-market revolution and the welfarism that preceded it”,263 seems to characterize contemporary Anglo-American government-in-action and, in these respects, addresses a self-assertive and ‘creative’ dominant subjectivity. Like the examples drawn from the practices and discourses of the Creative Economy and its “new world of work” discussed later, contemporary stakeholder politics de-emphasize the material-physical ordering of relatively complex structured and institutionalized conditions. These instead emphasize the creative opportunities and imagination-driven initiatives that relatively complex structured and institutionalized conditions might also create, yet seem to do so as if these are always seen and experienced from within a disembodied realm of private autonomous desiring.

Where, as Chapter 10 suggests, the creating and reproducing of liberal individualism works to anchor and impel ongoing sociality, the expansion of workplace flexibility and consumer choices under the rubric of stakeholder polities might be seen to animate an ‘immediate’, self-


orienting and projecting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ dominant subjectivity. Moreover, this subjectivity appears to sustain a deferral of many dilemmas that sociality in the predominance of such a form of life might raise. Amidst widespread relative affluence, where engagements often require high levels of education, and articulate dispositions, government’s managing of ‘economic growth’ to create ‘professional conditions’ — where ‘self-starting’ stakeholders use initiative to ‘grow’ personal capabilities — in part, creates conditions that emphasize sovereign satisfactions and dissatisfactions, while ‘reclassifying’ welfarism’s positive freedoms as public and personal ‘costs’. As Bauman suggests, a poor and marginalized underclass have come to represent “the sole alternative to ‘staying in [a] game’” that centres on competitive emending of the self aimed at desires’ satisfactions, and the ‘empowering’ self-development of capabilities that facilitate expressions of dissatisfaction through sovereign choices.264

... ... ...

In the 1990s and 2000s, appeals to ‘stakeholders’ and ‘stakeholder communities’ were also made by market-based organizations within and from within Anglo-American societies, often, as part of an influential corporate sustainability ‘movement’. Through ‘corporate sustainability’, a plethora of contemporary businesses, including large, medium, and small corporations, employer, trade, and industry representatives, and financial, auditing, and business consultancies, enact practices and discourses that involve ‘stakeholders’. Indeed, it might be said that treating shareholding owners, managers, salaried staff, waged employees, local, national, and offshore contractors, producer and consumer communities, as well as individuals as stakeholders is central to corporate sustainability in practice. Generally, a firm adopting corporate sustainability aims “to go beyond traditional single ‘financial’ bottom-line [accounting] methods”, “measure impacts [of business activities] on the social fabric, environment and, in some cases, human rights”, as well as maintaining “competitive advantage” in capitalistic markets. As such, corporate sustainability is here seen as a permutation of “full-cost’ financial accounting methods”, which work to “internalize various social and environmental externalities” as business costs and, as such, “make doing good, doing well”.265

264 Bauman, The Individualized Society, 76.
265 John Elkington’s 1997 Cannibals With Forks: The Triple Bottom-line of 21st Century Business is an early and widely cited work on the topic of triple bottom-line management and commercial ethics. Global accounting firm KPMG explains “corporate social...
Several commentators link the emergence of a “global corporate sustainability agenda” to the “exclusive focus of corporations on shareholder value that arose as part and parcel of the Reaganite and Thatcherite ‘revolutions’”. Therefore, it is seen as a condition of the neoliberalization and financialization Chapters 7 and 8 discuss. Amongst others, Giles Atkinson and Lyuba Zarsky describe how by the late 1990s, “increasing discussion which has looked at sustainability from the perspective of smaller spatial scales (such as cities or regions) and economic entities (such as sectors or firms)” became part of market, and market-oriented government, concerns with the environmental and social effects of ‘globalization’. The corporate sustainability agenda is also said to be commensurate with the “Washington Consensus ‘model’”. As Gill Seyfang suggests, while the “term ‘sustainable consumption’ entered the international policy arena at Rio … its definition narrowed as it became a policy goal” such that, by the 2000s, the major globalizing inter-governmental, nation-state, and market institutions “saw market failure as the prime cause of unsustainability”. Corporate sustainability ‘initiatives’ are developed, applied, and promoted by management theorists, corporate executives, globalizing bureaucrats, government organs, and environmental thinkers. Representing these might be former Greenpeace leader Paul Gilding’s claim that corporations and, indeed, “global capitalism itself, must go beyond financial obligations to shareholders and account for their activities in support of the people who work for them, the communities in which they operate, and the global environment”. Like Gilding’s “triple bottom-line ‘reporting’”, numerous other sustainability ‘initiatives’, such as the corporate social responsibility programs practiced by commercial firms, and inter-firm voluntary Codes of


Conduct, such as the United Nations’ Global Compact, can be seen to inform a particular order of practices and discourses within core arenas.

In interviews with Fiona Haddock, “leaders of companies that shape up as socially responsible” suggest “sustainability is not just the warm, fuzzy feeling you get from buying free-range eggs. It’s a management philosophy that ensures the continued, long-term success of a company”:

[C]orporate sustainability takes in a broader base — the stakeholders ... not just a company’s investors but also its employees, customers, suppliers, and the community at large. Here’s why. The fall of communism and the triumph of the free-market have slashed the influence of nation-states. Big business holds the reins of the world economy and, to a large extent, world politics. In an era of globalization ... information technology is bringing transparency and fluidity to global communications. Where in the past they would not have given a flying forethought to sustainable development, today’s global consumers not only know what’s happening across the ocean some two to 12 thousand miles away — they also care.

The proponents of corporate sustainability seem not merely to promote a new globalizing order based in “caring, sharing corporations”, but actively to pursue a “new era of capitalism” based in “social and environmental responsibility”. The practices and discourses associated with corporate sustainability and this ‘new era’ often intertwine with calls to “unite in a shared purpose”. This ‘new era’ is said to supplant a failed and substantively different antecedent. Implicit here are claims that ‘top-down’ management, ‘full-time’ workforces and, importantly, ‘big’ bureaucratic governments, restrain “good corporate citizens”, and limit market relations to archaic, oppressive, hierarchical, and conformity-driven, largely, dirty, and heavy, industrial practices. This so-called “new era of capitalism” and its “new social realities” appears to unleash a nature-like tendency for high-technology, services, and consumption-centred, markets to engender unprecedented opportunities for personal ‘imaginativeness’ and ‘creativity’, individual ‘freedom of choice’, community development, ecological reparations, and to increase ‘democracy’.

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Notably, however, several commentators allege that corporate sustainability merely improves the “public relations profile of business”, while delivering them from actual obligations to implement socially, or environmentally, sustainable practices. For example, Stuart Esrock and Greg Liechty claim, “There may be little relationship between a corporation’s self-presentation and its actual social responsibility performance”. While this is important, it relates only indirectly to the present thesis’ argument. It frames discussion of moves by several prominent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active across Anglo-American societies to support corporations that “have now moved towards managing their stakeholder relationships to varying degrees and appear to have moved away from a minimalist notion of being ‘responsible only for meeting legal obligations in generating profits for shareholders’”. These include public offers of support by NGOs to businesses in their efforts to account for employee ‘wellbeing’; enhance auditing, investor, or consumer ‘transparency’; stimulate Social Entrepreneurialism; develop guidelines for environmental care; and support ‘self-regulation’ through Codes of Conduct, for example.

These NGO actions, often based in explicit claims that “the environmental problem we are facing is symptomatic of the breakdown of our broader governance systems”, are interesting. The example provided by NGO action in support of ‘caring, sharing’ forms of market relations helps to explain how stakeholder politics and corporate sustainability might work in-action. Where, alongside some NGOs, certain governments also support ‘caring, sharing’ corporations — through market-based environmental ‘solutions’, consumer-driven “green power initiatives” or, indirectly, by “re-thinking welfare” and supporting “social entrepreneurialism”, for example —

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these also seem to contribute to and reinforce practices and discourses that privilege sovereign choice through atomized forms of desiring within core societal arenas. While arguments that NGO support for corporate sustainability ignores or elides structured and institutionalized conditions that make markets and government key contributors to many of the ongoing concerns raised by them as civil groups are not the direct concern here, this is a relatively important point. On the one hand, NGOs that “encourage[e] industry innovation by naming the laggards and promoting the innovators”, “in the hope that other [corporations], and by extension, consumers, will follow the good example” work to link environmental problems to the relatively complex, abstract, and extended nature of structured and institutionalized forms of authority. Yet, on the other hand, such support and, indeed, promotions, seem to obscure or elide a link that would imply such problems are also ‘symptomatic’ of the similarly complex structured institutionalization of value criteria in contemporary Anglo-American conditions.273

Such corporate sustainability ‘initiatives’ are not merely widespread, but in many ways important to the job of creating and reproducing Anglo-American sociality. Highlighting this order of relationship between markets and some civil society groups helps to suggest how conditions both enframe and address a dominant subjectivity. Where such relationships between markets and civil society seem to proliferate, conditions emerge that seem to elide many possibilities for engagements based in claims that it is, partially or wholly, government’s failure — as the main institutionalized bearer of concentrated social power — to reign-in or delimit injustices or pollution created by market activities. These examples suggest the extension of practical and discursive conditions that emphasize consumer sovereignty occlude alternative or critical engagements or expressions of concerns with environmental and social issues. In conditions of neoliberalization and financialization, these NGO actions appeal to antinomian and libertarian currents within Anglo-American liberal individualism that were themselves, once, largely eclipsed by the relatively collective forms of life manifest amidst welfare statism, mass-industrialism, and the predominance of mass-society forms of culture.

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Looking briefly at ‘shareholder activism’ helps to explicate further the suggestion that situations which privilege liberal individualism work to emphasize sovereign desires’ satisfactions and dissatisfactions in conditions that marginalize or exclude engagements within sociality on other terms. Chapters 7 and 8 associate neoliberalization and financialization with a wide-reaching movement of middle and high incomes “into the orbit of the financial sector”, and increased levels of personal debt and consumption. By the late 1990s, and into the 2000s, several commentators had described how these earners of middle and high incomes, and their representatives — as well as, indirectly through ‘pension funds’, a relatively large number of lower income groups — began to assert themselves within the financial sphere in particular ways. As well as critical commentators Krippner, and Duménil and Lévy, management theorist Peter Drucker, and economist-policy advisor Robert Monks, describe how these groups, having been drawn ‘into’ the financial sector as albeit incremental corporate ‘owners’, began to exert influence upon firms as “shareholder activists”.

Such activism is said to “redefine the corporation as a social as well as an economic entity” by combining individual share-owning investors and the “immense financial power of the mainstream institutional shareholders to force corporations to adopt progressive social [and environmental] policies” or, to “maximize shareholder value”. Monks suggests that, in the United States at least, individual ‘activist’ resolutions, as well as actions by union-based pension funds and “ethical investment portfolios”, increasingly work to “exert pressure on fund managers” to devolve investments in corporations acting in ways incommensurate with “the material interests or stated ideals of members”. The key point here is that, while shareholder activism seems to express an array of public concerns, it ‘goes on’ amidst socially structured conditions that render market-based relations the predominant institutionalized responses to them. The assumption is that, “When ownership becomes affectively asserted, the likelihood of corporations being run in a sustainable manner is vastly improved”.

274 Shareholder activism, “systematic application by individual and institutional investors of rights to submit resolutions relating to the practices of corporations in which they have invested”, is said to constitute a “major concern for corporations into the early 2000s”, especially, following widely publicized business scandals, human rights and environmental abuses. Indeed, Drucker suggests that the relative growth and influence of the financial sector as the predominant institutional aspect of the overall economic sphere since the 1970s and 1980s has created a “new social structure …”, which he calls “pension fund socialism, or employee capitalism”. In Australia, between 1999 and 2004, for example, 100,000 people became shareholders: “7.4 million Australians, 51% of the adult population owns shares … on a per-capita basis ahead of other great share owning countries such as the US”. V. Carson, "Holidays or No, Shares Rule the Roost," The Australian, 4 Feb. 2004, Duménil and Lévy, "Neoliberal Income Trends," 128-29, Krippner, "The Financialization of the American Economy," 176. Drucker, Post-Capitalist Society, 82.

This is interesting when seen in the light of United States’ Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) moves in 2004 to support shareholder claims against managers by “pushing for even more shareholder democracy”. Arguably, a key effect of such policy is to pass through market relations, actions to address social injustice, environmental pollution, or economic miscreancy. On the one hand, what seems to background governmental support for shareholder activism are assumptions that solutions for environmental and social problems, or financial malfeasance, will be created as a spill-over where citizen-shareholder-activists choose ‘good corporate citizens’ over those that downsize, pollute, or mismanage. On the other hand, however, and more important for the present thesis, like stakeholder politics, corporate sustainability, and some NGO support for business, is that shareholder activism, both privileges a liberal individualism that empowers and marginalizes in particular ways.

In conclusion to this chapter, it might be said that, like appeals to stakeholders, corporate sustainability ‘initiatives’, and NGO support for business ‘innovators’, ‘shareholder activism’ ‘goes on’ as an aspect of ongoing Anglo-American sociality that partially contributes to the creating and reproducing of a plethora of atomized opportunities for ‘creativity’, individual freedoms, and personal autonomy. Looking at ‘shareholder activism’ as supported by governments sympathetic to Washington Consensus policies helps to suggest how the environmental, social, and economic issues it raises can be seen in terms of expanded and extended individuated ‘opportunities’ for consumer-like exercise of sovereign choice. These examples are seen to both address and animate a particular formation of individualism amidst relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate milieux, across contemporary core arenas. Moreover, it is where core engagements are said to ‘go on’ in these ways amidst particular cultural histories that a self-orienting and projecting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ dominant subjectivity might be seen to manifest in and through a liberal ‘enlightened stakeholder’ individualism.

Since the 1970s, increasing prominence within Anglo-American social, cultural, economic, and political affairs has been given to the kinds of social and environmental issues that concern the theorists and practitioners of corporate sustainability. Coinciding with the ‘industrialization of
culture’, increased participation in higher education, and expanded mass-communications media, such issues combine and intertwine with corporate sustainability in scientific research, legislation, re-regulation, as well as international dialogues and treaties. In these respects, and like the gestures surrounding stakeholder politics, corporate sustainability imbricates itself into Anglo-American sociality through appeals to “an individualism of expanded desire”. Discussing corporate sustainability in terms of the relative affluence, high levels of education, and articulate dispositions said to characterize many occupational and consumer engagements across core societal arenas helps to focus upon situations that animate such a liberal individualism, and support the claim that a new subjectivity presents itself in contemporary conditions.

Interestingly, some social theorists have developed a concept of “risk society” to explain the effects of a range of institutional actions and subjective conditions prompted by widespread concern with such issues, especially alongside more recent emphases on ‘terrorism’ and ‘homeland security’. Where such issues are disseminated by the news-media across Anglo-American societies, ‘current affairs’ reportage might focus upon natural disasters, social dislocation, poverty, pollution, and human rights abuses, wars, and conflicts, for example. In addition, the news-media may discuss these issues in relation to specific events, such as the Vietnam War, Energy Crisis, and ‘hyperinflation’, in the 1970s, the Bhopal and Chernobyl disasters, War on Drugs, or Iran-Contra Affair, in the 1980s, or Global Warming, the Gulf War, and conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq in the 1990s and 2000s, for example. From within Anglo-American societies, public concern over these issues might be seen to take a number of forms. These might include relatively spontaneous collective actions, such as marches, demonstrations, or participation in civil society groups; legal claims for redress, such as ‘public interest suits’; political engagements, aimed at achieving legislative change; or, individual actions-in-concert, such as ‘shareholder activism’, ‘green consumerism’ and, of course, voting in elections, or referenda.

In such conditions, both the stakeholder and corporate sustainability offer motifs for particular structured institutionalized responses to what might be seen as broad public concerns

276 Sharp, “Is This the End of History?,” S.
raised by subject-agents and groups from within in the civil sphere. Richard Gosden claims that climatologist Phillip Kelly’s 1987 call for “fundamental changes in lifestyle and consumption patterns” across the global North prompted a “popular media that fell over each other in the rush to inform the public about their new responsibility to consume with green discrimination”. For Gosden, these issues and their reportage intertwine within wider conditions of ongoing neoliberalization. For him, these contributed to “the wave of green consumerism [that] was thereafter quickly established as an essential ingredient of the business culture’s plan to save the planet”.

While subsequent chapters discuss examples of commodity-based ‘social messages’, offers of high-quality, ‘self-care’, or ‘nutrition’, for example, this chapter moves to discuss in more detail contemporary occupational practices and discourses in conditions of neoliberalization and financialization. These chapters focus upon ways that contemporary Anglo-American occupational domains seem to emphasize sustainability, compassion, caring and sharing, and ‘socially responsible’ practices, which address a dominant subjectivity that, oscillating between sovereign satisfactions and dissatisfactions, sustains a deferral of worldly dilemmas raised by social worlds. These examples concentrate in particular upon links between so-called countercultural forms of individualism and emphasizes upon creativity and autonomy in the new world of work. Said by Paul Heelas to constitute part of a broad-based “turn to soft capitalism”, these examples help to illustrate wide-reaching shifts from ostensibly ‘cold and heartless’ mass-industrial to erstwhile ‘caring and sharing’ employment and production practices as these enframe a dominant subjectivity that oscillates between heightened desires and enervated dissatisfactions. Seen to be commensurate with corporate sustainability ‘initiatives’, and often purported as contributions to a ‘new era’ and its concomitant ‘shared purpose’, these examples emphasize contemporary conditions that privilege forms of individualism which bring sovereignty of choice and autonomous desiring into core occupational domains.

Interesting here is Du Gay’s suggestion that a key epistemological premise of the ‘new wave’ management theory that became prominent in the early 1990s is its assumption that subject-agents bring an autonomous and entrepreneurial self-hood to engagements with market-based organizations as employees, staff, contractors, suppliers, or consumers. This ‘new wave’ seems to


coincide with the emergence of global sustainability initiatives, and stakeholder politics in conditions of a broad-based shift away from social-democratic welfare statism, and towards policies based in recognition that “equality of opportunity is the key to economic prosperity”.

Du Gay argues that this approach contrasts with the ‘symbolic interactionism’ that dominated management theory and practice until the late 1970s. The older approach meant assuming that subject-agents seek to identify with firms, workplaces, occupational milieux or, in consumption, with specific cultural representations. For du Gay, the ‘new wave’ of management theories and practices began to displace interactionism in the late 1980s. It set out to “harness the psychological striving of individuals for autonomy and creativity and channel them into the search of the firm for excellence and success … in a sphere within which the individual constructs and confirms his or her identity”. Du Gay suggests that this ‘new wave’ shifts labour away from “an activity undertaken to meet instrumental needs”. Occupations at all levels, indeed, life itself, is said to become “a means to self-responsibility and hence self-optimization … the new wave is explicitly aimed at everyone”. This ‘new wave’ extends an invitation to managers, salaried staff, waged employees, contractors, and suppliers to join the corporation In Search of Excellence, while congratulating end-users and consumers for choosing to support “Best Practice”.

Arguably, the theories and practices associated with this ‘new wave’ constitute but a single facet of a more broad transformation of practices and discourses that the present thesis suggests emerge across Anglo-America in the 1990s. Notable here are firms engaged in the creation, production, distribution, and dissemination of personal-use commodities, and ‘cultural’, or ‘leisure’ products and services. One such firm that has grown exponentially since the 1980s, to employ over 27,000 persons in over 7,500 retail outlets across the world in 2005, is the Starbucks Coffee Company. While Starbucks is arguably a central feature in contemporary United States’, British and to a lesser extent, Australian cityscapes, the firm is also of interest here because of the associations it maintains with the libertarian countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Starbucks’ management deliberately cultivates a caring, sharing, and nurturing image, which the firm’s Mission Statement emphasizes in six Guiding Principles:

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281 du Gay, Consumption and Identity at Work, 60, 65, 68, 72.
Provide a great work environment and treat each other with respect.
Embrace diversity as an essential component in the way we do business.
Apply the highest standards of excellence to the purchasing, roasting, and fresh delivery of our coffee.
Develop enthusiastically satisfied customers all of the time.
Contribute positively to our communities and our environment.
Recognize that profitability is essential to our future success.283

Indeed, Naomi Weiss investigated Starbucks as one of Fortune magazine’s “100 Best Companies to work for in America”, and “found an energy here — not induced by a caffeine rush — but from associates drinking up a robust blend of teamwork, sense of mission and challenge”. Weiss asks a rhetorical question of Starbucks’ management spokesperson, “How does a young … company on an aggressive growth track motivate more than 27 000 people and inspire balance and camaraderie?” The spokesperson’s response echoes the caring and nurturing rhetoric of the Mission Statement; “We use a special blend of employee benefits and a work/life program that focuses on the physical, mental, emotional, and creative aspects of each person”. In a separate interview with journalist Jon Carlin, Chief Executive Howard Schultz enthuses over wanting “to work with people who don’t leave their values at home but bring them to work, people whose principles match my own”. Schultz’s own book, Pour Your Heart Into It; encapsulates these principles in a business model that he suggests is applicable within any industry.284

An interesting point about Starbucks as an employer — and one also applied by other large firms, such as Borders Bookstores, Wal-Mart, and Amazon.com, for example — is that it refers to employees as ‘partners’ or ‘associates’. This relatively subtle and recent move by such firms offers a way into discussing conditions where, it seems, labour at almost any level appears to become more than ‘just a job’, more than a time- or task-based exchange of effort for cash remuneration. Where erstwhile partners or associates replace staff or employees, the human effort these represent in practice seem to become opportunities for self-assertion. Even menial service jobs, such as making take-away coffee, take on the qualities, at least, in the corporate rhetoric, of


something akin to the life-work of the artist in Western culture. These become market-sanctioned opportunities for an ostensibly unbound project-of-the-self. Importantly, such metamorphoses extend beyond the occupational domain. Firms such as Starbucks employ subject-agents as store partners and regale consumers with information about a Commitment to Origins™, for example, the practices and discourses these create and reproduce manifest alongside and amidst what the present thesis describes as the policies of the stakeholder society.285

References to partners and associates aside, the “sinewy, rounded lines and holistic atmosphere” that obtains within Starbucks’ outlets obscure an almost unprecedented level of hyper-efficiency, specifically directed at achieving single-bottom-line profitability. It seems that conditions for paid labour at Starbucks in the United States, at least, are such that store partners are employed on an hourly basis, and may have hours cut mid-shift, or be sent to other branches if trade slows on a given day. Similarly, Borders, the world’s second largest book retailer — and a socially responsible corporation “founded by two Ann Arbor hippies in the 1970s” — provides a gay and lesbian “domestic-partner” friendly health-plan for associates. Nonetheless, Starbucks’, Border’s, and the United States’ largest employer, Wal-Mart’s health-insurance plans, while “loudly touted” as evidence of social progressiveness by these firms in North American media discourses, continue to be derided by unions and labour advocates as “one[s that] most employees could not afford”.286

Naomi Klein and Liza Featherstone, for example, argue that Noah’s Bagels, Whole Foods, Newman’s Own, Working Assets, and Powell’s Books, alongside Starbucks and Borders, use their erstwhile “socially responsible public profiles [as a] union busting tool”, and remain frequently “mired in acrimonious labour disputes”. At Borders, the “phantasmic liberalism” and geek-culture image central to the company’s internal and public profile as a “progressive company” coincides with the retaining of “Jackson Lewis, one of the leading union-busting law firms” in North America. Indeed, the firm regularly uses the mass-media to argue that unions are “inappropriate for Borders”, as do Starbucks, claiming in the Wall Street Journal in March 2006 that “its work environment makes unions unnecessary at the company”. As in the United States, Borders’ Australian branches are

285 See, Starbucks, "Starbucks; Timeline and History."
targeted by unions and sustain employee claims that “staff are on low pay, have no penalty rates, and are discouraged from organizing their workplace”.

Globalizing bookstore *Borders*, makes clear that it “prefers to hire tertiary qualified staff”, with education levels beyond the obvious requirements of the book-trade for articulate and skilled workers. *Borders* actively seeks associates of this kind, it seems, because the creative dispositions and deeply individuated, autonomous lifestyle expectations that “tertiary qualified staff” bring to work are compatible with this particular, allegedly “aggressive, anti-union, and big …” globalizing corporation’s approach to efficiency and, so, profitability. This is where links between such market-based organizational strategies and the libertarian and antinomian countercultural individualisms spreading across Anglo-America and the West after the 1960s and 1970s become most visible. That is, this aspect of such operational strategies seems to hang on a deep-seated social and cultural rejection of divisions between labour and leisure: it taps into libertarian and antinomian modes of personal autonomy and sovereign desiring.

At this point, I want to break off from discussion that relates directly to the thesis argument, and look at some contemporary employment conditions in more detail. This brief digression allows discussion to link the occupational domain to broader currents in recent Anglo-American cultural and countercultural history. These examples help to clarify the direction of the overall argument, because offering insight into ways that the creating and reproducing of normative conditions can be said to ‘go on’ in dynamic terms, as the societal and relational enframing of a dominant subjectivity. The suggestion is that there exist these conditions, in and around which exists this subjectivity, which can be seen as creating sociality, and as the condition of ‘being’ human amidst the conditions such a form of life creates and reproduces.

The case of *Amazon.com*, “Famous for its casual, unhierarchical management style, eccentric work habits and e-commerce pioneer of dotcommunism”, is also interesting. “In lieu of

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full wages in the ‘heady days’ of the high-tech ‘bubble’” in the 1990s, Amazon.com distributed share options to its associates. However, when “the bubble finally burst”, prompting a unionization drive and claims for full-wages to replace what had become near-worthless stock options, Amazon.com’s response was to “export the troublesome operation to some less questioning region on earth, terminating most of its Seattle-based customer service workforce on the way”. Implicated in this move was Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bezos, who while denying allegations that the company was preparing to move offshore, underwent investigation by the United States’ government SEC for “selling USD $12 million of Amazon stock shortly before a report critical of the company was scheduled to appear”.280

Another firm with close historical and rhetorical links to the 1960s and 1970s counterculture is Ben & Jerry’s Ice-Creamery. The firm uses countercultural symbolism both as a promotional tool — it retails ice-cream products labelled Cherry Garcia and Phish Food, named for past and present doyens of the ‘psychedelic’ scene — and in guidelines for its “corporate concept of linked prosperity” and “deep respect for individuals inside and outside the company and for the communities in which they are part”. Originating as a cottage industry, “begun by two Burlington, Vermont ‘longhairs’ in the 1970s”, Ben & Jerry’s expanded to operate more than 170 outlets across the United States’ and Britain by 1998, while achieving notoriety as a “famously anti-corporate [and] socially responsible ice-cream manufacturer”.290

However, in spite of such sustainability ‘credentials’, including a policy for “the delivery of 7.5% of pre-tax profits to charity” and a “top to bottom salary ratio of 7:1”, the company demonstrated marked recalcitrance over questions of unionization at its main plant in a 1998 overtime pay dispute. While Ben & Jerry’s “disingenuously … argued that its employees didn’t need a union because they had better than average benefits (including paid family leave and health club memberships, as well as three pints of ice-cream daily)”, the company forbade media contact during the dispute, ostensibly under “legal advice”. Moreover, after conducting an investigation into the dispute, labour rights researcher Featherstone claims to have encountered a degree of employee reticence to speak to the media, which she argues “suggest an unusually hostile workplace”.291

While the case of Ben & Jerry’s seems to resemble the other examples discussed here, such as those of Nike, Starbucks, Borders, Amazon.com, Wal-Mart, and others, it takes on a somewhat different complexion when recognizing that globalizing consumer goods conglomerate Unilever purchased the firm in 2000 for USD $326 million. Unilever clearly transcends in scale the lifestyle niche-market in which the firm operated before the buyout, “pledging” to increase sales at Ben & Jerry’s from USD $270 million … to USD $1 billion in five to ten years”. While the globalizing corporation shares the “socially responsible” ethos of the ice creamery’s original owners, Unilever spokesperson Steve Milton’s explanation for the purchase is interesting: “The company wanted to take a lead on the [CSR] issue internationally … [Unilever recognizes] corporate social auditing as the ‘next big trend’ after environmental accountability”. Regardless of the corporation’s enthusiasm for social responsibility, however, Unilever “instituted a hiring freeze” at Ben & Jerry’s, and “allowed wage ratios to blow-out to 16:1”, while appointee Director Yves Couette suggested publicly, “If you have to cut some jobs, that might happen, yes”.

As in the examples of stakeholder politics, corporate sustainability, NGO support for responsible businesses, and shareholder activism discussed in this chapter, such occupational conditions seem prestations to an individualism that turns on projections of exemplarity and emending the self. These set out to displace a past order of stifling homogeneity, conformity, ‘dirty’ industries, bureaucratic inertia, and a ‘nannying’ welfare state. No longer arduous exercises in boredom, alienation, discipline, or emotional control, duty, or civil responsibility, contemporary occupations and stakeholder initiatives seem to offer opportunities for augmented forms of personal desiring and an ever-expanding array of choices; for contributing to meaningful relationships or embracing interesting and fulfilling tasks, for ‘climbing the ladder of opportunity’.

This is where links to recent Anglo-American cultural history and, especially, the so-called counterculture are important. That is, calls to partners and associates to Pour Your Heart into It, seem to offer opportunities for personal autonomy and sovereign choice, but also to negate possibilities that employment relationships could be overly demanding, require long hours, be unrewarding, boring, tedious, or underpaid. Regardless of any actual quality of partner benefits on offer, the practices discussed in these examples put the workplace beyond possibilities that it may be the site for unfairness, injustice, or exploitation. The examples discussed here represent contemporary occupational practices that imply subject-agents work on ‘their own time’ and self-present in ‘their own ways’. Where stakeholder communities and corporate sustainability combine

with government policies emphasizing workplace flexibility, it seems that employee enthusiasm, energetic application of the self to occupational tasks, said to be ‘fun’ and ‘fulfilling’, as well as incessant impulsion to self-improvement, seem to characterize occupational domains across core arenas for sociality.

Such conditions become more recognizable in relation to subjectivity and a liberal individualism when looking at how several large and diverse Anglo-American corporations, such as General Electric and BankOne engage an array of consultancies to provide “employee outreach and education, and wellness programs” as methods for “educating employees to help themselves”. A key premise for such corporate action is that, “today, firms recognize that employees are essentially corporate athletes, and we have to keep them healthy and in peak performance on the playing field of the workplace”. Supported by a range of productivity and ‘well-being’ consultancies, healthcare firms, and insurance companies, corporations might deploy “Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that target the problem of presenteeism”. In contrast with absenteeism, when employees take time off, presenteeism “is the loss in productivity that occurs when workers are on the job, but not performing at their best”. It is seen as “an important part of the business strategy for companies that seek ways to reduce costs, improve productivity, and promote employee health and wellness”. Actions to limit presenteeism might include “integrated disease management and integrated health-related productivity improvement initiatives”, while “reaching out to employees who are dealing with mental stress, anxiety or depression … [or] need a lawyer for bankruptcy, for eviction, for child custody”.

For the present thesis, this particular order of the range of ‘well-being’ initiatives taken up by businesses in recent years seems to make subject-agents’ extra-curricular activities the focus of lifestyle-fashioning efforts. Such initiatives do not merely work as an abstract conjuring of subject-agents as human effort — holders of time and skills offered in a market place — but, as holders of effort on what amounts to a ‘pre-purchase plan’: these seem to impel subject-agents’ to consistent optimizing of skills, education and, indeed, creativity. Presenteeism conjures and pre-defines subject-agents as if always holders of the same order of interests as those demanded within the occupational domain. Where corporations adopt presenteeism to facilitate employee health and

293 For example, in 2003, Hughes Electronics, a relatively large United States’ computer and electrical goods designer and manufacturer, implemented presenteeism initiatives after finding that “workforce obesity caused 20 days productivity loss per year per employee … and allergies caused 4 days loss per year per employee”. M. Stevens, “Present Dangers: Presenteeism Is the Next Area of Focus as Companies Seek to Maximise Their Investment in Human Capital by Improving Productivity and Promoting Employee Health and Wellness,” Risk & Insurance 15, no. 3 (2004): 40-41. Bunting, *Willing Slaves: How the Overwork Culture Is Ruling Our Lives*, 54, 154, 256.
well-being, they seem to require subject-agents to emend the self; to strive for personal Best Practice. Such corporate “synergies for best practice” might also include “volunteerism programs”. The practices of volunteerism are based in claims that “the interests of both the individual and the organization have to be met and commitment to work, which once could perhaps be assumed, now has to be organized and bargained for.” Volunteerism fosters “the attitude employees bring to their jobs, the concept of being engaged and enthusiastic, of having absorbed the goals and values of the organization. They have put their hands up for the task”.294

Volunteerism is another ‘initiative’ taken up by large, medium, and small firms operating in Anglo-American societies over recent years. For example, the multinational Alcoa Corporation uses “company-tracked employee engagement programs” to administer “employee volunteer efforts”. The corporation’s program of encouraging employees to volunteer — for example, volunteering ‘Alcoans’ planted 5 000 trees in Swansea, Wales — “helped earn organizations throughout the world over USD$ 1 million in grants from Alcoa” in 2003. Virgin Blue Airlines has also used volunteerism to encourage employees to adopt ways of “relating to each other and customers as they would to friends or family”.295 Although a contentious point, initiatives such as Alcoa’s seem to open the way for the stigmatizing by employers or colleagues of employees who do not, cannot or, who refuse to join volunteerism programs in what are, essentially, civil activities. While in a different way, Virgin Blue’s initiatives seem to work as barriers to employment that demarcates particular forms of articulateness and employee dispositions. Moreover, Virgin Blue has been subjected to action in the civil courts in Australia for using employment methods designed to exclude particular kinds of employees.296

While the present thesis does not discuss presenteeism and volunteerism in order to detract from claims that these are ‘high-minded’ initiatives. This may or may not be the case. Rather, the aim here is to suggest how these may work, in practice, to make self-assertion, autonomy, creativity, or, indeed, athlete-like emendation of the self a near-compulsory condition


for engaging in core occupational domains. Moreover, the aim is to suggest that where corporate sustainability is said to benefit “people, planet and profits”, and governments call for stakeholder-based “opportunity societies”, initiatives such as presenteeism and volunteerism might be said to extend a dominant subjectivity that oscillates between satisfactions and dissatisfactions beyond the occupational domain.

These examples help to suggest that a kind of pervasive wholism encompasses core societal arenas across the contemporary Anglo-American West. These examples might be said to represent a blurring of distinctions between oppression or exploitation and stakeholder-like individual opportunities. Occupation on almost any terms seems readily presented as creative opportunities, expressions of sovereign Work Choices, Compassion, or Democracy. Just as corporate presenteeism aids employee well-being as well as lifts productivity; appeals to volunteers animate offers of opportunities for personal autonomy and sovereign choices in ways that work to assuage many existential, ethical, or material dilemmas which might arise in occupational domains. These seem to turn on offers of opportunities for self-assertion and creativity, yet effectively render mute possibilities for claiming or rejecting conditions that prompt fatigue, weariness, stress, or overwork, in ways incommensurate with the directives of a shared purpose. These seem to obscure possibilities that alternate or critical claims might enter negotiations. Arguably, such conditions make the creating by market-based organizations of social injustices, environmental pollution, workplace exploitation, or undemocratic situations non-possibilities.

Described in this way, such conditions can be seen to frame a peculiar dissipating of divisions between non-instrumental leisure and instrumental labour activities. Where self-creativity and pro-activeness become key requirements for engaging in core arenas for sociality, exploitation, stress, or fatigue, unemployment, or ill-health become mere expressions of dissatisfaction: target-markets for the purveyors of well-being, presenteeism, or volunteerism ‘initiatives’, for example. However, these examples also suggest that such conditions render relatively unequal power relationships between buyers and suppliers of human effort almost ‘non-possibilities’. On the other side of conditions that imply socially created problems manifest as ‘opportunities’ lay

297 KPMG, Beyond Numbers: How Leading Organisations Link Values with Value to Gain Competitive Advantage.
enervated dissatisfactions. Contemporary existential, ethical, or material dilemmas, such as lack of meaningful work, stressful terms, or exploitative relations, for example, seem to gain iteration within the occupational domain, but almost only as private expressions of dissatisfaction. Indeed, the whole gamut of examples discussed here, from stakeholder politics and corporate sustainability ‘initiatives’, to NGO support for responsible businesses and ‘stakeholder activism, might be seen in terms of a particular order of structured and institutionalized responses to a dominant subjectivity that oscillates between such heightened satisfactions and enervated dissatisfactions.

This is also where examples more readily recognizable as the material for current sociology might be brought into inquiry, such as the relatively widespread use of communications and information technologies across the ‘new world of work’. In flexible job markets, various technologies, such as mobile telephony, home-internet connections, Global Positioning Systems in vehicles and plant, personal data storage and information retrieval systems, for example, are said to free subject-agents from paperwork and the office desk. However, simultaneously, these can be represented as the facilitators of heightened surveillance and more exact tasking. Such technologies allow for monitoring of ‘log-in’ times, communications, and make possible constant spatial locating of employees. Staying ‘in-touch’ and under constant surveillance through such technologies seems closely interrelated.298

Here, suggestions by Ehrenreich, Pusey, Sennett, and others, that conditions of neoliberalization and financialization effectively normalize relatively long hours, heighten sources of stress, and create deep-seated insecurities or ‘precarity’ across a range of class, status, or occupational groupings become interesting. These critical sociologists often discuss contemporary conditions in terms of a “new world of work”, where widespread outsourcing, flexibility, and casualization bring enhanced individual responsibilities to manage time and money, while high labour mobility creates an absence of opportunities for meaningful relationships, or maintaining friendships and family ties. These authors describe a creeping precarity that “transcend[s] class divisions”. This precarity is said to coincide with a pervasive “lack of [social] security”, and to characterize ongoing conditions of neoliberalization and financialization. These insights into the

“personal consequences of work in the new capitalism” help to focus upon subject-agents’ experiences amidst what Sennett argues is a social, cultural, political, and economic “system that radiates indifference … where there is history, but no shared narrative of difficulty … no shared fate”.299

For Sennett, such precarity is fuelled by increasing ‘casualization’ and the organizing of work-time around high technologies, and demand for relatively high vocational-educational attainment in service and service-type industries.300 Similarly, Bunting describes the increasing prevalence, across almost all forms of employment, of occupational demands for “emotional labour [which] requires not just physical stamina and analytical capabilities … but your personality and emotional skills as well”.301 While Ehrenreich discusses the “futility of the American corporate dream”, Pusey focuses upon the “dark side” of Australian “economic rationalism”. Both Ehrenreich and Pusey concur, “the proportion of full-timers working standard hours of work dropped significantly and the proportion working very long hours rose dramatically” in recent decades, implying that “increased productivity is experienced by employees as increased intensity of work”, which brings demands for “unconditional commitment to work harder”.302

Sociology of this order is also commensurate with policy-oriented statistical econometric analyses by Ken Hudson and Jared Bernstein, for example. Hudson and Bernstein argue that, “in the ‘long-term’, beginning with the major structural shifts” of the mid-1970s, which have been exacerbated by the “early 1990s’ recession”, contemporary conditions manifest as a “jobless recovery”. They suggest that, into the 2000s, “nearly 30% of [US] workers are employed in … non-standard jobs — part-time work, independent contracting, temping, on-call work, day labor,

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and self-employment”, while “many of those who have kept their jobs are facing less job security”.

Discussing examples of what are, in effect, corporate sustainability-styled efforts to create ‘work-life’ balance, enhance personal ‘well-being’, or expand ‘environmental stewardship’, for example, and linking these to particular recent cultural and countercultural histories helps to relate the discussion to conditions that the sociologists describe as ‘precarious’. It seems that time, space, and the body, are ‘returned’ to subject-agents in contemporary conditions, yet, on terms that make much of freedom and autonomy and offer little recourse for occupational grievances: beyond, that is, dissatisfaction as expressed in choices to change employers. While later chapters will discuss examples that suggest a similar set of conditions prevails in relation to ‘green’ and ‘fair trade’ commodities, these examples suggest how contemporary conditions render the creation of conditions for injustice or exploitation non-possibilities.

These examples appear to allow for little room for collective assessment or institutionalized actions that would reject or modify the peculiar offers of personal autonomy and individual liberty made under the aegis of ostensibly ‘caring, sharing’ employment conditions. Ronald Paul Hill and Debra Lynn Stephens’ study of *Compassionate Organizations* in operations at the *Ideo*, *Intel*, and *Microsoft* information technology hardware and software manufacturers, as well as at the *Nike* leisurewear producer, designer, and distributor are interesting here:

*Compassionate Organizations* offer employees exciting and fulfilling workplaces [where] the elicitation of sheer enjoyment or fun in activities … [that] fail to distinguish between work and play … are stimulating emotionally as well as intellectually complementary and creativity-enhancing. [These] recognize and appreciate the needs and desires of major internal and external constituencies, and … operate to find synergies between the goals of these subgroups and the larger institution. This vigilance goes beyond the traditional market-driven approach … of the previous century, to include a fuller understanding of and dedication to meeting the many and varied requirements of human existence.

Hill and Stephens’ suggest that the operations of *Nike* are “consistent with this perspective” and, as such, describe the firm as being a typical *Compassionate Organization*:


Nike has developed a campus environment at its Beaverton, Oregon facility that provides a variety of services to meet professional and personal needs. Exercise facilities allow employees to engage in virtually any sport or physical activity throughout the day. There are a number of restaurants … where employees gather to chat informally or just unwind. Shopping for clothing or gifts often occurs at the Nike store, and workers receive steep discounts off retail prices. Parents can participate in a number of family events sponsored by the company, and their young children are given day care facilities in a nearby building.305

While the creating of such conditions at Nike’s Beaverton campus are seen as emblems for the central tenets of the ‘compassionate’ organizational theory, Hill and Stephens’ appraisal does seem to contradict numerous criticisms of the firm’s operations. Some critics actually regard Nike as “a globally understood symbol for exploitative, irresponsible, inflexibly pitiless capitalism”. These criticisms jar with claims the firm, itself, makes on its website; “Nike is committed to being a responsible corporate citizen”. While criticism in mainstream media, peer-reviewed journals, and through activist channels allege the firm uses a range of strategies that create extremely low wages, exploitative work practices, and human rights abuses at its production sites, Nike’s website features images of young women, arm-in-arm, laughing and joking outside what seem to be factory gates somewhere in South East Asia. However, whether or not Hill and Stephens’ claims are ill-considered, weakly researched or, merely, research with a limited scope and intent, and Nike’s website a cynical ruse designed to give positive ‘spin’ to an exploitative business strategy, or an attempt to clarify affairs before a defamatory opposition, such matters lay beyond the ambit of the present thesis’ argument. That is, this brief discussion of aspects of the theories and practices of The Compassionate Organization suggests something different.306

This is important when considering ways that other large firms, such as Wal-Mart — the United States’ largest employer, owner of British ASDA, Canadian Woolco, and part of an “enduring alliance” with Australian Woolworths — that also “make much of its commitment to communities, its workforce, and the environment”. Such claims sit in stark contrast with

305 Ibid.: 339.

accusations made by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services in 2006. The report claims that Wal-Mart, and another large, albeit, more recent CSR advocate, McDonald’s, rely on federal and state-funded “Medicaid, food stamps, and welfare rolls” in lieu of supplying healthcare fund access to United States’ employees. It claims that “12 000 Wal-Mart … [and] 11 359 McDonald’s employees and their dependents received [federal or state-funded] benefits last year” in Ohio. A similar report in Georgia claims that “10 000 children of Wal-Mart employees were enrolled in the state’s program for needy children in 2003”. Moreover, critics argue that Wal-Mart offers a health-care fund “so costly only two in five workers buy it”; uses extreme anti-union tactics; discriminates based on gender; along with Gap, Hilfiger, May Company, and Sears, knowingly engages offshore ‘sweated’ labour; uses illegal immigrant cleaning contractors “in conditions one step away from slavery”; and locks associates “inside overnight to prevent theft”.307

Arguably, representations of compassion, caring, and sharing work to obscure a genuine labour-leisure divide within and from within core Anglo-American societal arenas and elides possibilities for reflecting on qualitative divisions between on-shore ‘creative’ and off-shore ‘manufacturing’. Where such strategies seem to proliferate amidst labour market ‘flexibility’ reforms, they obscure possibilities that domestic or foreign workplace practices could be exploitative. The voluntarism implicit in compassionate organizational practices, while attuned to “services to meet professional and personal needs”, seems ill-tuned to the vagaries of the market relations it otherwise supports and enacts.308

Where organizations provide well-being services for employees, and government policies encourage social entrepreneurialism and workfare, corporate compassion combines with workplace flexibility policy to engender a kind of inversion, whereby liberal-democratic emphases on individual exemplarity and equalitarianism, freedom and opportunity, become sources for near-consistent requirements for self-assertion and creativity. Alongside governmental policymaking to enhance stakeholder opportunities, a “gooey corporate hug” seems to relieve labour efforts of any determinate end, while portraying offshore associates as pro-active “petitioners for the overflow of


“abundance” created by Anglo-American sociality said to be heavily reliant upon the economies of personal-use and household consumption. Within core arenas, contemporary subject-agents seem “free, to follow paths that lead everywhere, but to a stable career. Free to change discipline, job title, clothing, and personality, and … free to sleep under a bridge”.

These examples suggest that, beyond almost incessant demands for self-assertion and emendation, and the assuagements manifest in achievements of personal satisfaction through these have an obverse; the choice not to partake, and exercise consumer-like sovereign dissatisfaction. While sociologists clearly demonstrate relatively heightened levels of dismay and anxiety exist across the contemporary Anglo-American West, these seem not to register in occupational domains, or the domestic polity as such. Where grievances or claims do manifest, they seem, so often, cast as stakeholder opportunities, or health and well-being initiatives. Occupations or civil engagements might be said to work through thinly veiled calls to ever-further assertions of individual autonomy and sovereign choice. In such conditions, the predominance of a particular formation of liberal individualism seems to mean subjectivity oscillates between heightened satisfactions and strangely insipid dissatisfactions. A dominant contemporary Anglo-American subjectivity is freed to pursue almost unbounded self-sovereignty, yet bound to near-incessant maintenance of individual viability and emending of the self that sustain an ongoing deferral of worldly dilemmas.

These examples imply conditions where rights — in employment, for example — undergo something of metamorphosis. Where occupations require presentation of the self on the playing field of work in athlete-like optimum condition, stakeholder opportunities become impulsions to develop capacities and fulfill obligations through near-consistent emendation of the self. The present thesis suggests that these examples work to animate a formation of individualism that overlays citizenship’s rights and duties with liberal stakeholder’s capacities and obligations. These examples point to the stakeholder as something slightly different from the citizen. It seems based not merely on the legal act that is said to “mark an individual citizen’s voluntary recognition of a political order”, but on an extension of it which introduces into Anglo-American citizenship a relatively exclusive order of contributed capacities and fulfilled obligations.


This is not to argue that rights become restricted to specific groups within sociality; although this may often be the case. Nor is it to argue that duties disappear beneath the weight of a market-based ‘harmony of interests’; although public rhetoric might proclaim the beneficence of an ‘invisible hand’ extends across all spheres of existence. Where seemingly widespread awarenesses that globalization creates large-scale environmental or social problems seem delimited to individuated ‘consumer choices’, collective, community, or universalistic claims continue to arise, yet, by and large, fail to generate responses at the level of relatively complex, abstract, and extended structured institutionalism. Rather, I am suggesting that this emphasis upon stakeholders brings in conditions that imbricate a situation-specific formation of liberal individualism into sociality in ways that mean social and cultural practices discourses obscure or elide public concerns, at least as aired by civil society groups.

A strange kind of inversion seems to take place here. Not only do citizenship’s rights and duties seem overlaid with stakeholder capacities and obligations, but liberal-democratic notions of equalitarianism seem to fold back in upon themselves here, making equality a task of achieving parity through emendation of the self. A recent health and wellbeing initiative proposed by government helps to take this point further. In Britain in mid-2003, conservative newspapers and tabloids reported on a Blair government proposal that, “Patients of the National Health Service (NHS) sign a ‘contract’ with their GPs, under which they will pledge to lead healthy lifestyles”. The policy document recommends that general practitioners begin “reminding patients about the limits of the NHS and about their responsibility in using its resources sensibly. It is one [message] we [the government] want to take forward”. Such proposals imply conditions that would privilege emended selves, over ‘un-emended’ selves. These seem verily to enforce individual exemplarity in the name of equality. On the one hand, sovereign individualism remains instate as a motif for the autonomous citizen, yet, on the other hand, in an odd equalitarian twist, such policy implies conditions where the emending of the self becomes an enforceable requisite for social participation.

To discuss a slightly different example, contemporary government actions to marketize public services — notably, in areas hitherto seen as unprofitable, such as welfare or charity provision, for example — are said by some commentators to extend the principles of consumer sovereignty into many areas of society. In other words, these actions might be said to expand the liberal individualism animated within core societal arenas out, to potentially encompass hitherto

312 S. Pollard, "Juice-Bar Lefties Kick the Poor and Sick out of the NHS," The Times, June 4 2003, 18.
marginalized or excluded groups. While such moves are said to displace welfare and charity by “empowering the powerless” in particular ways, they also bring instrumentalist engagements based on the institutionalized value criteria ‘capital’ to milieux hitherto left uninvolved in them: through “social entrepreneurialism” programs to ‘build’ economic, or social, environmental, or cultural ‘capital’, for example. For Jeremy Seabrook, these programs emphasize forms of ‘Participation’ that “now suggest poor people themselves must provide amenities neglected by the State and priced out of their reach by the market”.

The poor, frail, unwell, or otherwise disenfranchised are cast, alongside the un- and underemployed, not so much as undeserving, or morally weak, as had been the case in the 1980s, but as in need of opportunities to climb the ladder or ‘tap into’ the Creative Economy. Arguably, these examples imply the imbricating of charity and social security into sociality in ways that set a benchmark for participation that partially alters citizenship’s rights and duties by overlaying these with capacities and obligations. The individuated rights and duties concomitant with citizenship in Anglo-American liberal-democracies seem to shrink, as stakeholder opportunities emerge to address a self-projecting and orienting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ subjectivity.

Contemporary ‘global’ management theory describing the position of market-based organizations within contemporary globalization, such Maurice Thévenet’s work, helps to explain conditions that combine demands for constant projection of individual exemplarity with this peculiar equalitarianism:

There may be a risk today, or an illusion … that the company could (should?) do what the rest of society has not been able (willing?) to do. If companies should comply with universal values, we could expect from the rest of society that people do know these values, and practice them.

The key to global [social and environmental] responsibility will be, at the end of the day, behavioral responsibility from people. There cannot be any kind of global responsibility … if we do not think in terms of the responsibility of individuals. There cannot be a sense of responsibility for the

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individual if he or she is not trained to increase his or her level of maturity. It is difficult to say how a company could or should fulfill the duty of the society (family, school, etc.) … a company could enhance the level of consciousness of people … in the course of their professional experience. There is some necessity for companies to enhance the level of people in all areas, behaviors included.\footnote{Thevenet, "Global Responsibility and Individual Exemplarity," 123, 24-25. Parentheses in original.}

For Thévenet, “individual responsibility and exemplarity” are “force[s] for change” and make global corporate social and environmental responsibility possible. This is because the “exemplarity of a company derives from individual behaviors”.\footnote{Ibid.: 115.} The peculiar equalitarianism that Thévenet seems to appeal to — whereby instrumentalist corporations press subject-agents to act responsibly as individuals — might be seen in terms of conditions where liberal individualism works as both motor and anchor point within sociality, yet structured and institutionalized complexity overlays norm-based and relational contexts.

Throughout these examples, practices and discourses seem to animate and address a form of life that ‘lives’ a harmonious interweaving of consumer-sovereign choices and instrumentalist convenience and efficiency criteria.\footnote{KPMG, Beyond Numbers: How Leading Organisations Link Values with Value to Gain Competitive Advantage.} Stakeholder politics, corporate sustainability, NGO support for responsible businesses, and shareholder activism appear to ‘go on’ as if “network forms of governance based on mutual trust, friendships, reputation, shared ideology, and reciprocity” held, in practice, across relatively complex, abstract, and extended modernizing and globalizing conditions. It is as if the forms of authority and value criteria central to Anglo-American globalizing modernization did not effectively neutralize, in all but inter-personal engagements, the affectivity of norm-based and relational contexts in relation to its structured and institutionalized conditions.\footnote{S. Letza, X. Sun, and J. Kirkbride, "Shareholding Versus Stakeholding: A Critical Review of Corporate Governance," Corporate Governance 12, no. 3 (2004): 250.}

Two further examples help to clarify. Shoshanna Zuboff describes the politics of this new era, “believ[ing] that capitalism, as it now exists, is broken and can’t be fixed … will move on, as it has before, to a new evolutionary stage”, a \textit{Support Economy: Why Corporations are Failing Individuals and the Next Episode of Capitalism}. For Zuboff, “Capitalism … is too focused on production and not on the end consumer. What we see around us today will usher in a new era … focused on meeting the needs of the consumer. The eBay mode of commerce is a primitive step on the way to a new
era of capitalism” where “the consumer will win … because if you sell a piece of junk through eBay you soon earn a reputation as someone to be shunned. Deliver quality goods and make the transaction painless and you earn rave reviews”. Zuboff argues that the “old capitalism has had its day”. Moreover, it has “left behind the distrustful, the resentful, the stressed majority who stand ready with their cash, skills and commitment”. Zuboff seems to address an affluent, well educated, and articulate ‘majority’, stressed by top-heavy ‘old’ corporations and bureaucratic government that frustrate sovereign consumer choices and undermine the new Support Economy’s “potential [for] wealth creation and quality of life”.  

Zuboff’s Support Economy treats of globalizing sociality as if it were a localized community, and did not involve relatively complex structured and institutionalized conditions. Such conditions might create opportunities for stakeholders to embark upon projects of individual development, community, and meaning, but also create situations that sociologists describe as ‘precarious’. This is especially the case in relation to Lynda Gratton’s theory of the Democratic Enterprise. Gratton uses the twin motifs of the new era and its shared purpose in recommendations to businesses that account for political and economic power in particular ways. Gratton argues that the Democratic Enterprise is “renewing democracy through the corporation” because cognizant of a unifying “shared purpose”:

[Market-based] organizations are now the predominant fact of economic life, as important for individuals as the states with which we more usually associate the exercise of democratic functions. For the individual the possibilities of democracy are the possibilities of creating lives of meaning — of becoming the best they can be. [R]eote technologies … higher educational standards and, not least, generations of young people who aren’t prepared to put up with the exploitative relationships that dogged their parents [demand] delightful organizations. [These are] based around individual autonomy and reciprocal obligation … self-determining employees do not exploit their colleagues or the organization because power has to be negotiated. And they choose to stay and provide their resources because the company … has a purpose that engages and interests them, a shared purpose that removes the need for command and control. The purpose and destiny of the company is also their purpose and destiny. The Democratic Enterprise works on a different operating system, one that is internalized in the individuals that make it up … people want to join, and their children to join, for the opportunities they offer for individual development, community, and meaning.  


Gratton’s theory of democracy seems to cast matters of a political nature — that in liberal-democracies might be said to involve ‘legitimating’ the exercise of power — as if negotiation in occupational domains never involve claims incongruent with the purpose and destiny of the company. When power has to be negotiated with market-based organizations putting these principles into practice, possibilities that negotiations can take place outside the ambit of the purpose and destiny of the company are occluded. By making sovereign satisfactions and dissatisfactions central to negotiations over power these delimit negotiations over power before they can begin: dissatisfied employees choose to work elsewhere. However, a range of conditions may curtail the shared purpose said to ‘remove the need for command and control’, not least of these being a globalizing ‘de-regulated’ marketplace that also admits of undemocratic or uncompassionate enterprises. These corporations must remain competitive in capitalistic markets, regardless of management vogue, and seem to call upon employees to orient themselves in relation to a ‘shared purpose’ that is not necessarily consistent in its demands.

A dominant subjectivity that oscillates between expressions of sovereign satisfactions and dissatisfactions defers, or displaces resolving dilemmas of this order. The voluntary codes, personal creativity, individual responsibility, transparency, autonomy, reciprocal obligation, self-determination, power to negotiate, or choosing to stay and provide resources or to leave, discussed here imply the exclusive points-of-contact for engaging within occupational domains are personal autonomy and sovereign choices. It seems that, in a ‘new era’, occupational domains entertain expressions of desire’s satisfaction and welcome expressions of dissatisfaction insofar as these do not impede convenience and efficiency criteria that are lifted above-and-beyond negotiation. Such conditions do not so much as nullify possibilities that the world might be problematic but, occlude resolutions that involve things other than augmented individual autonomy and personal sovereignty in relation to dilemmas that social worlds might raise.

... ... ...

The chapter now moves to focus more upon examples of cultural practices and discourses that are said to characterize the New or Creative Economies of the 1990 and 2000s. Employee team-building or morale-boosting programs became a relatively common tool used by commercial firms and government departments to increase productivity and “dedication to the organization”,

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“foster staff teamwork and motivation”, “reward service and effort”, or “boost staff ‘energy-
levels’”. These might be said to extend organizational culture into civil or, indeed, ‘leisure’
domains, but can also be seen to extend appeals to a liberal individualism in occupational domains.

An extraordinary example helps to describe how such programs, which attempt to develop
“group bonds”, “allegiance to the team”, and employers, bring personal autonomy, sovereign
desiring, fun, commitment to others, and camaraderie, into contemporary workplaces. In July
1998, the British Eagle Star Life insurance company held a “weekend intensive motivational
course” to build “team spirit among new sales staff”. The culminating event of this weekend
intensive was a “psyching up exercise” purported to “test employee resolve”. As with events held
at similar such courses, the test was billed as an initiation-type ceremony. However, at the Eagle
Star ceremony trainees were encouraged to walk barefoot over “a fire pit of red-hot coal”, which
resulted in the hospitalization of seven employees with “serious burns to the soles of their feet”.

Another, albeit, less hyperbolic example is the Corporate Battle of the Bands, an annual event
attended by a range of corporate employees, largely from high-level positions, in the finance and
service industries across Australia, Britain, and the United States. These include the annual Telstra
Corporate Battle of the Bands, at the Sydney Entertainment Centre, the Corporate Clash, at the
Hammersmith Palais, and the International Corporate Battle of the Bands, at Cleveland’s Rock’n’Roll
Hall of Fame. Such events bring “workmates from a single company together as a rock band [that]
must include at least one senior executive”, in order to perform in front of “bosses and co-
workers”. The corporate-sponsored eisteddfod emphasizes inter-personal bonding and team-
building, and are said to be inspired by institutional allegiance and the desire to play music. While
also raising funds for charity, the Battles are seen as “an exercise in promoting business,
networking, and having a lot of fun in the process”:

A singer struts across the stage, the crowd roars its response and a drummer starts tapping out a
beat. From a thick fog of machine-made smoke, a guitarist emerges to rip out a lead break. A pair
of lithe blondes run to the foot of the stage and start bopping about. Apart from the small crowd of
dancers … diners are seated around tables, scoffing Atlantic salmon and quaffing fine wine …
Company bigwigs are seated at the $275-a-head tables; those on the lower rungs of the corporate
ladder fill out the cheap seats at the back of the hall.

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321 Corporations taking part in the Australian, British, and United States’ events include the Telstra Corporation, Johnson &
Johnson/Jansen Cilag, Westfield Corporation, AMP Capital Investors, The Macquarie Bank, Kimberly-Clark, Prudon Yamami, Marsh &
Here, the bonds between audience and performer, the collective desiring enacted to produce harmony, melody, and syncopation, the discipline, the solidarity of performing in unison, and the catharsis of dance combine as groundings for friendliness, cooperation, and camaraderie. Such events are outlets for leisure-desires; these facilitate the aura of charisma, communal bonding, and romantic freedoms often associated with music in Western cultures.

However, lurking beneath the solidarity and collective identities forged by band members, audiences of employers, and colleagues, are awarenesses that all is for one night, only. At events such as these, a frisson of interpersonal bonding and carefree living partially, and temporarily, obscure the unsettling lack of common ground engendered by highly competitive working environments, tight employment markets, pressures to educational attainment, and skills maintenance. As one band member claims, “I’ve got a day job to look after so I can’t get too carried away”, while another refers to the following day, when co-band members will “sit about 10 feet apart in an aggressive work environment”. As is arguably the case in most such ‘team-building’ exercise, the spectre of performing in occupation tomorrow haunts this evening’s performance, as does the looming knowledge that band-member camaraderie will be meaningless the next day at the office.322

It seems that the kind of “gooey corporate hug” attributed by Klein to “corporate practitioners of ‘Social Responsibility’” both underpins and diminishes the Corporate Battle of the Bands. On the one hand, corporate support for team-building and collective harmony frames offers for experiences of release from the imperatives to act instrumentally which go with deeply atomized and, possibly, precarious occupational domains. Yet, on the other hand, corporate sponsorship for such extra-curricular events seems almost completely to envelop participants within the very conditions that such programs appear to assuage. Whether as aids to enhance

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322 See, Long, "Banker by Day, Rock Star by Night," 23. To argue that the cultural meanings implicit in ‘rock’ lyrics shroud the event in meaninglessness, in that the generally recognizable ‘sex, drugs and booze’ ambiance of ‘rock n’roll’ contradict the explicit goal of a corporate charity/team-building/publicity event, however, would be to state no more than a value claim. Likewise, recognising that status within a corporation begets ‘front-row’ seats, and the corporation that ‘shelled out the most for seats’ won the event would also constitute no more than a value claim for this thesis. For scathing criticism of ‘new’ organizational practices and the ethics of ‘team building’ amidst the highly competitive interpersonal environments found in contemporary Anglo-American corporations see, for example, Sennett, The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism, 106-11.

323 Klein, “It’s Hard Work Trying to Escape from the Gooey Corporate Hug.”
collective achievement, capacities for interpersonal group bonds, or personal communication skills, such practices seem to extend a specific kind of relationship beyond the occupational domain.

Because such programs so often take place offsite, out-of-hours, or on weekends, these effectively blur embodied, spatial, and temporal differences between occupations and leisure. Similarly, such examples highlight ways that the norm-based and inter-relational contextuality that always and already enframes the job of ‘being’ human are brought into tension as a condition of imbrication within relatively complex structured and institutionalized forms of authority and value criteria. Such team-building courses and events extend the spectre of demands for aggression and competitiveness or, more commonly, monotonous workaday acts of individual exemplarity. The relative proliferation of these kinds of initiatives draws leisure, desiring, and joy, commitment to others, and feelings of belonging, into the orbit of commodity relations and, more subtly, legal contractual obligation. These seem to link subject-agents and groups to each other in ways not directly accountable for as exchange relations or formal contract. In these examples, the mores of the occupational domain seem to retract from visibility, while their influence is extended beyond it. These examples highlight the kinds of situations that Bunting argues “demand emotional labour”, and which Sennett suggests make teamwork a tool that silences possibilities for dissent and criticism.324

The opportunities for self-orientation and projection, self-assertion and ‘creativity’ on offer seem to accompany a near-complete absence of possibilities for avoiding them. Unenthusiastic employees do not only ‘miss out on the fun’, but also risk ostracism by colleagues, and negative sanction from employers seeking to engender workplace harmony and a ‘team-spirit’. Such initiatives might not occlude dissent per se, but more so, obscure mere abstention. Amidst a backdrop of instrumental and competitive individualism and, what the sociologists call precarity, such initiatives appear to mandate near-consistent emending of the self.

These examples suggest how practices and discourses in occupational domains seem to offer assuagement through desires’ satisfaction. What is interesting about the examples is that individualism based in desires’ satisfactions, arguably, long associated with civil, consumer, or privatist social and cultural domains, seems extended to commoditized labour-exchange and contractual relations. That is, these seem to make desires’ satisfactions the near-final point for

arbitration in domains that ‘go on’ under the order of what are that relatively more ‘concrete’ structured and institutionalized forms of authority and value criteria of (nation-state) law and the markets. The result is that desires’ dissatisfactions work as the primary route for raising claims in occupational domains. Requirements to be an avid team-player, relish opportunities to shine — or to ‘optimize peak performance on the playing field of work’ — seem to render not only criticism and unwillingness, but also plain non-engagement and inability to engage non-possibilities. These examples help to describe conditions that Ehrenreich and Pusey, for example, explain in terms of the financialization and neoliberalization that leaves “the excluded middle” within Anglo-American societies with little or no recourse to raise claims beyond consumer-like sovereign expressions of desires’ satisfaction or dissatisfaction.\textsuperscript{325}

To conclude the chapter, it is suggested that discussion here indicates a partial reconfiguring of divisions between leisure and labour might manifest in what is often labeled the Creative Economy. The chapter suggests how structured and institutionalized patterns of access to or monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses might work themselves out within core arenas for sociality, such that conditions seem to frame opportunities for personal autonomy and sovereign choice, as well as for fatigue, weariness, stress, overwork, or exploitation. The concept of ‘core societal arenas’ helps to focus inquiry here upon conditions arising where the large-scale movement of manufacturing industries out of Anglo-American societies have taken place alongside the emergence of financial, knowledge, and service-based industries requiring relatively complex technologies, and workforces holding relatively high levels of skill, education, and articulate dispositions. In addition, it focuses attention upon conditions where large-scale ‘privatization’ programs and labour market ‘deregulation’ coincide with employment ‘flexibility’ policies, workforce ‘downsizing’, and ‘casualization’; reduced income taxes coincide with cuts to welfare spending; and relaxed consumer credit laws foster high rates of personal-use commodity consumption, and a broad-based transfer of upper and middle-incomes into the financial sector. Looking at things in this way means avoiding what Flew argues is the “simple assumption that jobs in the creative sectors necessarily have high degrees of autonomy and are well paid”, while

\textsuperscript{325} See, for example, Ehrenreich, \textit{Bait and Switch: The Futile Pursuit of the Corporate Dream}, Pusey, \textit{The Experience of Middle Australia: The Dark Side of Economic Reform}. 
contemporary service industry “jobs basically involve following orders, or … [are] synonymous with deskilling”.326

Occupations in relatively information-intensive, communications-oriented, and knowledge-based industries, while often requiring highly-skilled, educated, and articulate workforces are, however, frequently irregular, intensely service, client, or customer-oriented. Levels of literacy and numeracy, or articulate dispositions, as well as the relative authority and ‘creativity’ in occupational tasks, once seen as the preserve of the ‘professions’, seem to become commonplace requirements for engaging in the ‘new world of work’. Discussing social conditions in these terms also involves claims about the industrialization of culture. As Chapter 6 suggests, Heath and Potter, and Frank, discuss these links in particular ways. Somewhat problematically, however, Heath and Potter use rational actor theory to discuss a relationship between (Western) countercultural individualism and consumerism. This thesis discards Heath and Potter’s rather contradictory thesis, which defines counterculture as a form of elitism and as something so generalized that it forms the impetus for “globalizing consumer capitalism” in its Anglo-American manifestations. And, rather, follows Frank’s, and more importantly, Mukerji’s, more sanguine appraisals of the historically consistent intertwining of hedonism and Puritanism, to claim that over several decades, so-called countercultural sensibilities provide important loci for practical and discursive appeals to what Sharp calls the “individualism of expanded desire”. Where these examples suggest market-oriented liberal-democratic conditions work to extend such appeals into contemporary occupational domains, it might be said that the liberal individualism animated therein, partially work to create and reproduce conditions for a dominant subjectivity that oscillates between desires’ satisfactions and dissatisfactions.327

Seen in combination to represent contemporary conditions, these examples might be said to animate a somewhat specious communitarianism. This ‘stakeholder communitarianism’ partially obscures the dynamics of power and value criteria that manifest amidst relative societal complexity, “abstract systems”, and “technologically extended forms of the social”.328 Where governing parties and corporations embrace stakeholders in contemporary Anglo-American market-oriented liberal-democracies, they seem to respond to public concerns as if privatist,

atomized, individuated solutions to worldly dilemmas — such as would be resolved by “emotional faith or social beliefs”— were unimpeded by the particularities of societal and relational complexity. While corporations, like any other “legal person” must obey ‘the law’ in general, the examples discussed here seem to appeal to subject-agents as if the specificity of interest set up by the legal responsibility and sustained by economic imperative to maximize profitability or ‘shareholder value’ were of little or no socio-political consequence.  

Although the law guarantees property rights to owners of (shares in) a corporation, it also separates them as embodied subject-agents from liability for a firm’s actions, while compelling managers to aim solely at maximizing shareholder value. That a corporation exists as an artifice of the law, a ‘legal person’, implies it is a condition of the abstract and extended forms that societal and relational dynamics take in contemporary conditions. Claims that “companies are duty bound with economic and profit-making functions for society’s survival and development”, both explicit and implicit in these examples, ‘materialize’ the leap from an arbitrary supposition about the functioning of market-oriented liberal-democracies to fact-like assertion that “economic and profit-making activities” always, and automatically, ensure “society’s survival and development”.

Sociality seems to ‘go on’ as if instrumental forms of authority and market-based value criteria do not challenge or place under pressure the kinds of claims central to issues aired by civil groups as public concerns. These examples seem to obfuscate possibilities for practices and discourses that are incommensurate with the increased convenience and heightened efficiency imperatives that conditions of neoliberalization extend across sociality. The conditions that these examples represent work to resolve somewhat tendentiously, what was, until recently, a tense and contradictory relationship between capitalistic markets and nation-state government. These are examples of conditions for a conflating of particular forms of ‘interestedness’ with the ‘interests’ of society in general. Such conditions can be seen in terms of appeals to a self-orienting and projecting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ dominant subjectivity that is effectively ‘structured into’

329 Thom Hartmann describes how the 14th Amendment to the United States’ Constitution “guarantees every person within the jurisdiction of the State the equal protection of the laws”. However, he also argues that, in 1886 the United States’ Supreme Court, by refusing to explicitly rule on the matter of corporate ‘personhood’, which arose in a taxation case between the Southern Pacific Railroad Company and the Californian County of Santa Clara, inadvertently upheld that corporations were ‘legal persons’ and, thus, entitled to protection as such. Hartmann argues that such readings of the 14th Amendment, originally intended to protect the freedom of manumitted slaves, remains dominant whilst “other forms of association, like unions, unincorporated small businesses and even governments” are not recognized as legal persons. See, T. Hartmann, "Privatizing the Vote," *Arena Magazine* 70 (2004): 19, Letza, Sun, and Kirkbride, "Shareholding Versus Stakeholding: A Critical Review of Corporate Governance," 257.

Anglo-American institutionality, temporality, spatiality, and bodies through the practices and discourses of liberal individualism.

In the same movement, these support the kinds of de-regulation and market-oriented re-regulation that confound possibilities that norm-based and relational claims affect the job of creating and reproducing sociality. It is in this sense that liberal individualism seems to represent a kind of overt catholicization of such a subjectivity. Conditions seem to engender individuated expressions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in ways that make these the means for engaging within sociality, in occupations, or, where raising environmental or social concerns, for example, efforts of self-orientation and projection, self-assertion and ‘creativity’. For the present thesis, conditions that the sociologists characterize as precarious can include offers of opportunities for personal sovereignty over choices, and autonomy in desiring. However, these offer assuagement, rather than resolution to the dilemmas that this precarity raises. Of interest here is not so much that conditions across core arenas’ ‘new world of work’ are replete with precariousness but that, within them, opportunities for redress seem delimited to the velveteen motivations of heightened individual satisfactions or the enervation of dissatisfactions with choices taken. These conditions seem to give a double-edge to government offers of ‘opportunities’ and corporate claims that *You Matter*.

It is suggested that Dumont’s and Godelier’s claims, after Alexis de Tocqueville, that a “permanent deficit of solidarity” means almost any “new solidarities … take the form of the negotiated contract” in market-oriented liberal-democracies might be extended. A kind of loose ‘competitive’ solidarity seems to pervade structured and institutionalized Anglo-American modernity that turns on the satisfactions and dissatisfactions, expressed by the sovereign desires and choices of citizen-stakeholders. These examples suggest a kind of pervasive wholism has emerged in contemporary conditions, such that claims emanating from norm-based or relational contexts continue to arise, but are largely emptied of alternate, marginal, or critical force.

As relatively widespread affluence, and requirements for high levels of education, occupational skills, techno-informational aptitudes, and articulate cultural dispositions combine amidst particular cultural histories, societal and relational situations seem to ‘go on’ in ways that delimit possibilities for occupational grievances to extend beyond private dissatisfactions with the

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331 *You Matter!* might be seen as the catch-cry for the management ethos espoused by theorists such as Drucker. See, for example, P. F. Drucker, "They’re Not Employees, They’re People," *Harvard Business Review* Reprint R0202E (2002): 71, Italics in original.

employment contract. The examples discussed in this chapter suggest a near-consistent impulsion for subject-agents to engage, not as mere ‘entrepreneurial selves’, but as antinomian and libertarian contributors to a shared purpose that, by-and-large pervades occupational, civil, political, and cultural domains. The notion of a pervasive wholism comes in here, and helps explain how such conditions work to obscure alternate, critical, or marginal forms of life within core arenas across sociality. This obscuring might be seen as the ‘negative dialectic’ of a dominant contemporary subjectivity that oscillates between heightened satisfactions and enervated dissatisfactions. The examples help to discuss some of the conditions that obscure alternate, critical, or marginal forms of life, and imply a dominant subjectivity sustains a deferral of worldly dilemmas irreconcilable to the liberal individualism privileged in and through contemporary sociality. The suggestion is that the emphases upon ‘stakeholder’ capabilities and obligations described here make for a folding-back of sovereign satisfactions and dissatisfactions, such that these become demands for deeply individuated subject-agents to ‘creatively’ self-orient and emend the embodied self.
This chapter moves away from discussing subjectivity in relation to the polity, and economic and civil domains and, instead, looks at examples drawn from within Anglo-American social and cultural domains. As does Chapter 13, this chapter springs from the claim that a particular liberal individualism works as both motor and anchor point within ongoing sociality. Similarly, the chapter discusses the examples as evidence for the circumstantial claim that a new subjectivity presents itself in Anglo-American societies. In terms of the approach, the chapter uses Chapter 13’s emphasis upon normative conditions to background a new series of examples. As an aid to discussion, the examples in Chapter 14 are organized around the two motifs of ‘social messaging’ and ‘me-time’. These motifs help to focus attention upon subjectivity amidst relatively complex, abstract, and extended societal and relational conditions, where particular ‘mainstream’ and ‘counter’ cultural histories intertwine, and where engagements frequently involve relatively high, albeit, unevenly distributed levels of affluence, education, and articulate dispositions.

Throughout the chapter, ‘social messaging’ refers to the embedding within goods or services of meanings that relate information about the world to contemporary subject-agents. Social messaging is interesting because it often involves relatively complex and abstract information about the world, or subject-agents’ within it, and is often associated with the kinds of social justice or environmental issues that Chapter 13 suggests civil groups often raise. The motif of ‘me-time’ refers to information or situations that frame ‘existential’ or ‘ethical’ reflections on the state of the self within in social worlds. Both social messaging and me-time are discussed in terms of recent cultural and countercultural histories. Both social messaging and me-time arise as subject-agents — it might be said, as a ‘public’ — are seen to act, create meanings, and modalize things within core arenas, in conditions of globalizing neoliberalization and financialization. In a sense, the motif of ‘social messaging’ is used to highlight practices and discourses that structured and institutionalized ‘responses’ to a contemporary form of life might create and reproduce, while

me-time refers to what happens as subject-agents ‘go on’ amidst particular patterns of access to and monopoly over materials, practices, and discourses.

Organizing inquiry around these two motifs also means that the chapter raises and develops two concerns. First, discussing the examples through these motifs allows the chapter to recognize how contemporary sociality conditions an ostensibly enlightened and ‘worldly’, articulate individualism, which might be said to possess high levels of what is sometimes called ‘cultural capital’. Second, discussing things in this way allows the chapter to consider the examples in terms of interweaving ontological categories of spatiality and temporality. Raising these two concerns means the chapter also begins examining the examples in relation to the concept of interweaving ‘somatic, practical-ethological, and reflexive subjectivity’.

In the late the 1990s and into the 2000s, increasing numbers of businesses across a range of industries, as well as governments and civil groups, created, produced, and distributed goods, services, and information using social messages. Many aspects of the stakeholder politics and corporate sustainability, NGO support for socially responsible firms, and shareholder activism, discussed in Chapter 13 can be seen in terms of social messages. Indeed, Anglo-American governments that use public announcements on a range of social and environmental issues are effectively disseminators of social messages. Such government actions might include advertising campaigns to alert a population to the perils of climate change. They might also be the products of government policies to encourage utilities to “inform households and businesses how much greenhouse gas was produced to supply their electricity”, or “Going for Green initiative[s] and a Green Code” to present “information to the public on environmental issues and sustainable living options”. As Chapter 13 suggests, contemporary government policies of this order seem based in


appeals to an individualism that combines consumer-like sovereign desiring with ‘enlightened’ values. In relation to this chapter’s aims, these social messages are said to represent institutional ‘responses’ to such an individualism, which is presumed to utilize and interpret relatively complex and abstract information, and act upon knowledges as ‘stakeholders’.

Social messages can also be seen as aspects of those fractions of personal-use commodity markets turning on exchanges of an increasingly varied array of ‘ethical’, ‘green’, ‘organic’, and ‘fair-trade’ goods or services. The “ethical consumerism” that characterizes such relations often involves civil groups, such as the NGOs discussed in Chapter 13. Across Anglo-American societies in recent decades, live animal exports, whaling, organic farming, animal testing, petroleum, nuclear power, biotechnology, ozone depletion, labour conditions in relation to sports shoes, footballs, and carpets, political oppression in South Africa, Burma, or Tibet, and relatively individuated ethical-moral issues, such as vegetarianism, for example, have been the subjects of ethical consumer-styled movements. Seen in terms of social messaging, ethical consumerism is interesting at two levels. On the one hand, ethical consumer movements might both actualize and disseminate social messages. From this perspective, what Chapter 13 discusses as publicity campaigns, legal actions, support for firms said to be environmental ‘innovators’, or calls for green consumerism, can be seen as a mobilization expressing public concerns over social and environmental issues. Sometimes described as “democracy through the wallet”, the ethical consumerism that such mobilizations seem to prompt might be said to animate a liberal individualism that, making sovereign choices within markets, expresses atomized satisfaction or dissatisfaction with broader worldly conditions.336

On the other hand, civil actions to promote ethical consumerism, as well as ‘market-research’, are important as prompts for businesses, especially in personal-use commodity markets. These firms might embed social messages within the goods and services they commoditize,

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intending to convey information about the impacts of society upon natural environments, or human bodies, for example. In this sense, the whole gamut of corporate sustainability ‘initiatives’ that corporations practice within, and from within, Anglo-American societies can, in part, be seen in terms of social messaging. For example, both Dow Chemical’s call to investors — *Don’t just trust us, track us!* — and General Electric’s “Ecomagination education campaign”, might be seen as examples of social messaging. Social messaging of this order can also be seen to manifest as corporations respond to the shareholder activism that Chapter 13 discusses as a condition of ‘upper’ and ‘upper-middle’ incomes becoming increasingly directed into ‘the orbit of the financial sector’. Furthermore, social messages involving information about social and environmental issues are central to the relatively large and influential “ethical investment portfolios” that Chapter 13 also discusses.337

Since the early 1990s, several firms, especially within personal-use commodity markets, combine ethical consumerism and marketing strategies to disseminate social messages as the means for promoting their wares. Notable here are the Benetton clothier’s controversial billboard and print-media advertisements portraying dying HIV/AIDS patients and Death Row prisoners, for example. Also prompting relatively wide-reaching news-media attention in the 2000s have been the Nike sportswear, Kenneth Cole, and Diesel casual-wear firms, which base promotional strategies based around ‘politicized’ social messages. These firms have conducted “juice anti-capitalist protests [as the] platform for launching a new sports-shoe range”, called for “peace in the Middle East”, promoted participation in United States’ elections, and demanded “gun safety legislation”, as well as urging subject-agents to take “*Action! If you want to live a successful life you have to fight for it*” By 2005, other sportswear firms, like Puma, and high-fashion ‘labels’, such as Dior, Katherine E Hamnett, and Nuala, as well as ethical commodity-activist operations, such as American Apparel, Polichicks, Black Spot Sneakers, and Tight Knickers, some holding “Greenspeace’s Green Approval rating”, made public in more subtle ways, similar links between an array of ‘politicized’ social messages and their products.338

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In contemporary market-oriented liberal-democratic settings, social messaging seems to appeal to but also to animate an individualism that exercises sovereign choices to achieve desires’ satisfactions, and to express dissatisfaction by choosing not to exercise sovereignty on these terms. In short, subject-agents are being asked to orient themselves. What governments, civil groups, and a range of businesses, ‘materialize’ in social messages is here seen in terms of what Chapter 12 describes as a kind of ‘double hermeneutic effect’. In these respects, many governments, civil groups, and businesses take in information about social worlds and act on it as if deeply individuated subject-agents are well-educated, articulate, and worldly-aware.

Using a slightly different perspective, discussion now focuses on some further examples using the motif of ‘me-time’. The relatively widespread phenomena of ‘downshifting’, “simple living” or, what Michael Maniates calls the “voluntary simplicity movement”, seems to involve information about the world in relation to humans ‘being’ in it:

It’s quiet, countercultural, potentially subversive, but also mainstream. It flies low, usually hidden amidst reports of increasing productivity, rising consumer confidence, expanding personal debt, and the dizzying array of new products promising to make life easier, faster, more productive, and more rewarding. Unpromisingly rooted in an apolitical and consumerist response to social ills, it also sows the seeds of collective challenge to fundamental dysfunctions of industrial society. Focused as it is on the quality of work and quest for personal control of one’s time and one’s life, it resonates with the [Anglo-]American deification of individual freedom. But inevitable connections to questions of environmental quality, workplace control, and civic responsibility lend it more complicated hues.339

Richard Gregg is said to have coined the term “voluntary simplicity” (VS) in 1936. He used it to describe the reaction by relatively well-educated yet financially struggling groups to the Great Depression through the embrace of “material simplicity”, advocacy of “production on a human-scale”, political “self-determination”, “ecological awareness”, and “a desire to free one’s self from external clutter [ii] and develop one’s inner life”. Like, Gregg and, more recently, Maniates, other authors, such as Everett Rogers and Dorothy Leonard-Barton, or Duane Elgin, recognize within VS a tense interconnectedness between conditions wherein personal-use commodity consumption provides the backdrop for ‘mainstream’ cultural life, and an enlightened individualism that is bound to ‘seek’ freedom from modernization’s chronic instability. While

hermeneutics-based claims about downshifting might suggest that the ‘movement’ draws on traditions deeply rooted in the individualistic peculiarities of Anglo-American Romanticism, the present thesis looks at the phenomena from a slightly different angle.

On the one hand, downshifting seems a relatively enduring Anglo-American cultural-countercultural phenomenon that, on the other hand, has taken on a somewhat novel dimension since the 1980s. Downshifting can be seen as a relatively widespread phenomena that implies subject-agents act to engender a relaxation of spatial and temporal contexts for ‘being’, especially, from within core societal arenas. It might also be said that downshifting is one way by which relatively well-educated and articulate subject-agents might actualize ‘reflexivity’ about ethical and existential conditions. On the other hand, however, downshifting seems to take on new qualities as conditions emerge in the early 1980s that mean it becomes the target for a range of personal-use commodity producers, marketing, advertising, and promotional agencies. Into the 1990s, increasing numbers of firms continued to create niche markets based in appeals to ‘simplifiers’ and ‘downshifters’ as desiring subject-agents; moves that the industry journal Marketing and Media Decisions describes as efforts to “Give Them the Simple Life”. Indeed, by 2000, Time-Warner, Goldman Sachs, and cigarette manufacturer Brown & Williamson each published downshifting-inspired ‘glossy’ magazines. The advertising revenue-driven Real Simple, Simplicity, and The Art of Simple Living, somewhat ironically, offer information about “how to strip away the ambitions and lust for material goods that, for many, make living complicated and stressful”. What is important about these moves by businesses — to embrace what management literature since the 1980s consistently designates “a fast growing consumer market” — is that they address relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate milieux through appeals to an enlightened individualism which is seen as desiring the means for shrinking space and slowing-down time amidst conditions of globalizing financialization and neoliberalization.

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In order to take discussion further, the chapter now turns to concentrate upon some more specific examples. Again, informing discussion of these examples is the claim that a liberal individualism works as both motor and anchor point within sociality. This means inquiry looks at phenomena, especially, but not exclusively, personal-use commodities that — seen as ‘materialized’ by subject-agents as they imagine ‘real’ worlds — appear to mobilize, propagate, and perpetuate, a dominant subjectivity amidst the interweaving spatial, temporal, embodied, and institutional contexts, which they also create and reproduce. These examples help to test normative conditions where widespread relative affluence, high levels of education, articulateness, and particular Western cultural and countercultural histories combine, in and through such a form of life.

Alongside the examples already discussed, other relatively important fractions of personal-use commodity markets that make use of social messages and offer opportunities for me-time within core arenas involve leisure, entertainment, or, similar ‘cultural’ pursuits. These examples involve the putting into practice of a relatively novel “design concept”, labeled by retailers, interior designers, architects, and promotional strategists, as the ‘3rd Place’. These 3rd Places are offered in retail outlets, office complexes, hotels, universities, hospitals, sporting, and other mass-entertainment venues. They are designed into areas where crowds of ‘strangers’ intermingle, such as airports, and other mass-transit hubs, public libraries, shopping ‘malls’, bookstores, laundromats, gymnasiums, hairdressers, car washes, florists, and promenades, although they are most commonly associated with food and beverage outlets and, notably, coffee shops. The 3rd Places’ main quality is the offer of opportunities for comfort and casual informality amidst often stressful, fractious urban, suburban, and occupational environments.

The example of 3rd Places form but a single aspect of a widespread range of ‘responses’ by personal-use commodity markets — to particular milieux within core arenas for sociality. Such ‘responses’ are often based on market-research or sociology that suggests a wholesale shift has taken place, to an erstwhile Information Age that turns on a Creative Class. In this sense, Chapter 13’s discussion of Compassionate Organizations, such as *Ideo, Intel, Microsoft*, and *Nike*, which offer “space where employees gather to chat informally or just unwind” at certain of their ‘campuses’, can readily be seen as purveyors of such 3rd Places. Whether provided by such major globalizing corporations, café or bookshop chains, such as *Starbucks* and *Borders*, or, relatively small, local ‘independent’ firms, such as San Francisco’s *City Lights*, and Melbourne’s *Readings*, 3rd Places are
interesting because as prestations made to subject-agents as consumers, they combine both social messaging and offers of opportunities for me-time. These offers of “a stress free place between home and work” are an increasingly prominent way of using public, quasi-public, and private space across Anglo-American societies. The kinds of societal and relational engagements that ‘go on’ in and around 3rd Places — combining what are promoted as ‘high-quality’ commodities with space for “social bonds”, “stress-free relaxation”, “casual amiability”, and “pleasurable, light conversation” — presume relatively high levels of affluence, education, skills, and articulate dispositions and a liberal ‘enlightened stakeholder’ individualism:

Going forward, business should grow the ‘platinum’ retail sector that caters to choosy customers interested in health, comfort, recreation, culture, individuality, enjoyment, and security. [This is] a homogenous cohort that crosses market-research categories of Baby-Boomers and Generation X … the Neo-Consumer [sector] that makes up 24% of the population in Australia and the United States. Across all age and gender groups, this cohort demonstrates a desire to be in control of their own lives, a passion for authenticity, an urge for the edge, a desire for change, an appetite for technology to accelerate slow-time, and continuous high-margin consumption, [and] a resurgent focus on the neighbourhood local village as a place for sharing [that is] fast displacing the moat encircled, isolating suburban castle.

In these respects, these 3rd Places and the prestations made in and through them seem to proliferate in conditions that Part II describes in terms of globalizing neoliberalization and financialization. They coincide with the emergence across core arenas of relatively high and sustained levels of personal-use commodity consumption, household ‘credit’ and ‘debt’, and ‘non-standard’ working hours. The suggestion here is that 3rd Places offer relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate milieux opportunities to augment personal autonomy and animate individual desires’ satisfactions as part of ‘going on’ amidst contemporary market-oriented Anglo-American liberal-democracies. What is interesting is that the prestations made in and through 3rd


Places arise in and around the plethora of well-being programs and stakeholder ‘initiatives’ that Chapter 13 sees in terms conditions for a near-consistent impulsion to emend and optimize the self. That is, to develop and maintain ‘stakeholder’ capabilities and responsibilities as an adjunct to citizenship rights and duties. These 3rd Places coincide with a ‘new world of work’, where irregular hours, dismantled hierarchies, and No-Collar casual informality offer opportunities for increased personal autonomy and expanded sovereign choices that, nonetheless, might also be sources of fatigue, stress, and exploitation, in conditions that leave little room for engagements within sociality on terms beyond sovereign satisfactions or dissatisfactions. For architect Julie Eizenberg, and sociologist Ray Oldenburg 3rd Places are a “generic design innovation”:

[These 3rd Places] are public places that are snug and welcoming or informal. The first place is the home, often small, often crowded. The second place is the workplace, a desk, office, or factory floor. But, the third place is where it’s possible to have an informal meeting, chat to a friend, or just hang out. You know you’re in one when you feel the urge to slip off your shoes. The idea of a third space is personal, somewhere people socialize. We need to be sure we invest our [design] work with idiosyncrasies [because] people’s sense of self lies in the things they do in their everyday lives. Starbucks’ cafés are ideal 3rd Places. Repetition is not a problem, you can have more than one; it really depends on the quality of the space, Starbucks has comfy chairs, tables to sit at, an activity that doesn’t cost a lot. Most importantly, it has a policy where you do more than just purchase. You can hang out there … it gives people a little place to hang.345

This is not exclusive to food and beverage outlets. Laura Miller and John Sutherland describe a similar emphasis on individually meaningful and personally authentic experiences in the 3rd Place offered-up by Barnes & Noble, which “opened its first bookstore café in 1992”, and Borders, which Chapter 13 discusses as a socially responsible employer:

The[se firms] devised a décor and layout which encouraged a hip sort of casualness and which treated books merely as one among a range of fashion accessories and leisure activities. [Borders and Barnes & Noble’s] stock was rich in ‘wallpaper’ tiles, whose function was not primarily to sell, but to dignify the environment. As one B & N publicity statement put it … these were ‘amusement parks for the mind’. [Nevertheless, the] relaxed mood camouflaged category management systems

345 P. Ellingsen, ”The Battle of the Bookshops Turns out to Be a Spat,” The Age, Mar 21 2003, 17, Ketchell, ”A Little Space Just to Hang,” 11.
borrowed from grocery chains, and a way with customer profiling that the FBI might have envied.346

These 3rd Places might be seen as part of a broader shift towards what Mark Gottdeiner calls “themed environments”. Gottdeiner argues that it is spaces that are dedicated to personal-use commodity consumption, and its promotion, which epitomize the “themed environments [that are offered-up as] having the capacity of providing enjoyment for their own sake beyond the attractions they contain”. It is arguably the case that, until the emergence of themed environments and the ‘3rd Place’ concept, the key market ‘perception’ was that the commoditized goods and services, or entertainments themselves, such as the foods, beverages, films, or, carnival-type ‘rides’, on offer where what constituted the locus for desires’ satisfactions. Gottdeiner’s concept of “themed environments” is helpful here, because it allows a suggestion that the atmosphere said to exist in 3rd Places is premised on institutional ‘perceptions’ that contemporary, relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate milieux desire “complete lifestyle experiences”. Such commercial ambitions are the intention at Waterstone’s outlet in Piccadilly, London, for example; “the biggest bookstore in Europe”, where “customers can sip smoothies in the juice bar, surf the net, visit a guest shop … dine in a full service restaurant, or attend author readings in a 175 seat auditorium”.347

One globalizing corporation that claims as its own the concept of the ‘3rd Place’, and uses it as a platform for prestation of social messages and offers of opportunities for me-time is Starbucks. Indeed, “Store Development President, Arthur Rubinfeld believes that Starbucks is the ultimate 3rd Place — first is home, second is work, third is where you meet and interact”. Starbucks is worth discussing in some detail because the firm operates outlets across major and regional Anglo-American cities, suburbs, “Latte Belt ex-urbs”, and “sea-change towns”, is prominent in media-cultural representations, and is the prompt for a plethora of imitators, such as Australia’s Gloria Jean’s. Said to have originated as a “bohemian style café in Seattle’s farmer’s market” in the 1970s, Starbucks was purchased by a business consortium in 1987, and used as the vehicle for marketing executive Howard Schultz’ plan to “grow the European coffee bar concept”, and

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“reported its first USD$1 billion ‘quarter’ by January 2003”. Starbucks acts in personal-use commodity markets by “emotionally connecting to the customer based on the intimacy of Starbucks’ ambience”, “product placement deals”, and the hyper-efficiency methods discussed in Chapter 13 — which resemble closely those Miller and Sutherland link to Barnes & Noble and Borders — as well as what management theorists call “store cannibalism”. 348

What is important for the present chapter is that the 3rd Places offered by Starbucks are intended to work as platforms for the firm’s Commitment to Origins™. It is in Starbucks’ 3rd Places that links are made explicit between social messages of “corporate social responsibility” and atomized offers of me-time, in “our uncompromising attitude to quality”: Starbucks “mixes corporate values and a high-quality product”. This is evident in the way Starbucks’ “coffee bar concept [has been] brought to life by interior design mastermind Wright Massey”, also the author of promotional strategies for The Disney Company, Papa John’s Pizza, and Ritz Carlton Hotels. Wright Massey took up Schultz’ vision for Starbucks, and applied a “philosophy that recognizes branding is about reaching the heart and soul, not the head … the idea is to create a story line which brings credibility”:

Each Starbucks’ store is an oasis for contemplation, a stress free place between home and work, a place for deep, meaningful experiences … grounded in quasi-mystical imagery, sinewy, rounded lines and holistic intimacy, where iconography adapted from coffee growing countries reflect growth, like that of vegetables and coffee beans. Despite language differences, cultural differences, the 3rd Place — what happens when coffee and people come to life — is exactly the same. We’re in the business of creating an experience around coffee and culture and the sense of community, and the 3rd Place. 349


Offering opportunities for augmented desiring and joy, for extending, and emending the ‘self-as-project’, 3rd Places proffer the lightest of templates upon which a liberal ‘enlightened stakeholder’ individualism asserts personal autonomy and sovereign choices. Subject-agents move within such spaces as embodied self-orienting individuals. The emphasis upon ‘high-quality’ goods and services, the “warmth and intimacy”, and “connecting with supplier communities” that constitute social messages and offers of opportunities for ‘me-time’ mean that, through promotional strategies that aim to attract worldly and discretionary consumers, these 3rd Places exemplify contemporary appeals to a relatively ‘enlightened’ liberal individualism. The offers of opportunities for me-time that Starbucks makes through its 3rd Places are premised on ‘perceptions’ that contemporary individuals demand me-time: “have a need to spend more quality time with oneself to enhance one’s well-being”. Such prestations appeal to an individualism that is perceived by the firm to be ‘doing good by doing well’ when engaging in consumption exchanges. As spaces harnessed for consumption, but encouraging subject-agents “to linger” and “savour the atmosphere”, such 3rd Places are designed to “encourage warmth and intimacy” between consumers, employees, managers, and the businesses responsible for provision of them. These commoditized spaces combine opportunities for relaxation, contemplation, and “social bonds”. They are sites extend the consumption-experience through “partner mentoring programs” with marginalized local communities, and beyond Anglo-American societies by “connecting [consumers] with supplier communities” in offshore locales.350

Starbucks’ 3rd Places are sites for “a very intimate experience that takes place in a particular physical space and, as result of that, all of the signals that create the ambience, the romance, the theatre, emotionally connect to the customer based on the intimacy of the relationship”. Indeed, at Starbucks, store ‘partners’ do not wear uniforms, and the scripted-encounter is studiously avoided: somewhat famously, its customers are addressed using their first names. These offers by Starbucks emphasize the quality of the goods and services on offer in a way that makes them, the commodities, inseparable from “the ambience” that is explicitly a part of the socially responsible firm’s Commitment to Origins™. Such appeals presume an atomized and autonomous “individualism of expanding desire” that is enlightened, articulate, and worldly, and seeks solace in 3rd Places from relatively complex, abstract, and extended conditions. Starbucks’ 3rd Places are said

to be places of respite from the world because their offers are, verily, to make the spatial contexts for ‘being’ more manageably ‘human’. Similarly, these are said to be sites for ‘stress-free’ relaxation because the offer is, in effect, to slow-down temporal contexts: Starbucks actively encourages its patrons to ‘linger’ and ‘bond’ with “supplier communities” in “amazingly comfortable chairs”.

Cast in this light, 3rd Places seem attuned to a particular form of life. They are ostensibly ‘gatekeeper-less’ spaces for relaxation and respite from the world, which in the first instance, do not appear to contribute directly to instrumental ‘sales’ or ‘productivity’ goals. Indeed, it is arguable that even in their most common guise — as the point-of-sale strategies for promoting personal-use commodities discussed here — 3rd Places detract from, rather than emphasize, convenience and efficiency. The invitation at 3rd Places — to linger, browse, engage in light conversation, indulge, or “work upon one’s self” — forms an adjunct to what Chapter 13 suggests is an increasingly blurred distinction between occupational and leisure activities and, importantly, the market-based exchange relations these turn upon. Here, amidst an order of prestations directed towards relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate milieux. The brasher commercial aspects of what are essentially market-relations do not so much recede from view, as undergo a somewhat shallow transformation. These 3rd Places foster the savouring of ‘high-quality’ commodities within “a little space just to hang” that facilitates conversation, sociality, networking, and “the exchange of ideas”. They offer “warmth and comfort”, while also furnishing the necessities for 24-7 Just Do It lifestyles. Not readily recognizable as a commodity and, possibly more important, in the absence of any entry fee or mannerist code, such uses of space appear to avoid any stigma that might attach to commodity exchanges or cultural hegemony: yet, these remain an explicit aspect of the globalizing commodity form. That is, the ‘gatekeeper’ mentality of older style commercial spaces gives way to a softer policy in 3rd Places. The entry ‘fee’ is not apparent as a cash transaction, nor does it depend on the bourgeois ‘mannerisms’ of luxury-goods emporia, or ‘clickiness’ often associated with artistic and fashionable ‘haunts’.

Such prestations engender a subtle blurring of distinctions between public-collective and private-commercial space, as well as between (First World) spaces of consumption and occupations, (Third World) spaces of production. Of course, in materialist-analytic terms, where 3rd Places are set-up within retail outlets or, in as part of ‘campus-type’ occupational domains, the commodity exchange or employment contract remains the key point of interest. On these terms,

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351 Sharp, "Is This the End of History?" 6. See, McDonald’s, "My Me-Time! I’m Lovin’ ItTM", InStyle Magazine (Paid advertisement) March (2004): 332-33, Starbucks, "Starbucks; Timeline and History." Carlin, "Would You Buy a Skinny Latte from This Man?" 33.
the examples discussed here might be seen as the products of commodity-relations yet, the blurring of this distinction in practice is what is of interest for the present thesis. What seems central to the often low-key blurring of public and private space in and around 3rd Places — arguably, they are cast in the spirit of ‘public’ spaces, as well as the synthesis of collective and individual agencies in ethical and green consumerism is that politics is atomized and depoliticized. Indeed, like the debates over Nike’s labour policies that Chapter 13 discusses, Starbucks promotes its socially responsible “coffee conscience”, yet is accused by NGO Oxfam of “block[ing] an attempt by Ethiopia’s farmers to copyright … coffee bean types, denying them potential earnings of up to USD$90 million a year”. Like the subtle mix of capitalistic entrepreneurialism and charitable works that characterizes “the new contract culture” — also discussed in Chapter 13 — these examples represent within core arenas a subjectivity that expresses satisfaction and dissatisfaction through enlightened stakeholder choices, while dilemmas irreconcilable to such choices are deferred. 352

The present thesis sees these 3rd Places as sites for prestations of social messages and offers of opportunities for me-time that are not so much ‘havens in a heartless world’, but sites construed to address a dominant subjectivity in conditions that mean citizen’s rights and duties are overlaid with stakeholder capacities and obligations. Offering a ‘home away from home’, or “ethical consumerism” amidst a globalizing society said to ‘go on’ 24-7; these examples appeal as points of entry into and assuagement from the vicissitudes of the world for an unobstructed, autonomous, and ‘creative’ Anglo-American individualism. These examples blur boundaries between profit-seeking enterprise and ‘chakra alignment’ by combining ‘high-quality’ with empathetic worldliness. In these examples, situations assuagement of what is seen by some as the relentless ‘buzz’ of 24-7 lifestyles in a Creative Age, and by others, the uncertain ‘precarity’ of flexibility regimes and consumption-oriented debt and credit in ‘corrosive’ societies. 353

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The chapter now turns to briefly compare and contrast these 3rd Places with what some theorists describe in terms of McDonaldization and McDonaldized spaces. This brief discussion helps situate the present thesis’ approach to the problem of explaining a contemporary dominant subjectivity in relation to one interpretive application of Weberian and Frankfurt School theory, and to the somewhat large and well-known economic and cultural phenomenon central to it. Theories of McDonaldization are also interesting because they provide a way into discussing subjectivity in relation to theories of modernity and postmodernity.

George Ritzer’s thesis explains how the mass-industrialization, suburbanization, and mass-communications characteristic of a “burger culture” that rose to prominence in North American societies in the 1950s and 1960s characterizes contemporary conditions. Ritzer uses the eponym McDonaldization as a metaphor for conditions that are said to have originated in processes used by the relatively long-standing and popular ‘fast-food’ chain McDonald’s, which “has spread across American society as well as the rest of the world”. For Ritzer, McDonaldization is the socially and culturally transformational form that “instrumental rationality” takes on in conditions of globalization and hegemonic capitalistic industrialization. In relation to questions of subjectivity, Ritzer theorizes globalizing modernization as an expansive and extensive, systemic continuum that, through ever-increasing rationalization, all but disqualifies possibilities for personal autonomy, individual sovereignty, and ‘creativity’. Of course, many social conditions that Part II links to the decades of the Long Upturn, such as full-time industrial employment, relatively equitable income distribution, suburbanization, and automobilization, are commensurate with McDonaldization as Ritzer describes it. Certain other theorists of McDonaldization discuss its representations, and spaces commoditized in the McDonald’s style, as ahistorical virtual, hyperreal or simulated environments that offer respite and refuge from contemporary social worlds. For example, Douglas Kellner and Arthur Kroker both suggest the “phantasmagoric advertising” that McDonaldized corporations deploy in promotional strategies link McDonaldized spaces with a mythical “hypertrophy of abundance”, and “unending suburban sunshine” that “draws customers into a world of simulation, hyperreality”.354

The present thesis neither wholly embraces Ritzer's argument, nor does it uncritically take on claims that McDonaldization manifests “postmodern rupture”. Instead, the metaphor McDonaldization is useful here because it helps to background explanation that recognizes the emergence over recent years of conditions such that the McDonald's firm itself — along with many operationally similar firms, such as Burger King, Pizza Hut, and KFC — passed into temporary ‘decline’, involving “outlet closures and highly-publicized menu changes”. I want to use these reports of declining and resurgent profitability, not to suggest that we are witnessing a complete passing of the McDonaldized ‘model’, and with it ‘modernizing’ conditions but, rather, to point-up the emergence of a new layer of predominant conditions within core societal arenas.355

To begin to explain this suggestion, the references to ‘high-quality’ and ‘product origins’ made in 3rd Places are helpful. That is, in recent years, McDonald's itself has seen fit to embrace not merely the 3rd Place concept, rolling out its McCafés but, also, offering-up “new healthy eating alternatives” that, in 2006, created “a stunning market turnaround”. While the shiny-clean, efficient, and predictable gloss of the Golden Arches remains in some demand — often well positioned for a quick snack or meal-break with children — the nature of the snack has changed. McDonald's now emphasizes “health and well-being”, corporate sustainability, and promotes itself as provider of a space for My me-time: I'm Lovin' it!™ The relative economic decline of McDonald's and other “fast-food giants” — as well as other operations based in ‘mass-produced’ commodities, and visible economies of scale such as department store emporia, for example — implies these may have become somewhat peripheral as sources of profitability.356

355 Beginning in the late-1990s, several indications emerged that McDonald's, and seemingly McDonaldized corporations, such as KFC and Pizza Hut, had begun to suffer declining sales. This became a newsworthy topic, for example, CNN's Inside Business World, The Los Angeles Times reported on McDonald's “declining sales and consumer dissatisfaction with its products in 2000. In March and again in August 2001, The Guardian reported that the “McDonald's Corporation has reported its second consecutive drop in quarterly profits … analysts said the 16% decline made it the worst quarter in year-on-year earnings since the company went public in 1965”. Later that year, the US Journal of Managers & Management reported that McDonald's continued to “warn disappointing numbers. McDonald's and Trion (KFC, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell) both warned of results below year earlier figures”. The Sydney Morning Herald ran articles titled “Still Fast and Furious; But the Burger Goes Cold” and, later in the year, “One Fawlty Burger Please”. By early 2002, even Ritzer conceded that “McDonald's itself … is experiencing some difficulties and does not have quite the luster it once did”. By late 2002, McDonald's underwent “a $US425 million profit fall causing a 15% decline in share value”. D. Dale, "One Fawlty Burger Please, Conrad," Sydney Morning Herald, 15-16 September 2001, D. Dale, "Still Fast and Furious, but Burger Goes Cold," Sydney Morning Herald, 30 May 2001, L. Donegan and P. Webster, "Dark Days beneath the Golden Arches," The Guardian Weekly, 31 Oct - 6 Nov 2002, 12, A. Holland, "Griller Tactics: Why McDonald's Has Been Forced into a Makeover," The Age, 15 Dec 2002, 4, US Journal of Management, Many Restaurants in the US Finding Earnings Flat (Dow Jones Interactive Website, 2001 2001]), Ritzer, Explorations in the Sociology of Consumption: Fast Food, Credit Cards and Casinos, D. Teather, "Falling Profits Make the Big Mac a Little Smaller," The Age, 10 Nov 2002.

The claim here is that, while McDonaldized spaces remain immensely popular, and fast food itself remains explicitly a part of contemporary sociality, 3rd Places and the other examples discussed here seem to represent changing conditions over recent decades. Indeed, a broad range of 3rd Place-styled spaces — primarily cafes, but also laundromats, and ‘backpacker’ hostels, for example — offer “Wi-Fi connectivity”, and are offered-up as sites for interpersonal ‘networking’ and places to “refuel during a hectic day”. Here, 3rd Places appear to offer-up opportunities for assuagement from the fraught, stressful, and often dilemma-bound, situations which Chapter 13 describes through the sociologists’ concept ‘precarity’. These offers appeal to and animate a liberal individualism and, as such, differ markedly from those made by the purveyors of ‘traditional’ McDonaldized spaces and commodities.357

The homogenized and garishness of McDonaldized spaces seems to offer little comfort, or opportunities for personal choice. Similarly, McDonaldization itself, which offers ‘high-volume’, ‘low-quality’ products and the ‘scripted encounter’ between staff and customers, offers little to an enlightened individualism seeking stakeholder ‘dialogues’. Instead, it is spaces like 3rd Places that offer such opportunities; for self-assertion and worldly-awareness in ‘cozy’ surroundings. The point of 3rd Places lay not in an explicit ‘sales-pitch’, nor any phantasmagoric corporate-imagineered spectacle but, rather, precisely in the situation as offered-up. Like social messaging embedded in clothing or sportswear, 3rd Places offer assuagement for dilemmas that worldly conditions might raise. These examples both appeal to and animate a relatively autonomous and ‘creative’, articulate, ‘aware’ and, importantly, ‘authentic’ individualism. In ways far removed from McDonaldization’s shiny interiors, and fast but blunt process-like engagements, ‘new’ McCafes open their doors to health-conscious individuals with calls of Me-time! I’m lovin’ it.358 These examples encourage subject-agents to linger over ‘high-quality’ commodities and link ‘caring and sharing’ to profitability in ways that imply a complex of conditions has emerged, in and through which a new dominant subjectivity presents itself.

Just as contemporary occupational domains might impel near-consistent emending of the self — in No-Collar or ‘compassionate’ workplaces, for example — yet, simultaneously, foster

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358 Sharp, "Is This the End of History?," 6. See, McDonald’s, "My Me-Time! I’m Lovin’ It™," 332-33. Starbucks, "Starbucks; Timeline and History."
weariness, overwork, or stress, while offering little or no recourse for complaint, the emphases upon community and ‘well-being’ discussed here seems to occlude alternate possibilities for redressing social or environmental concerns. These examples appeal to and animate an enlightened and authentic liberal individualism in ways that mean such affairs ‘return’ to sociality within core arenas as the desiderata of consumer sovereign choices. In practice and discourse, social messages make manifest a subtle unity between a globalizing ‘ethical’ market-sphere and relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate, ostensibly, enlightened stakeholder milieux. These examples combine social messaging and offers of opportunities for me-time in prestations that facilitate and enhance moments of jouissance: instrumental intentions here frame the moment of personal desires’ satisfaction as a wholesome and articulate, and direct, expression of caring and sharing agency.

Theorists as diverse as Sharp, Manuel Castells, and Paul Virilio — who focus upon “technologically extended forms of the social”, “information networks”, and “surveillance infrastructure” — are helpful here. The point that these theorists help to make is that individualism and subjectivity, seen as social-historical conditions of modernization, do not disappear beneath the ‘logic’ of systemic, expansive instrumental rationality, nor into a postmodern hyperreal simulacra. Rather, these theorists insights make it possible to suggest that engagements across core arenas for sociality now involve significant milieux that, relatively well-educated and articulate, derive meaning from, consume, produce, and convey relatively complex and abstract meanings about the world, other persons, and the environment because they materialize ‘real’ worlds as part of ‘going on’.

Discussing the increasingly widespread form of promotional strategy that Starbucks uses is also helpful here. In general, Starbucks does not promote itself through ‘traditional’ media advertising channels; albeit, until 2005 and, then, only in Australia, when the firm began to place advertisements in magazines and newspapers. Elsewhere in the world, and over the period of its initial expansion in the late 1990s, Starbucks limited its promotional activities to store-based ‘info-tisements’, non-advertising ‘viral’ or ‘word-of-mouth’ campaigns, and “product placements” in film and television. This is where popular cultural texts, such as the television series Sex and the City, or cinema film The Devil Wears Prada, for example, ‘place’ Starbucks products in the hands of

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characters, and portray 3rd Places as both ‘a place between home and work’, and proxy sites for ‘irregular’ work and ‘networking’.

When considering that, while ‘traditional’ advertising remains an important aspect of contemporary personal-use commodity promotional strategies, a subtle shift might be taking place, which the McDonaldization ‘model’ does not explain. The prestation of social messaging and offers of opportunities for me-time appeal to and animate an articulate and well-educated individualism, which institutions ‘perceive’ through the filter of market-research as ‘demanding’ personalized, ‘high-quality’, and ‘ethical’, commoditized goods and services, while expressing distaste for mass-production and consumption. As such, 3rd Places often form part of a broader move towards ‘sub-advertising’ promotional strategies, which complement “product placements”, tightly “stage-managed” pseudo-word-of-mouth campaigns”, “viral marketing techniques”, and hayola-like “info-tainment”, as practiced by the Krispy Kreme Donut Company, for example. The invitation to linger or browse stretches the value of the customer for the corporation; clothing and sportswear logos might be said to work in the same way. By “kicking back and enjoying … amazingly comfortable chairs”, or wearing ‘political’ clothing, subject-agents’ somatic presence itself becomes a contribution to commoditizing efforts that, elsewhere, work unhindered, in less caring and sharing ways.

Unlike McDonaldized spaces and commodity-offers, there are no references to an archetypal ‘hypertrophy of abundance’ or ‘suburban sunshine’ made in or through these kinds of offers. The social messages and offers of opportunities for me-time discussed here do not so much seem to draw subject-agents into a world of hyperreal simulation but, instead, offer (commercialized) spaces where ‘self-actualizing’ subject-agents might take up opportunities to emend the self, to experience heightened desires for quality from around the world, as authentic participants in (social) worlds. In this sense, postmodern and semiotic analyses that suggest

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McDonaldized spaces represent a hyperreality might go ‘too deep’. They seem to graft onto the signs and symbols they explain — as related to the worldly phenomena that is their topic — their own interpretive insights. Rather, it is suggested that an authentic individualism is brought to the examples discussed here because the situations they offer can assuage — as means for escaping stress and fatigue, empathizing with others, or savouring ‘high-quality’ in a caring, sharing environment — through desires’ satisfactions.

In this light, a tangential suggestion that relatively widespread shifts in popular music tastes follow a similar trajectory — from ‘stadium rock’ events, at which *audiences* witness the spectacular displays of ‘rock Gods’, to ‘raves’ and ‘parties’, at which *participants* create the ambience of a ‘happening’ might also support these claims. Moreover, an array of relatively recent moves by regional and local governments — such as the Central Manchester Development Corporation’s Cultural Quarter, or Melbourne City Council’s 2030 projects — can be seen to appeal to and animate an individualism that is more ‘participant’ than ‘punter’. That is, the examples discussed here seem tied less to extra-somatic, delayed, or vicarious possibilities, and more to immediate embodied ‘being’. Designer Wright Massey’s emphasis on “investing design work with idiosyncrasies” and Eizenberg’s suggestion that “repetition is not a problem” for globalizing purveyors of 3rd Places also helps emphasize this point. The claim is that the examples discussed here ‘work’ because they embrace and mobilize the always unique and authentic ‘satisfactions’ of a dominant subjectivity in many ways bound to ever-further self-assertion and emendation. The examples augment existential and ethical reflections upon ‘being’ embodied, in space, and time, as well as amongst others, in contemporary Anglo-American conditions that often require high levels of education and articulate dispositions, personal autonomy, as well as stress, fatigue, and weariness.

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Interestingly, retail consultant Ross Honeywill argues that the ‘authenticity’ exuded by genuine 3rd Places is inconsistent with the formulaic qualities of globalizing chain stores, such as Starbucks, Waterstone’s, and Borders. Honeywill contrasts globalizing chain stores, which for him “are merely about the transaction”, with small-scale independent bookshops, cafés, and bars. For him, what matters are “intangibles, like connection and communication … genuine 3rd Places [offer] an environment where strangers can linger in good company”. Honeywill suggests that genuine 3rd Places appeal to “discriminating people more interested in authenticity than price”, because they are “not necessarily about the transaction … not just about putting books in bags”. Although defining them in the same way that globalizing chain Starbucks does — as “cozy places to hang out, following home, the first place, and work, the second” — Honeywill argues it is the small-scale, localized, independent and, often, alternative, ambience of particular spaces that makes a genuine 3rd Place. 364

What is important here is that Honeywill’s claim is of a form that often arises in debates over the practices and discourses of contemporary individualism. For Honeywill, globalizing corporate chain stores offer only weak imitations of genuine 3rd Places. Starbucks, or Borders’, like globalizing purveyor of furniture and ‘lifestyles’ Ikea, for example, are pale commercialized imitations, and offer-up sham consumer experiences while, for Honeywill, ‘arty’ inner-city cafés, ‘underground’ bars, and ‘independent’ bookstores are ‘genuine’, and offer authentic experiences. Discussion now pauses briefly to engage aspects of Habermas’ and Sennett’s work on early-modern coffee shops and the formation of a “public sphere”. Bringing in Habermas and Sennett here allows the chapter to revisit issues raised initially in Chapters 2 and 3. These engagements help tie together the different strands of this and the previous chapter’s discussions, and provide a background for issues raised in Chapter 16.

Habermas and Sennett discuss the formation of an early-modern “public sphere” that, in seventeenth and eighteenth century London, Paris, as well as elsewhere in Western Europe, used coffee shops as places to inter-relate and discuss worldly affairs. Moreover, the politically neutral forum that Habermas suggests coffee shops provided offered situations to these “bourgeois private citizens” — generally excluded from Royal court and Church hierarchy — in and through which, as a class, they could develop and exercise “political will”. For Habermas, coffee shops were places for meeting and discussing ‘news’ and information of concern to the milieux engaged in the commerce and industry that, as Chapter 2’s engagements with his work suggests, had

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364 Ellingsen, “The Battle of the Bookshops Turns out to Be a Spat,” 17.
increased their wealth and contributed to a broad transformation of power structures favouring it as a primary source of authority. Habermas traces the genesis of the “public opinion” and subjectivity that, intimately tied-up with the emergence of what Dumont calls “Western individualism” and, importantly, “modern artificialism”, extended beyond the coffee shops to become the dominant form of life within modernizing Western societies.365

Similarly, Sennett ascribes to the “public man” of seventeenth and eighteenth century coffee shops the emergence of the “public spaces” intrinsic to the social and cultural formation of a Secular and Rational liberal individualism. Sennett suggests that the erstwhile classless equalitarianism, unregulated atmosphere, and emphasis on individual exemplarity and ‘talent’, as well as their initial political marginalization as alleged breeding grounds for sedition, meant coffee shops were important sites for the development of the liberal-democratic principles of private autonomy, individual liberty, and secular ‘humanist’ equalitarianism. Both Habermas and Sennett use their claims as a framework for suggestions that more recent capitalistic-industrial modernization — notably, the development of mass-communications technologies and ‘mass-mediatisation’ of ‘news’ and information, as well as suburbanization and, later, automobilization — has significantly undermined possibilities for public spaces and a politically effective public sphere. Unlike the coffee shops of early-modernity, recent and contemporary conditions are said to make person-to–person and localized communication difficult, and are incongruous with the formation of norm-based and relational “public opinion” that might provide a bulwark against many of the irrationalities created and reproduced by globalizing modernization.366

While Habermas and Sennett make it possible to discuss contemporary 3rd Places as a debased form of Anglo-American public sphere, this is not the primary aim here. The aim is to reframe slightly the focus upon subjectivity within these debates through the theory and method discussed in Part III. That is, the present thesis avers from suggesting that contemporary 3rd Places can be used as a metaphor for a historically emaciated political counterculture. Rather, I want to use their work to make a more low-key but related suggestion that claims independent or alternative 3rd Places are genuine, and offer ‘authentic’ situations, while corporatized 3rd Places are simulacra of these. The suggestion is that such claims spring from a kind of hermeneutics that links independent and alternative bookshops, cafés, and bars to a historicized concept of counterculture that also presumes it is, intrinsically, the expression of a progressive or radical political will. Such

365 See, Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.
claims seem based in propositions that seventeenth and eighteenth century coffee shops, as spaces for Rational discourse — an increasingly powerful public’s opinion — became spaces for Romantic reaction against it, once the bourgeoisie had achieved political power and cultural hegemony. Hence, such a countercultural history might link the culture of coffee shops, as described by Habermas and Sennett, to nineteenth century Parisian salons, early-twentieth century radicalized Left Bank Modernism, its mid-twentieth century transferal to New York’s Greenwich Village bohemian ghetto ‘dives’, and subsequent popularization with the Hippy counterculture of the late 1960s and Punk fads of the 1970s.

While remaining a descriptive-interpretive history of modern counterculture’s ‘modernization’, such claims seem sound. However, the form of claim that is represented by Honeywill’s suggestions that independent, local, and alternative 3rd Places are genuine often comes in here, and a further step is taken. Such an order of claims seemingly assert that aspects of counterculture — such as emphases on localized, small-scale, and artisanal production, the ‘human-scale’, and empathy-based, egalitarian inter-relations, for example — are intrinsically political and survive intact globalizing modernization’s increased relative societal and relational complexity, abstractedness, and “extended forms of the social”. This form of claim seems to involve a subtle switch in analytic emphasis. The move from continuous histories that leave certain matters un-reflected upon to critical commentary seems to conflate antinomian self-expression with anti-authoritarian political will. When such a step is taken, argument effectively moves from critique of the situation to criticism of subject-agents.

This form of claim raises a methodological conundrum that I want to avoid. On the one hand, such claims seem to require that analyses jettison commitment to material-physical contextuality and, so, adopt a utopian vision of the genuine that, always and already unrealizable, draws inquiry towards an ever-receding horizon of authentication, which opens claims that any horizons are genuine to assertions that they too, are simulacra. Alternately, such claims could require assertions that a specific set of worldly experiences are authentic and, so, involve asserting personal will-objectives over possible points of reference derivd from claims that others ‘live’ genuinely. On the other hand, such claims seem to require analyses jettison critique altogether, and embrace wholesale the globalizing conditions that mean some corporations are ‘caring and sharing’, or that might bring 3rd Places to those — not able to access the means for developing ‘cultural capital’ — who otherwise would miss out.

367 Sharp, ”Extended Forms of the Social,” 223.
What seem lost in such claims are those aspects of the critical perspective that allow inquiry to traverse situations and their contextuality in relation to human-being, as it can be said to ‘go on’ amidst them. While it may be that localized, independently run or, culturally alternative sites for producing goods and services do practice certain processes that sustain aspects of these. Honeywill’s favoured 3rd Places might contribute to social justice or reduce pollution, because they are wholly based in person-to-person inter-relations or, through plain voluntarism. Large corporate chains also sometimes create and reproduce processes that do this. The issue is that both contemporary globalizing corporate and local independent alternative sites for producing goods and services ‘go on’ amidst conditions that abstract from and change inter-relations of ‘the human-scale’, for example, and with social or, indeed, environmental stability more broadly conceived. For the present thesis, the focus here is not so much upon differences between independent-alternative and corporate-commoditized situations, or the formations of individualism said to ‘go on’ in and through them, but on the interweaving of normative conditions and broader material-physical contextuality as these relate to the job of ‘being’ human. The problem can be seen as one where such claims blur what is, for the present thesis, a necessary analytic distinction between situation-specific formations of individualism and a dominant subjectivity. As Part III suggests, this means linking inquiry over a normative register to inquiry over an ontological register, and to what is seen as the project’s critique of normativity.

As a way of concluding the chapter, I again raise the suggestion that a kind of pervasive wholism becomes visible to inquiry through the examples discussed here. An individualism that acts to ‘live’ spatiality at the ‘human-scale’, or ‘slow-down’ temporality, ‘goes on’ amidst globalizing and modernizing conditions that — in contrast with commoditized ethics, me-time, or simplicity that might be on offer — depends upon the kinds of ever-further efficiency and convenience ‘gains’ that partially work to extend space and speed-up time. Arguably, concerns raised by the purveyors of ethical or green commodities, politicized social messages, and downshifters, in many ways, ‘materialize’ what can be described as norm-based and relational claims. Yet, under the aegis of relatively complex, abstract, and extended, market-oriented and liberal-democratic conditions, such claims seem to enter sociality as ever-further opportunities for desires’ satisfactions: these call upon contemporary individuals to self-orient in relation to collectively created social worlds.
The examples discussed here suggest an active obscuring of references to speed, efficiency, and calculability, and an undermining of ‘faith’ or ‘trust’ in systematized conditions that are often promoted by relatively large market-based organizations such as Starbucks, or the Unilever-owned Ben & Jerry’s, for example. The increasing commoditization of downshifting and “slow food”, and the broader phenomena of “organic agriculture”, as well as the embrace by corporations and government of stakeholder ‘communities’ are also instructive here. The “tie-dyed aura” of Starbucks’ 3rd Places, the “dignified environments” of Barnes & Noble’s and Borders’ or, what Eva Cox calls the “‘womanliness’ of The Body Shop ‘community’” mesh with an ambiance that means ethical gestures become atomized acts of sovereign satisfaction. Social messaging offers opportunities for meaningful experiences, along with a wholesome worldly goodness; these offers provide a bridge that connects an autonomous and ‘creative’ individualism with market-agency.

These help support suggestions that shifting emphases in social and cultural practices and discourses, as well as government, civil, and market ‘responses’ to them, can be seen in terms of an individualism characterized by relatively high levels of affluence, education, and articulate dispositions. The array of commoditized sovereign desire-objectives yet, also, the norm-based and relational claims, represented in these examples can be seen as actions, meanings, and things that subject-agents ‘materialize’ because they create and reproduce a particular form of life. These examples might be used to suggest conditions for an expansion of market-based relations into hitherto marginal areas. However, the present thesis suggests that the market ‘responses’ to a consuming sovereign liberal individualism represented in these examples can also be discussed using the methodological framework discussed in Part II. This framework, which also involves discussing the polity, occupational, civil, and cultural domains, traverses normative and ontological registers. It allows the thesis to look at the examples in terms of wider societal, relational, and historical changes and to suggest shifting forms of authority and value criteria involving such form of life an individualism imply a new dominant subjectivity presents itself.

In the particular normative conditions discussed here, these examples hold out opportunities for assuagement of many existential, ethical, or material dilemmas that seem to arise as a liberal individualism is seen to work as both motor and anchor point within the job of creating

and reproducing contemporary Anglo-American sociality. This said, discussing subjectivity in relation to social messages and me-time might be taken to mean that the subjectivity under discussion is somehow more ‘knowledgeable’ than other possible subjectivities, or subjectivity as manifest at some historical juncture. Rather, the examples discussed here allow a dominant contemporary subjectivity to be seen in terms of structured and institutionalized ‘perceptions’ that subject-agents ‘do’ things in particular ways. The relatively complex and abstract information disseminated in and through these examples does not mean that the present thesis argues that contemporary subject-agents necessarily hold high orders of ‘scientific’, ‘sociological’, or ‘therapeutic’ knowledges about the world, societies, or themselves. However, the examples do inform suggestions that normative practices and discourses, combine with particular cultural histories, amidst relatively complex, abstract, and extended conditions, and that these are sufficient for the structuring of a range of institutions, in space, over time, and through human bodies, that appeal to and animate a dominant subjectivity as if subject-agents were knowledge-able as such. Moreover, framed by theory that sees a liberal individualism working as both motor and anchor point within sociality, these examples suggest that the structuring of institutionality on such terms brings sovereign satisfactions and dissatisfactions into sociality in ways that displace many alternate possibilities with situations that demand self-orienting individuals.

These examples suggest situations that might offer to enhance desires’ satisfactions, while assuaging many of the ethical and existential dilemmas that everyday life in core arenas might raise. Seen as ‘going on’ amidst the interweaving stakeholder politics and corporate sustainability ‘initiatives’ described in Chapter 13, these examples offer opportunities for symptomatic relief from what critical sociologists call the ‘precarity’ that pervades contemporary Anglo-American lifestyles; these are offers of opportunities for bringing spatiality, temporality, and, in many ways, institutionality, back-down to the ‘human-scale’. Looking at things in this way means focusing upon a tension between, on the one hand, the spatial, temporal, embodied, and institutional contexts that enframe ‘going on’ as the condition of ‘being’ human and, on the other hand, subject-agents as humans as they can be said to ‘be’ in contemporary Anglo-American settings.

Through these examples, it might be said that contemporary spatial contexts enframe a self-orienting and projecting subjectivity that ‘lives’ at the interstices of demands made by the somatic context for ‘being’, and modern empty and measurable, as well as postmodern relativistic spatiality. This is what happens when social messages work to connect Anglo-American consumers with supplier communities. Similarly, contemporary temporal contexts that enframe a self-asserting and ‘creative’ and ‘immediate’ subjectivity — such as in 3rd Places, or when wearing
social messaging, for example — appear to impel an authentic individualism that is somatic ‘presence’, yet is also bound to the onrush of future-time.

The examples here reveal a relatively enlightened, affluent, well-educated, articulate, and worldly individualism that acts in contexts which can be seen in terms of a tension between ‘being’ in particular social worlds, and the relatively complex, abstract, and extended worldly conditions that enframe the dominant subjectivity that subject-agents ‘live’ as human ‘beings’. I am suggesting that these examples represent worldly conditions where a kind of pervasive wholism means a dominant subjectivity oscillates between heightened satisfactions and enervated dissatisfactions. ‘Going on’ amidst a kind of velveteen embrace in conditions that, as these examples suggest, animate and appeal to a liberal individualism, such a subjectivity turns on an almost irreconcilable tension to defer many existential, ethical, and material dilemmas that Anglo-American social worlds might raise.
15 Leisure and ‘well-being’: authenticity and reflexivity

This chapter discusses examples that examine what happens in practice in relation to claims made in Part III, concerned with inquiry over an ontological register into the social constitution of subjectivity. The examples discussed here draw-together Chapter 13’s emphasis on normative conditions and Chapter 14’s focus upon spatial and temporal ontological categories to discuss the social constitution of somatic, practical-ethological, and reflexive subjectivity. The discussion takes up Chapter 15’s suggestion that, while differences between independent–alternative and corporate–commoditized situations can be discussed in terms of different forms of individualism, what is of interest to the present thesis are the interweaving of normative conditions and broader material-physical contextualities in the examples. The chapter considers the examples in relation to the critique of normativity based in a claim human-being is a norm-based and relational condition, which backgrounds the thesis’ Conclusion in Chapter 16.

Initially, the chapter discusses a contemporary non-fiction work as an aid to explaining how conditions said to privilege a liberal individualism might raise worldly problems, yet make these difficult to resolve in ways not involving exercises of sovereign choice or individuated desires. The chapter then concentrates on examples of contemporary travel and ‘extreme’ sports pursuits, personal health, nutrition, ‘well-being’, and ‘New Age’ practices. These examples focus upon how offers of ‘high-quality’ goods and services, or those embedded with relatively complex or abstract information appeal to and animate an authentic form of life. The chapter looks at these examples as representing actions, meanings, and things that mobilize, propagate, and perpetuate a dominant subjectivity because arising in conditions that privilege authentic individuated desires’ satisfactions and dissatisfactions. As such, a dominant subjectivity that turns on a sustained deferral of ethical and existential worldly dilemmas is said to emerge in conditions where such liberal individualism works both as motor and anchor point within sociality.

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Directly framing this chapter’s discussion is Chapter 8’s use of the concept of ‘core arenas’. Here, it helps to explain conditions for a dominant contemporary Anglo-American subjectivity amidst the industrialization of culture that has arisen over several decades of neoliberalization and financialization. Also framing discussion here are Chapter 2’s engagements with Mukerji’s, and Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner’s work. These are brought back to emphasize how the creating and reproducing of intertwining normative conditions and material-physical contextuality in Western and, moreover, Anglo-American modernization can be seen in terms of a liberal sovereign individualism that combines ‘hedonistic’ and ‘Puritan’ sensibilities. The chapter uses these earlier discussions to background a link between antinomian and libertarian sensibilities — seen by some as the preserve of a radical-progressive, politicized ‘counterculture’ in the 1960s and early 1970s — and the liberal individualism that the thesis sees both motor and anchor point within contemporary Anglo-American sociality. This discussion is important because it allows the chapter to look at an apparently generalized antipathy to large-scale political and economic, as well as social and cultural institutions that might be said to characterize contemporary individualism, while avoiding theoretical conundrums of the kind raised in Chapter 15.

The first example discussed here is a contemporary non-fiction text — media business commentators Helen Trinca and Catherine Fox’s Better Than Sex: How a Whole Generation Got Hooked on Work. The book sets out to explain individualism in the Information Age and its Creative Economies. What is interesting about Trinca and Fox’s argument is the way it appeals to ‘go-getting careerist’s’ enthusiasm for existing social conditions, while also being somewhat critical of them as contexts for everyday life in Anglo-American societies. The authors make an enlightened liberal individualism the avatar for a high-technology free-market nirvana yet, recognize that the world they describe can also be problematic. Trinca and Fox argue that contemporary conditions appeal to an individualism centred on “creativity and enthusiasm” — a “desire to get ahead”, “stay on top”, and “cut one’s own path” — because offering liberty from homogeneity, bureaucracy, and “a one-size-fits-all culture”. For Trinca and Fox, “as technology revolutionizes the world” it displaces dirty, heavy industry, hierarchical workplace structures, as well as smog, noise, and commuter gridlock. Their suggestion is that in place of these has arisen “a highly educated workforce … a new generation unwilling to take orders. Today’s workers increasingly negotiate their own way at work … employees are beginning to realize that they are not passive players. They sense they have leverage …” yet suffer from overwork, stress, and fatigue.370

370 Trinca and Fox, Better Than Sex: How a Whole Generation Got Hooked on Work, 37, 39, 69.
In some ways resembling Beck’s more critical-theoretical work on sub-politics and a post-materialist individualism said to combine “egoism and altruism”, Trinca and Fox argue that “old style organizations and the lens of [collective] values and goals … limited personal potential” and did not offer possibilities for “job satisfaction”, because “people disappeared into the group”. Moreover, “today, people see themselves as having an individual relationship with their employer. [They] face-off against the organization, and the avalanche of inspirational texts, or the countless other methods that a company uses to turn us into the kind of workers they think they need for the twenty-first century”. They argue that large-scale, ‘top-down’ bureaucratic administration is antithetical to the needs and interests of an informed, articulate, and ambitious, free, and creative individualism. Such an individualism is enlightened, consistently monitoring the subjective position of self in relation to the world, and ‘pro-actively’ sharpening personal ‘talents’. The individualism that Trinca and Fox appeal to and describe hones an embodied self as the abode for the tools and techniques presumed to be requirements for self-orienting and competitive engagements that mean always “living life to the full”.

Trinca and Fox’s gushingly enthusiastic paean to Just Do It careerism helps to set in relief Bunting’s more sober suggestion that demands made by a broad range of occupations for “emotional labour [mean] it is not just your physical stamina and analytical capabilities which are required to do a good job, but your personality and emotional skills as well”. Where the performance of such emotional labour is near-to imperative, joy, fun, and desiring — sometimes regarded as immaterial ‘goods’ — as well as presentation of the self seem made-over. On the one hand, these mask subject-agents’ engagements as if always expressing atomized desires’ satisfactions. Labour on these terms is largely seen as a matter of sovereign choice, or an expression of desires’ dissatisfaction. While, on the other hand, the veneer that emotional labour supplies appear to constitute a kind of decidedly instrumentalized cultural capital that passes through sociality to overlay economic capital per se. This example helps to take Chapter 13’s discussion of volunteerism a step further. The suggestion here is that, in emotional labour, value created through commoditized labour exchange relations becomes embedded in and dependent upon the bodies of subject-agents as authentic participants in the business’ enterprise. Arguably, as

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371 Ibid., 91, 207. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, Individualization, 171-72, 76.
the creativity and enthusiasm demanded in emotional labour-situations has become normalized, as the instrumentalism it masks has also become pervasive in scope.\footnote{372}

It is facing these kinds of problems that the co-authors’ gushing enthusiasm for the “enormous gains” that such “intense commitment to life” makes possible becomes somewhat ambiguous. Trinca and Fox recognize that the contemporary individualism that they embrace and promote “has its downside”:

The agenda [that arose in the] 1990s was about choices and about the possibility of having fun amid the commitment to high performance and productivity. The [new] workplace is informal enough to allow you to duck out for a coffee without feeling guilty, but stress may be a routine part of your day. Employees are under more pressure to produce yet, they have more physical freedom than ever. They are constantly monitored for performance, but how they reach their targets may well be up to them. Results, dollars and the bottom-line dominate their working days, yet they don’t have to ask permission to go out for a cigarette.\footnote{373}

In the co-authors’ work, ever-further flexibility-measures and technological ‘innovations’ provide a terrain over which it is expected an ever-improving and higher-achieving, success-oriented individualism is to be driven. It seems that atomized expressions of dissatisfaction are the chief tools of such an individualism in conditions that raise such existential and ethical dilemmas. Whether in choices over coffee breaks, commitments to productivity, or occupation-induced stress, the dilemma itself becomes an enduring state. For the individualism that Trinca and Fox outline, attaining a somewhat unclearly defined, yet, unarguably instrumental and atomistic success appears as the ultimate socially sanctioned condition:

\[W\]ork is now at the centre of people’s lives; it’s the thing they do to make money and meaning … many people are consumed by work because it is the element of their lives which is most affirming. For many people their work life is more fulfilling, empowering, consistent, and controllable than their sex life. Better than sex, in so many ways.\footnote{374}

\footnote{372} These suggestions are in many ways motivated by Margaret R. Somers’ suggestions that “social capital has been imported into the very heart of the neoliberal project [and, as such] has come to sociology as a large, shiny Trojan horse”. M. Somers, “Let Them Eat Social Capital: Socializing the Market Versus Marketizing the Social,” Thesis Eleven 81 (2005): 6. Such conditions might be most visible in ‘front-of-house’ occupations, such as in retail, hospitality, and other service industries. Indeed, one example is Virgin Blue Airlines’ insistence on certain definable parameters for ‘youth and beauty’, the subject of civil court proceedings in Australia, discussed in Chapter 14. Bunting, Willing Slaves: How the Overwork Culture Is Ruining Our Lives, 61. Italics in original, Queensland, “Hopper and Others Versus Virgin Blue Airlines Pty. Ltd.”

\footnote{373} Trinca and Fox, Better Than Sex: How a Whole Generation Got Hooked on Work, 33, 211-13.

\footnote{374} Ibid., 213, 19. 

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Under the order of the atomized individualism Trinca and Fox recount, the predominant desire-objectives are total freedom of will and complete unbinding from constraint. Trinca and Fox seem to describe a kind of *pleonexia* that takes labour itself as one more source for ever-greater desires’ satisfactions in conditions that, as Chapter 13 suggests, involve the mores of the occupational domain retracting from visibility while their influence becomes extended beyond it.

On the one hand, the co-authors recommend full and uncritical involvement in conditions that are sufficiently complex and institutionalized that they offer room for “stellar career advancement”, and “creativity and enthusiasm” amidst proliferating, but often ambiguous or barely tangible, occupational and consumer opportunities for choice and desires’ satisfactions. The denizens of the Creative Age at which their work is aimed embrace new technologies, increased personal autonomy, and workplace flexibility as emancipatory gains. While, on the other hand, the co-authors also argue that the very structured institutionality: the relative complexity, abstractions, and extensity of contemporary sociality are what foil the ambitious, said to be bent on achieving ‘success’. In this view, organizations attempt to corral subject-agents into homogenous and regimented workplace practices, yet “In the end, the sheer unpredictability of humans is [seen as] what gives business its edge”. What is elided here is the backdrop to celebrations of individual effort, entrepreneurial talent, ‘well-being’ initiatives, and “sheer enjoyment and fun in activities”. This backdrop comprises of conditions where flexibility *can* displace occupational security, and self-regulation or consumer choice *can* displace collective practices and appraisal of situations that might work to mitigate stress, fatigue, and ‘precarity’.375

Trinca and Fox construe individual liberty, personal autonomy, and sovereign choice in particular ways. Arguably, they make explicit a formation of individualism that seems to be a partial condition of the ‘industrialization of culture’ discussed in Chapter 8. Their work helps to underline suggestions that, amidst ongoing neoliberalization and financialization, sociality within core arenas seems to go on as if personal autonomy involved all ‘stakeholders’ beneficially, sovereignty over choices were complete, and a kind of *quasi*-symbolic ‘immaterial’ existence were an ‘actual’ subjective possibility. Conditions in the ‘new world of work’ seem to ‘go on’ as if the antipathy to social norms and rejection of conformity once associated with the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s were marginal to, rather than structured and institutionalized within sociality. Of course, the suggestion here is not that contemporary Anglo-American subject-agents have

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375 Ibid., 218, 19.
themselves taken on antinomian or libertarian ‘personalities’. Rather, the suggestion is that a dominant subjectivity presents itself in and through relatively complex, abstract, and extended, market-oriented, liberal-democratic sociality, such that practices and discourses privilege antinomian rejections of the obligatoriness of ethical-moral norms and libertarian assertions of personal-will objectives as the expression of freedom within arenas of core importance to creating and reproducing it.376

Discussing the practices and discourses of such an individualism in this way helps to partially explain normative conditions where relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate milieux appear to eschew divisions between leisure and labour for well-being ‘initiatives’ and ‘creative opportunities’, for example. In the light of these suggestions, such an apparent eschewing of divisions between leisure and labour is seen as a condition that arises within core societal arenas as Anglo-American subject-agents ‘live’ an inalienable form of life. Hence, the questioning of social norms and embracing of negative freedoms that ‘goes on’ in the conditions described here are not seen as being ‘essential’ to radical or progressive politics. Looking at things through the claim that a liberal individualism can be seen to work as both motor and anchor point within sociality, instead, implies that conditions have emerged to privilege sovereign satisfactions or dissatisfactions over norm-based and relational claims. As Chapter 13’s discussion of corporate ‘team-building’ exercises also suggests, the subjectivity that emerges in situations characterized by such an individualism seems to ‘go on’ as if sociality were a near-unending field of instrumental engagements where few, if any limits to the assuming of capacities for ever-further exertion and taking-on of ever-greater responsibilities present as ‘legitimate’. It is as if practices and discourses within core arenas for sociality privilege engagements that make maintaining and emending the self an almost consistent impulsion, such that a kind of dis-embodied embodiment and a strange kind of ‘legitimate’ normlessness pervades sociality.

The example that Trinca and Fox’s work provides helps to highlight how offers of opportunities to enhance experiences, augment enjoyment, or attenuate desiring, might arise in conditions that make sovereign choices over desires’ satisfactions almost the only ‘legitimate’ avenues for self-orientation. This is where the motifs of ‘social messaging’ and ‘me-time’ that

frame the examples in Chapter 15 — or the increasingly prominent “day-spas” and “nutrition and well-being centres” that offer “relaxation and reinvigoration”, for example — represent opportunities for individuated desiring in conditions where stress, fatigue, overwork, and exploitation are distinct possibilities. These are offers of opportunities that slow-down time in conditions that make possible a return of the body to subject-agents as the site of authentic existence. Yet, this authenticity so often turns on ‘creativity and enthusiasm’ in occupational domains that demand “emotional labour”, which implies that embodiment on these terms ‘goes on’ as a near-always instrumentalized condition, as Trinca and Fox themselves concede. Similarly, as Chapter 15 suggests, contemporary offers to make space amenable to the ‘human-scale’, such as at 3rd Places, do so in ways that bring together embodied Anglo-American consumers and supplier communities, yet do so in conditions that make it difficult to assess whether or not ‘caring and sharing’ corporations exploit or pollute these and other communities. The examples discussed suggest a form of life that might often act out norm-based and relational claims, yet does so amidst relatively complex, abstract, and extended conditions that privilege self-orienting individual’s atomized expressions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Sociality appears to enframe a dominant contemporary subjectivity that turns on a sustained deferral of worldly dilemmas irreconcilable with the job of creating and reproducing sociality in and through such an ‘enlightened stakeholder’ liberal individualism.377


The chapter now turns to discuss two examples of practices that involve a contemporary subjectivity in exercising the personal autonomy, creativity and enthusiasm, and atomized commitment to life described by Trinca and Fox. The examples focus upon contemporary travel and extreme sports pursuits. Backgrounding the discussion here are brief engagements with contemporary debates over these aspects of leisure ‘culture’. Travel and, in particular, ‘independent travel’ are interesting because becoming a widely undertaken pursuit since the 1990s, even following the events of September 11, 2001 in New York, the ensuing ‘war on terror’, and rising
Extreme sports are also interesting because, like travel, these have becoming increasingly popular, as well as commoditized, since the 1990s. Moreover, both examples are interesting because they are often discussed in terms of an individualism that is engaged in a ‘search for authenticity’.

Several commentators contrast contemporary ‘independent travel’ with the ‘mass-tourism’ that initially became popular in the 1950s and 1960s. For John Urry, for example, tourism is parochial, conformist, homogeneous, passive, safe, spatially pre-defined, and temporally delimited; a Puritan’s rite of rationalized expenditure and redeeming of delayed gratification and desires through “a passive gaze” that involves recording photographic images and obtaining “symbolic mementos”, such as souvenirs. Urry argues, “The power of the gaze stemmed from the architectural geography of the panopticon. [Tourists] visually consume ‘authentic’ places and people [as] Others. [Tourism] has become a right of citizenship from which few in the ‘West’ are formally excluded”. For Urry, the “mass character of the ‘tourist gaze’” is the antithesis of “the individual character of ‘travel’”. Urry seems to cast travel as a rejection of (mass-)tourism; travel is independent, Romantic, and involves “solitary, sustained immersion, vision, awe … [and] aura” based in “different type of scopic regime”.

Urry, like Chris Rojek, also discusses irony-laden “post-tourism”. Post-tourists embrace relatively abstract knowledges about the world, such that “the apparently authentic fishing village could not exist without the income from tourism or that the glossy brochure is a piece of pop culture … [For post-tourists] there is no particular problem about the inauthentic. It is merely another game to be played at, another pastiched surface feature of post-modern experience”. Implicit in this kind of claim are suggestions that post-tourism involves a generalized callousness, a self-based disregard for the Other, and a kind of ‘knowing’ irony that rejects, as a collectively understood narrative, possibilities for authenticity in a globalizing world.

Ian Munt’s comments are slightly different, although he too sets up a contrast between travel and tourism. For Munt, travel is the postmodern form that tourism takes, and is an expression of what Bourdieu calls the aspirational “new petit bourgeoisie”. Munt suggests postmodern tourism became a significant phenomenon as an array of “bespoke holiday journeys”, ‘ethical’, ‘green’, ‘truthful’, and ‘eco-tourism’ offers, alongside a plethora of “independent travel guidebooks”, such as the Lonely Planet and Rough Guide series, began to emerge in the 1990s. For

Munt, these “culturally and environmentally sensitive forms of holiday-making” involve an “imaginative and independent traveler looking for an extra dimension” yet, represent an individualism that “experience[s] the world through a pseudo-intellectual frame”, such that eco-travel is no more than “a figment of wistful middle-class thinking”. Munt’s work is interesting because he suggests that Urry’s hermeneutics-based differentiation — between travel and tourism — is ‘spurious’. Instead, Munt use Bourdieu’s concept of ‘distinction’ to argue that independent travel is no more than “a thinly disguised expression of a sort of dream of flying, a desperate effort to defy the gravity of the social field”. For Munt, travel represents a Bourdieuan class tension that, played out in the symbolic register, “signals a cultural and social reaction of the new middle classes to the crassness which they perceive as tourism, and their craving for social and spatial distinction from the ‘golden hordes’ [of the old bourgeoisie]”.

These brief engagements raise two issues. First, a slight elision seems to take place in relation to the temporal synchrony between what these debates figure as ‘independent travel’ and ‘mass-tourism’. Urry and Munt both see travel as a phenomenon that comes after and reacts against mass-tourism. Arguably, these views ignore the phenomena of ‘Hippy’ or ‘drop-out’ travel closely tied to the 1960s and 1970s’ counterculture. Carried on in the wake of relatively unprecedented affluence and access to higher education, dropping-out was ostensibly an eschewing of package tourism and, more importantly, the entire society seen as responsible for spawning package-deal ‘family holidays’ and the full-time employment that might have provided ‘annual-leave’. In this sense, the ‘Hippy’ alternative to tourism arose contemporaneously with it. Dropping-out became increasingly widespread in the late 1960s, and with the arrival of the Jumbo-Jet, became reasonably accessible to many from the early 1970s. The often, but not always, indeterminate meander of the Hippy odyssey might be seen as a picaresque rite-of-passage, a creative freeing-up of the self yet, it can also be seen as a permutation of tourism, albeit, commensurate with increased levels of affluence, education, and worldliness.

Second, while Munt’s questioning of Urry’s Western philosophy-based polarization of (Rational) tourism and (Romantic) travel seems important, his depiction of a Bourdieuan struggle between “new bourgeois” and “new petit bourgeois” might be somewhat unnecessarily pessimistic. Munt’s use of conceptual devices like “class fractions”, “struggles for distinction”, and his rather strongly expressed antipathy towards “soft, responsible, appropriate, or alternative travel” seems

to lay blame rather than explain. The contemporary ‘ethical’ travel he describes as “subsumed into the highest order discourse of postmodernization, sustainability, subordinating socio-cultural factors to environmental considerations”, seems to recognize the relatively high degrees of affluence, education and articulateness linked by the present thesis to engagements within core arenas and an liberal individualism. However, Munt seems to take on a somewhat moralizing tone, appearing to demand the travelers he describes understand the specific and relatively complex theoretical arguments that place ‘environmental considerations’ as ‘socio-cultural factors’.

If Urry delivers to the subjectivity that undertakes ‘independent travel’ a feeling for relatively arcane Western philosophical traditions, Munt seems to equate heightened reflexivity with greater cognizance. The present thesis avers from emphasizing a distinction between Hippy and mass cultures and, instead, focuses upon explaining how shifting normative conditions and material-physical contextuality frame the situations that mean the form of life seen as practicing travel is seen as an aspect of a dominant subjectivity. For the present thesis, travel involves a dominant subjectivity that practices relatively deep reflexivity about the self and social worlds that are seen as ‘tools and techniques’ which do not necessarily translate into ‘knowledges’ per se but, moreover, inform ‘going on’ as imagining ‘real’ worlds in space, in time, and amongst others.

Robert Shepherd takes a slightly different approach, and compares travel with the powerlessness felt by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his Tristes Tropiques: “the enduring dream of a paradise simultaneously found and lost, a space of difference experienced under a black cloud of certainty that this ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ experience will soon become part of a lost (and thus nostalgic) past, its purity destroyed”. Sheppard also discusses eco-tourism, “authentic tribal visits”, and “safari tours” but sees these as part of a Western “science of remorse”, an ever-circling process of receding possibilities for claims to authenticity. For Shepherd, contemporary “anti-tourists delude themselves into believing they can transcend the boundaries of self and other with the help of a guidebook ‘not’ for tourists”. For Shepherd, where travelers seek new “authentic worlds”, they do so in the knowledge that, like Lévi-Strauss, their own sheer presence renders the authentic inauthentic. Shepherd, like Munt, offers incisive commentary on “independent travel” that avoids falling into metaphysical speculation about Romance and Reason as motivators to travel. However, also like Munt, Shepherd’s argument seems based in what Bourdieu elsewhere calls the “scholastic point of view”. Shepherd seems to claim that travel is a quest for authenticity set

381 Munt, “The "Other" Postmodern Tourism: Culture, Travel and the New Middle Classes,” 117.
against tourism, as primarily a (pseudo-)political act directed at tourists, or some recognized hegemonic cultural trope.\textsuperscript{382}

Discussing ‘backpacking’ as a form of independent travel, Fiona Allon suggests, “Backpackers tend to regard guidebooks as the ultimate travel accessory”. These serve as orienting tools for participation in a “flexible, diversified, and differentiated … worldwide community of global citizens consumed by the pursuit of experiences”. However, like Munt and Shepherd, Allon also claims that backpackers use guidebooks because they provide information that is “used as a means to set ‘the self’ apart from tourists”, and help to establish a particular subjective claim “on [backpacker’s own] authenticity of experience”.\textsuperscript{383} While such ‘self-conscious’ opposition to tourism, said to derive or create “authenticity of experience” through vicarious comparison with an objectified and sometimes despised Other, might be important to many ‘backpackers’, these aspects of the example travel provides is not of central importance to the present thesis’ argument. Rather, the emphasis here is upon what it is about contemporary travel, or extreme sports pursuits, for example, which suggests these offer opportunities for an authentic individualism to experience through heightened satisfactions. The suggestion is that, seen as phenomena that appeal to and animate Western individualism, independent travel and mass-tourism co-exist as phenomena that can be seen to address a dominant contemporary Anglo-American subjectivity.

In such conditions, Kate Simpson’s suggestion that backpacking has “metamorphosed from a radical activity of a rebellious student generation into an obligation for ambitious future professionals”. The backpacking “gap year” that Simpson describes seems to be constituted through a web of small, medium, and large-scale commoditization, and traverses social, cultural, and civil domains. Simpson suggests that, in contemporary social and economic conditions, ‘backpackers’ increasingly need to consider the effects that a well thought-out “gap year” might have on “future careers”, which is contributing to “a relationship between international travel and international development, a relationship that is proving economically lucrative for the booming ‘gap year’ industry”. Simpson questions the validity of practices that mean “groups of 18 year olds arrive [on foreign aid projects] somewhere with no skills and set about building a bridge or school, often without proper consultation with the local community” and that, ultimately, are tied to benefits for market-based organizing institutions. What is interesting about Simpson’s suggestions


is that they highlight a link between contemporary individualism and conditions that make travel and ethical concerns “a requirement for success and as inevitable as your [university] degree”.

Here, subjectivity presents itself through an individualism that accounts reflexively for instrumental actions in ethical terms that, when seen from without, might be of dubious merit. Again, Trinca and Fox are prescient: “corporate culture offers all of us a can-do world where anything seems possible”.

Interesting here are international newsweekly *Time Magazine’s* comments on the phenomena of ‘backpacking’ after the Bali bombing tragedy of 2002:

> The freedom to travel safely and cheaply is one of the greatest blessings of our time — something that immeasurably expands the range of human experience. That’s particularly true for one class of traveler; backpackers … few modern social developments are more significant and less appreciated than the rise of backpacker travel. The tens of thousands of young Australians, Germans, Britons, Americans, and others who wander the globe … are building what may be the only example of a truly global community.

> These *Time* comments help to highlight a subtle tension that, for the present thesis, seems to characterize many contemporary leisure practices and discourses. Initially, however, *Time’s* comments raise an issue that is important but, arguably, well-covered as a sociological issue. While, indeed, ‘truly global’ communities may manifest in and around backpacker centres, such as Bondi Beach, Earl’s Court, or Khao Sahn Road, the relational bonds that ‘go on’ within them seem relatively fragile. On the one hand, subject-agents might ‘bond’ through comparable experiences, especially, where carefree attitudes and novel liberties are on offer. While chance meetings may lead to joy and happiness, the least importune of encounters can readily be cast off. Yet, on the other hand, where movement from place to place occurs within the temporal limits of the ‘gap year’, or under the mundane constraints of available wealth, fragility seems the defining feature of such communities. The backpacking community that *Time* lauds might be only marginally more enduring than those others, sometimes said to be exemplary of ‘community’ in the Creative Age, the internet chat-rooms and weblogs of the ‘cybersphere’.

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In these respects, the relatively popular *Lonely Planet South-East Asia on a Shoestring* guidebook is emphatic in suggesting that travel is about self-assertion from within an authentic individualism:

> At *Lonely Planet* we believe the most memorable travel experiences are often those that are unexpected, and the finest discoveries are those that you make yourself. Guidebooks are not intended to be used as if they provide a detailed set of infallible instructions.\(^{386}\)

The similar *Rough Guides* emphasize “information about hostels and low-budget listings with the kind of details on restaurants and quality hotels that independent-minded visitors on any budget might expect, whether on business in New York or trekking in Thailand”. The *Guides* offer to reveal pathways for “independent travelers” that combines the firm’s “student origins” and “journalistic approach to description with a thoroughly practical approach to travelers’ needs”, including information about “culture, history and contemporary insights”. “*Rough Guides* had a ready market among impecunious backpackers, but soon acquired a much broader and older readership that relished … wit and inquisitiveness as much as an enthusiastic, critical approach”.\(^{387}\)

At once, travelers are offered stewardship and guidance alongside demands that personal sovereignty and autonomy be exercised. Such guidebooks do not pretend to offer entry to an untapped wilderness. The offer is intended to trigger personal achievement through the satisfactions might travel afford. These examples suggest a contemporary subjectivity that presents itself in conditions that motivate ongoing desires’ satisfactions and dissatisfactions, where almost consistent requirements for emendation of the self extend beyond directly instrumentalized occupational domains and into those of leisure and culture. While travel for some might include self-discovery, and for others the kind of melancholy felt by Levi-Strauss upon finding that all the ‘discoveries’ have been made already, such insights into subject-hood do not form part of the present inquiry. What these examples do represent are situations in which travel is seen to appeal to and animate a relatively well-educated, and articulate, autonomous individualism that practices sovereign fulfillment in conditions that privilege the sovereign desires’ satisfactions and dissatisfactions of a self-asserting and orienting subjectivity.


Some reasons given by Samantha Selinger-Morris for travel in North Asia are helpful here. Selinger-Morris suggests that what is interesting about contemporary travel is that subject-agents bring the authentic individualism that they ‘live’ to it. Drawing somewhat ironically on writers like Paul Theroux, Selinger-Morris’ suggests, while “tourists don’t know where they’ve been [and] travelers don’t know where they’re going.’ I’m a member of a lesser-known third class, the one that knows where the Starbucks is”. Selinger-Morris derides Theroux, as well as what she sees as “seekers of the self in areas untouched by Western culture”:

I’d have to drink piss-warm distilled goat’s milk in a Mongolian yurt to experience the ‘real China’ right? Traveling on the beaten path in Asia has given me the gift of hard-arse introspection. I had to deal with my lack of tolerance, my constant judging. And, now is the time to put up or shut up. I either remain an Orientalist for the rest of my life, or I learn to accept other cultures on their own terms.\(^3\)

The mode of travel that Selinger-Morris reports involves the exercise of autonomy, the self-development of capacities for ‘going on’, as a relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate Anglo-American individualism in contemporary globalizing conditions. Making similar claims, the somewhat more urbane Alain de Botton recommends, “Independent travelers” should, “reflect upon a fundamental question prior to setting out. What excites my curiosity?” In a world replete with offers of opportunities for desires’ satisfactions, de Botton implores reflection about why travel is undertaken, and what could be fulfilling about it, “lest one slip into anxiety, boredom, free-floating sadness, or alarm”. For Robert Dessaix, contemporary “travel is primarily about me”:

Travel is about self-discovery … saving your soul, or at least revivifying it, kaleidescoping it into something else is still the best reason for leaving home … it’s best to leave home unaccompanied, or with someone you can get rid of without too much trouble en route … It’s being on the prowl, beholden to nobody, for the beautiful self we’d forgotten was locked up inside us. It’s your business what makes you come alive – and nobody else’s. Once you get home nobody will be remotely interested in what you did, or what you saw. \(^4\)

Like de Botton, Dessaix recommends travel as catharsis, an experiencing of the self to be arrived at through private immersion in social worlds: “living more intensely, freed for a short time

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from the constraints of everyday life”. Personal authenticity and the genuineness of existence are *a priori* assumptions here. While for some, ‘the art of travel’ might involve “developing a lifelong interest in Gobelin tapestry … Parisian fashion, or Belgium between the wars”, Dessaix makes explicit a claim that the revivification of self, which he recommends, “is not impossible at [outer-suburban] Chadstone Shopping Centre”\(^{390}\).

That anxiety, boredom, or ‘free-floating alarm’ are recognizable as contemporary features of life within Anglo-American societies is a moot point. However, what is important here is the suggestion that Anglo-American conditions have emerged which seem to privilege practices and pursuits that work to augment and extend sovereign choices by authentic ‘identities’ through personal, autonomous, desires’ satisfactions, or dissatisfactions. These examples help to suggest what happens in contemporary leisure domains as relatively well-educated, affluent, and articulate milieux engage amidst conditions also demand almost consistent self-assertion and emendation of the self. What is interesting for the present thesis is not so much that tourism may have given way to travel, or that the former might express conformity and the latter liberty, but the emergence of conditions in which it seems independence and autonomy have become central to widely practiced cultural pursuits. Whether or not travel’s popularity works to undermine its authenticity for some travelers — as is possibly the case for many — is not as important here as the suggestion that travel ‘goes on’ in conditions that impel consistent emending of a ‘creative’ and ‘enthusiastic’ self-orienting and projecting subjectivity.

The examples discussed here are said to represent, not so much quests for authenticity but, quests *by* an inescapably authentic subjectivity through the experiences of an individualism that assumes personal capacities and responsibilities which satisfy, assuage, enhance, or augment, embodied ‘existential’ presence in particular social worlds. The directly commoditized offers of independent travel bureaus — Don’t go on holiday this year … get into a real life experience with Intrepid! — and guidebooks, like the *Lonely Planet* and *Rough Guides*, as well as the indirectly commoditized practices these complement, such as eco-tourism, backpacking, the “gap year”, or “extreme sports”, represent offers of opportunities for sovereign desires’ satisfactions. The offers of “memorable experiences”, and to “be all you can be”, “live close to the edge”, or to *Just Do It*, discussed here represent offers of opportunities to augment personal desiring and extend

\(^{390}\) Ibid. Alain de Botton’s *The Art of Travel*, as quoted by Dessaix.
moments of joy in conditions that consistently impel maintenance of an authentic form of life that ‘creatively’ self-orient and ‘pro-actively’ self-project.

Discussion now considers examples that help to examine conditions in relation to inquiry over an ontological register that focuses upon the social constitution of subjectivity. Discussion considers how particular situations within contemporary sociality appear in relation to intertwining somatic, practical-ethological, and reflexive layers of subjectivity. The key example here is a relatively recent personal-use commodity outlet design format, the ‘juice bars’ that squeeze and blend fruit juices, dairy-styled smoothies, and similar beverage-snacks on-site, using a relatively wide variety of seasonal and out-of-season fruits and vegetables, various permutations on yoghurt, milk, and soy products, as well as vitamin and mineral additives.

As a retailing concept, the ‘juice’ or ‘smoothie bar’ originated in California in the early 1990s, and spread to both Britain and Australia by the early 2000s. As a retailing format, juice bars are most often chains or franchises in urban and suburban shopping strips and ‘malls’, seafronts, and other ‘leisure’ precincts. However, ‘high-end’ and ‘boutique’ juice bars also seem common to Central Business Districts, ‘up-market’ shopping plazas, and financial districts. At first glance, the situations proffered by these juice bars might appear in some ways antithetical to the relaxing, comfortable, and ethical consumerism central to the 3rd Places discussed in Chapter 15. Indeed, the example provided by the juice bars is interesting because, while different from 3rd Places, as sites for personal-use commodity consumption, they can be seen to address a dominant contemporary subjectivity through appeals to a liberal ‘enlightened stakeholder’ individualism.

Multinational food and beverage corporation PepsiCo opened a single Jamba Juice outlet in California in 1995 and had 300 stores in the United States by 2001, generating a 3 200% expansion in revenues. Meanwhile, the Juice & Smoothie Association of the United States estimates 2001 sales at USD$552 million for the 2 000 outlets said to emerge there in recent years. In the United Kingdom, juice bars first appeared in 2000 in fashionable neighbourhoods, such as Fulham, the

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Kings Road, and Canary Wharf. Even in allegedly ‘unfashionable’ centres, such as Bristol the owner of one juice bar claims to “get through 150 kilos of carrots every week”. 392

Indeed, juice bars have emerged over the same period as 3rd Places, and often appear in similar locations. Similarly, the juice bars hold links with the United States’ West Coast counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. Like the corporatized 3rd Places, the most abundant contemporary manifestations of the ‘juice bar concept’ appear to be those developed by large corporations, such as PepsiCo. They are said to have “come a long way from hippy health food stores. Retailers have moved well from that concept to a slicker, sophisticated urban niche where the juice bar experience is all about feeling good and getting a lift”. As such, the juice bar example is interesting because designed to cater to the same relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate milieux for whom for whom engagements within core arenas are often, both sources of personal autonomy and individual sovereignty, as well as of irregular incomes, unpredictability, and what the sociologists call ‘precarity’.393

As a ‘retailing concept’, the juice bar does not rely on what Eizenberg sees as “comfy chairs, tables to sit at … a policy where you do more than just purchase, [offering] people a little place to hang”. In contrast with 3rd Places, juice bars typically provide only benches and stools for in-store consumption. Sited most often in relatively compact shop-fronts, juice bars usually offer a well-lit and pastel-hued menagerie of squeezing, pressing, and whirring machinery. Here, potential customers encounter relatively loud, pulsating, beat-driven electronic music, of a kind with that which aerobics gymnasiums offer-up. The choice of background music also stands juice bars in contrast with 3rd Places, which are closely associated with relaxing jazz, folk, ambient, and ‘world’ music. Indeed, the Starbucks firm owns a recording label that features, amongst others, Bob Dylan, while various Borders’ stores periodically offer ‘live’ freestyle-jazz.394

The juice bars’ commoditized prestations are based in claims that what is on offer are nutritious and flavoursome accompaniments to healthy yet busy contemporary Anglo-American ‘lifestyles’:

*Boost is Smoothies: Being healthy is fun at Boost!*
Boost Juice fruit juices and Super Juice Cocktails come with an added Super Nutritional Supplement of one of five specially formulated natural vitamin boosts. Or, if you prefer, a pure shot of liquid sunshine, better known as Wheatgrass. It is amazing how we have made something so healthy taste so good!

Finally, fast food you can feel good about, at Viva Juice, we love fruit, and we delight in dishing it out in magical combinations that burst with fantastic flavours and all round goodness.

Viva Juice – Smoothies … Good to Go, contain the recommended daily intake of fruit [and] are packed with vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, an extraordinary health experience.

Each smoothie includes a FREE nutritional booster.

On average, our juices contain approximately 2 grams of fat and 350 calories … by blending fruit to give you a meal-in-a-cup that conveniently fits into a day’s healthy eating plan.

To lead a healthy life you need to be fuelled by the right stuff:
- Oranges – provides all round goodness & protection from infection.
- Apples — fights infections, keeps skin clear & strengthens eyesight.
- Blueberries — fights gastro & urinary tract infections.
- Pineapples & Raspberries — helpful for angina & arthritis. Excellent anti-oxidant.

Enticing fruit flavours, vital nutrients, and total convenience: everything you need to live an active healthy life.\(^{395}\)

Such promotional information is interesting, because it allows discussion to consider the juice bar as a relatively recent commodity-phenomenon replete with social messaging of a distinctly informational nature alongside offers of opportunities for me-time. In and through juice bars, self-assertion coalesces around the ingestion of a beverage that is a nutritious, energizing, and purportedly, performance amplifying *Boost!* While in 3\(^\text{rd}\) Places, the offer is to replenish and regain composure, the juice bar offers opportunities to bring the embodied self up to scratch for participation in sociality. The provisioning of a forum for a self-orienting and asserting subjectivity is a change in the syntax of the offer yet, the paradigm in which the offer appears remains consistent. The offers here are based in market-perceptions that subject-agents desire ‘peak-performance’ at all times.

What both 3\(^\text{rd}\) Places and juice bars offer-up are some of the tools and techniques for ‘going on’ in the contemporary Anglo-American West. The order of representations attaching to the juice bars’ exhortations — to imbibe ‘a pure shot of liquid sunshine’ — also differ from those

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used to promote beverages in earlier decades. Briefly pausing to compare them here might offer further insight into how juice bars can be seen to address a dominant contemporary subjectivity. Juice bar promotions differ from those used by firms purveying liquor to ‘businessmen’ in the 1950s and 1960s, for example. Promotions in these decades often represented to the busy professional milieux of those decades, commodities as tools that might aid relaxation and the carrying-on of business. Likewise, the juice bars’ references to ‘liquid sunshine’ do not resemble commercially bowdlerized re-presentations of countercultural psychedelia seen in beverage promotions of the 1970s, such as Frank suggests formed a key part of the markets’ Conquest of Cool. What the juice bars’ promotions seem to re-present here are conditions in which work and life are experienced unitarily; as aspects of an active and healthy, achievement-oriented life. Contemporary occupational relations are not seen to be played-out over drinks — as Trinca and Fox suggest, “By the 2000s, the days of the ‘liquid lunch’ were well and truly over” — nor does leisure involve potentially debilitating mind-altering substances, and rejection of ‘working for the man’. Offered-up through the juice bars’ promotions are opportunities to revel in and augment an authentic individualism in conditions that make orienting and emending the self through the application of relatively high levels of education, skills, awarenesses, and ‘energy’ seem everyday requirements for engaging within sociality.396

Therefore, a key similarity between 3rd Places and juice bars is that they both offer-up possibilities for me-time through prestations embedded with relatively complex and abstract information. However, while the purveyors of 3rd Places make entreaties in the form of offers of opportunities to slow-down time, the offers presented through juice bars are different. The juice bars’ offer is not to spend quality time lingering, but to orient the self, to Just Do It, ‘focus’ energy, and ‘get in tune’ with the ‘buzz’ of hectic, demanding, and stressful 24-7 conditions. The offer is premised on providing opportunities to orient and optimize the self, in relation to the relatively intense on-rush, or slipping-away, of contemporary temporal contextuality. At commuter hubs, Central Business Districts, and ‘leisure’ precincts, the appeal of juice bars turns on the provision of sites and situations for Energization!, to Recharge!, and opportunities to Get A Life! 397

Because created and reproduced as part of conditions that address a self-orienting and projecting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ dominant subjectivity, these examples can be seen to

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present relatively complex and abstract information as gradations of quality. Where commodities, amongst other things, appear to mobilize, propagate, and perpetuate such a dominant subjectivity, the relatively complex and abstract information on offer at juice bars seem to attach to actions, meanings, and things as if superlatives of ‘quality’. Relatively complex and abstract information is here seen to provide an aid to subjectively qualifying phenomena before an autonomous individualism that ‘goes on’ in conditions requiring almost consistent maintaining and emending of the self. These examples appeal to and animate an authentic individualism that, seen to work as both motor and anchor point within ongoing sociality, is also the focus for the personal-use commodity markets which economists see as important to ‘growth’ in recent decades. The purveyors of these examples are here seen as ‘building into’ actions, meanings, and things, representations that relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate milieux ‘demand’ in hectic, stressful, and, often, precarious conditions. For the present thesis, these are some of the aids to self-orientation that situations which privilege an ‘enlightened stakeholder’ liberal individualism hold-out.

Looking at an example of social messaging made by the purveyors of the *Viva Juice Company* is helpful for discussing subjectivity’s reflexivity in terms of its intertwining with what are here called its practical-ethological and somatic layers of affect:

Polystyrene - What's with that? After looking at the alternatives, we [at *Viva Juice*] decided that Polystyrene is the most practical and environmentally friendly way to provide insulated packaging. Polystyrene does not contain any ozone depleting chemicals (*CFC’s or HFC’s*). In fact since 1990, these chemicals have been outlawed in Australia and around the world … A paper cup is much more resource intensive to manufacture … requiring 6 times more raw materials, 36 time more electricity, 33 time more water, 56 times more waste water. Whilst polystyrene is not biodegradable, it does make for stable and inert landfill … Australia does not currently have facilities available for recycling of polystyrene … [and] we hope to continue to campaign for recycling facilities to become available in Australia.398

Not only are quasi-scientific terms used to explain — to “busy executives and trendy young things, people with hectic and unpredictable lives” — the nutritional benefits of juiced fruit but also to justify the packaging that contains it.399 Alongside information detailing the nutritional

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398 VivaJuice, "The Viva Juice Difference."
399 Smith, "Liquid Lunches."
value and health benefits of juice and smoothies is relatively complex and abstract information about the benefits of using some chemicals and processes over others in the manufacture and possible recycling of alimentary containers.

In the minutes spent waiting for a ‘team member’ to blend fruit into a juice and in its consumption — again, like that of the ‘3rd Place’, the ‘juice bar’ concept also emphasizes a mix of casual familiarity and flexibility — a particular order of conditions for subjectivity become apparent. The offers of opportunities for sensual gratification, such as ‘enticing flavours’ might provide, and prestations designed to augment existential presence, such as ‘vital nutrients’ might hold-out, address a subjective reflexivity attuned to sustaining and fulfilling embodied, atomized ‘stakeholder’ capacities and responsibilities in consistently demanding environments. As in the example of contemporary travel, looking at these juice bars helps suggest that conditions can be seen to make an authentic individualism the ‘identity’ for engaging within core arenas. The relative societal and relational complexity that is said to bring ‘precarity’ is not here seen as posing a threat to ‘self-identity’. Nor is the subjectivity represented in these examples seen to be involved in “a frantic search for identity” or for an “authenticity which one is seeking in vain”. Rather, they imply the often-frantic search of an authentic individualism for the tools and techniques that make possible emendation and assuagement — boost-like energizations, or the assuagements of ‘high-quality’, for example — in conditions that frequently raise worldly dilemmas for such a form of life.

In this light, the example of the juice bar helps the present thesis to move away from theorizing conditions in terms of hyper-reality, and to suggest that a kind of hyper-individualism might be said to characterize ‘going on’ within core societal arenas. In all of the examples discussed so far, it seems that, within contemporary core arenas, the degree of effort required for attaining socially valued capabilities is set quite high. These examples address a deeply individuated, self-asserting, and self-orienting subjectivity that ‘goes on’ in situations almost relentlessly impelling athlete-like performance and self-emendation. Whether through offers of opportunities for conserving time at 3rd Places, or in the practices of downshifting, through the time-optimizing on offer at juice bars, or in the athleticism afforded through the presenteeism initiatives discussed in Chapter 13, the examples can be seen to address a dominant subjectivity amidst temporal contexts that on-rushes and slips-away. That is, seen in terms of somatic ‘sensation’ and practical-ethological ‘perception’, the examples help to suggest how ‘time’ enframes.

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subjectivity in relatively intense ways, and at a fleeting pace. The reflexivity that situates subjectivity in relation to temporal contextuality appears here as the job of self-orienting within normative conditions that impel near-continual emending of an authentic individualism.  

The sometimes-ambiguous sources of information that many New Age and well-being phenomena represent might also be discussed in terms of situations in which opportunities for reflexive subjective *awarenesses* of embodied states, or of orientations to social worlds ‘go on’. Looking at some examples of New Age-style phenomena allows discussion of subjective reflexivity in deeply individuating conditions in a way that does not necessarily see such information as *ipso facto* representing (sociological or scientific) *knowledges*. Moreover, the suggestion here is that a dominant subjectivity present itself as almost consistently thrown into a tense condition that demands a sustained deferral of worldly dilemmas. In these respects, discussion uses the concept of ‘modern artificialism’ to consider these examples, which are elsewhere sometimes discussed using psychology-based theories of Narcissism.

Adam Possomaï sees the “practitioners of alternative spiritualities” as “enacting an eclectic and selective form of cultural consumption”. Possomaï suggests the appropriation through commodity-consumption in the contemporary West of historical, indigenous, and ‘Eastern’ cultures offers a means for creating “new ‘mythical’ realities”. For Possomaï, the “selective interpretation and appropriation of originary explanation” and “non-traditional foundation myths” in New Age practices are premised on widespread consumerism and secularizing historicity that constitutes a movement of quasi-religious proportions. Guy Redden, however, sees in New Age practices something more than merely “religious consumerism”. For Redden, “privatist concerns of personal authority and self-care [are] better understood as offering solutions to the problem of personal agency in a post-traditional society [that] obliges individuals to assume the burden of plotting their own destinies”.

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401 Ross, "Retail: Juice Bars Extract Growth from a Fruity Fashion."


For the present thesis, Redden’s approach tempers Possomai’s claims that New Age practices are primarily appealing because they provide for quasi-religiosity in a secular post-Christian West. Although New Age practices might often include a religious or quasi-religious element, the present thesis sees them as the creations of an authentic and genuine individualism in situations that impel ever-greater self-assertion and emendation. These examples — and others, like the current “Yoga boom” that involves sporting-goods firms Puma, Adidas, and Nike in creating ‘lifestyle’ gear as an adjunct to existing sportswear lines — can be discussed in terms of an individualism that is caught between conditions that demand education and articulate dispositions alongside personal autonomy and ‘creativity’. New Age religion and mythic beliefs might provide opportunities for deeply individuated, experiential subjects to relax or regain composure and aid in the concentrating of personal energy. Although the ‘essence’ of an exotic ‘other’ might be a key feature in many New Age-styled practices, they do not of themselves necessarily serve as a vehicle for immersion in a transcendent faith, or an escape from the rationality of modernity. Rather, what the present thesis sees as appealing to and animating a contemporary enlightened liberal individualism here are practices that work as precursors to engagements in conditions that demand self-orientation and projection, and require self-emendation and ‘creativity’.

The suggestion here is that these examples might not be seen in ‘personal’ terms, as indicators of what commentators such as Lasch, or Brooks refer to as a “higher selfishness”. In some ways, and in direct contrast with what Lasch saw in the late 1970s as “the banality of pseudo-self awareness”, these examples maybe better described as symptomatic of social conditions that almost consistently impel deeply individuated emending of the self amidst a ‘rolling-back’ of the very ‘nannying’ conditions he blames for the “culture of Narcissism”. Dissolved over decades of neoliberalization and financialization, the collectively provisioned supports of welfare statism might be seen to normatively enframe subjectivity such that individuals did not need to withdraw into a compensatory “grandiose self” amidst the relative complexity, abstractions, and extensity of modernizing sociality. The methodological individualism Brooks or Lasch combine with conservative critique seemingly leads to moral argument and a conundrum

405 Brooks, Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There.
that ultimately ‘blames’ subject-agents for being weak and failing to ‘live up expectations’, or for being too strongly ‘individualistic’. ⁴⁰⁷

In this sense, Lasch’s perspective seems to suggest that the reflexivity afforded by contemporary sociality facilitates a knowing contradiction or self-deception. The present thesis suggests a different perspective, which is that the reflexivity afforded by sociality brings into subjectivity a tension that means the somatic, practical-ethological, and reflexive constitution of it — as ‘being’ in space, over time, and amongst others — is increasingly bound-over to defer actions and meanings that sociality might raise as worldly dilemmas. Here, the concept of ‘modern artificialism’ makes it possible to discuss ‘self-centred’ actions without recourse to intra-personal speculation about belief, or psychologizing theories of pan-cultural Narcissism. Rather than discuss these examples as projects of self-discovery, quests for authenticity, or religiosity in an ‘age’ of alleged ‘meaninglessness’ or ‘inauthenticity’, the present thesis sees these practices as appealing to and animating a relatively affluent, well-educated, and articulate individualism that embraces faith and mysticism as acts of self-orientation and projection. New Age spirituality, notionally ‘Eastern’ faiths, traditional religious ‘fundamentalism’ — and indeed, the relatively complex and abstract scientific or nutritional information on offer at juice bars or 3rd Places — are seen only as practices that a liberal individualism uses to edify the self in conditions that privilege self-orientation and projection through expressions of desires’ satisfactions and dissipations.

Bringing in the concept of ‘modern artificialism’ here helps to suggest how such conditions can be seen to enframe an ‘immediate’ self-orienting and projecting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ dominant subjectivity in ways that make liberal individualism a relatively impervious ‘final arbiter’ for ‘going on’ within contemporary sociality. Through the concept of ‘modern artificialism’, the examples help to suggest that contemporary Anglo-American sociality might be seen to affectively frame a ‘stripped-back’ individualism that takes as ‘objectively true’ a reality that, in analysis, appears the imagining ‘real’ worlds through personal will-objectives that mean subjectively ‘going on’ is making reality ‘real’. ⁴⁰⁸ What is seen as on offer in these examples are techniques for orienting an inescapably authentic individualism in conditions that mean making reality ‘real’ often involves

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⁴⁰⁸ To recap, modern artificialism refers to a generalization of the application by subject-agents to worldly affairs of personal will-objectives that are, in effect, the concentration within an individual’s will of ‘objectively true’ reality. In the absence of a traditional cosmological sense of Truth, modern subject-agents act in the world such that the world subjectively corresponds with and, so, responds to their individual wills. In this sense, reality subjectively becomes an artifice of ‘human-being’ — the relation of subject-agents to reality requires artifice — being human in modernity is the art making of reality ‘real’. See, Dumont, _Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective_, 56.
practicing a subjectivity that is, effectively, tempered to a density which makes ‘being’ relatively impervious to much ‘information’ and even ‘knowledge’. The imagining of ‘real’ worlds that implies ‘being’ involves making reality ‘real’ seems hardened by demands for consistent self-orientation and projection, self-assertion and ‘creativity’.

Where offers of creativity-enhancing ‘life-work’, personal autonomy, fulfilling careers, and well-being ‘initiatives’ arise alongside an obscuring of leisure-labour divisions that often brings ‘precarity’, the examples discussed so far can be seen in terms of a subjectivity that, moving between the jouissance of heightened satisfactions and enervated dissatisfactions, defers dilemmas irreconcilable to the particular formation of liberal individualism central to sociality. The purveyors of 3rd Places and juice bars, the promoters of social messages and ethical consumerism, as well niche marketing campaigners that target ‘downshifters’, are seen to appeal to a liberal individualism through offers of opportunities for unburdening and attenuating the self, in conditions where stress, fatigue, overwork, and exploitation remain distinct possibilities. As the examples of travel and extreme sports help to suggest, sociality offers freedoms to pursue almost unbounded personal autonomy, yet demands consistent maintenance of personal viability in competitive conditions. Yet, possibilities for alleviating or reducing the extent to which conditions are stressful, precarious, or exploitative of the self or others seems delimited to sovereign choices and ever-further autonomous self-assertion and ‘creativity’. Possibilities for ‘perfected’ embodied states, for liberated self-consciousness and, importantly, for autonomy in reflexive engagements in social worlds do characterize many of the examples discussed here. However, for the present thesis these imply conditions for a subjectivity at once empowered to realize and emend the self within an expansive field of desires, yet simultaneously bound almost ceaselessly to exercise desiring and improve selfhood.

The ‘legitimate normlessness’ that discussing Trinca and Fox’s work helps to describe is here seen to envelop liberal individualism, such that situations within core arenas for sociality hold out little recourse to norm-framing ‘information’ or ‘knowledges’. Through the lens of ‘modern artificialism’, these examples can be seen to appeal to and animate an ‘experiential’ individualism that, making reality ‘real’, mobilizes a heightened reflexivity in conditions that mean subjective, ‘objectively true’ reality works as the final arbiter for so much that individuals ‘do’. Hence, fetishistic attraction to Eastern belief systems may be said to resemble the similarly widespread, yet, decidedly parochial resurgence of Christian ‘fundamentalism’ in recent decades. In a similar way, the relatively complex and abstract information on nutrition and the environment proffered at juice bars might be said to contribute to reflexive awarenesses of the self, but not necessarily in
the terms of knowledges. Because arising as one superlative of ‘quality’ amongst a plethora of other, often competing sources of information, the norm-framing qualities of — sociological, or scientific, for example — knowledges or information seems diminished. What is important for the present thesis is that these examples help to describe a dominant contemporary subjectivity that, ‘stripped-back’ to self-orientation and projection that ‘goes on’ in contexts offering few means for engaging within sociality on norm-based or relational terms, places subjectivity in a tension to defer many worldly dilemmas raised through engagements within sociality.

While trust, angst, fear, or dread, indifference or irony, ‘narcissistic withdrawal’, the search for genuine situations, or authenticity, might characterize subject-hood for many in the conditions described here, these questions are better answered by the existential philosophies and therapeutic psychologies that lay beyond the ambit of the present thesis. Also, these examples mean the present thesis looks at what happens in practice in relation to the suggestion that ‘ontological inconsistencies’ enframe subjectivity, rather than that ontological insecurities characterize subjectivity. Looking to social conditions that enframe the constituting of subjectivity through layers of affect, means recognizing that deferral takes place at a pre-conscious level of ‘being-in-the-world’, instituted as it were behind the embodied practices of reflexive subjectivity. The deferral of almost irreconcilable dilemmas discussed here is said to be a condition of social affect, of actualization in the social field, manifest at the interstices of ontic contextuality and normative conditions that give form and constitution to the job of ‘being’ human. The tension discussed here emerges as normative conditions and ontic contextuality are seen to combine within a sociality that at once amplifies and enervates ‘being’. The deferral that the present thesis describes is seen as a condition of the social enframing of a dominant subjectivity.

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16 Conclusion

This thesis’ central argument turned on the claim that in the late-twentieth century and into the twenty-first, one of the dominant subjectivities that has emerged in the United States’, British, and Australian ‘Anglo-American’ societies moves between relatively intensified desires for immediate satisfactions and concomitant enervated dissatisfactions. Amidst relatively high levels of affluence and consumption, persons were said to experience relatively heightened desires for unbounded lifestyles, but concomitantly we experience stress and fatigue, or the chronic instability sometimes labeled ‘precarity’.

Examples drawn from contemporary Anglo-American societies in practice helped to illustrate how emphases upon personal capacity-building, private responsibility, ‘self-improvement’, and ‘well-being’ seem to animate and appeal to an ‘enlightened stakeholder’ liberal individualism, and to make resolving ethical and existential dilemmas difficult. The examples open to inquiry were also used to suggest that such appeals often appear to assuage self-orienting individuals, because addressing a dominant subjectivity through offers of opportunities to slow-down time, or reduce spatial and institutional abstractedness or extensity. The examples suggested how contemporary sociality appears to obfuscate subject-agents’ capacities to ‘go on’ in ways that do not involve self-orienting assessments of sovereign choices. As such, the thesis has suggested that an important consequence of such a subjectivity is that persons are often bound to defer existential and ethical dilemmas that social worlds raise for them as socialized subject-agents.

While similar claims about the West were once associated with the ‘critique of mass society’, as well as conservative criticisms of ‘moral decline’, the present thesis has moved to develop a critical approach to contemporary theories and practices of subjectivity. Furthermore, motivation for the thesis arose from recognition that the Third Way debates of the 1990s — seen by some as a beachhead from which critical theories and practices might confront ‘neoliberal’ globalization — had by the 2000s, largely faltered. The thesis set out to develop an approach that might take a different direction, and initially reached back to discussions in the early 1980s that had focused upon cultural ‘materialism’ and social conditions for the ‘formation’ of liberal individualism.
Where ‘past and tradition’ could no longer be seen to anchor the job of creating and reproducing forms of authority and value criteria, a certain kind of subjectivity was said to arise in situations that humans created and reproduced in particular ways. Discussing conditions that had come to be conceived of as material forces, a liberal individualism that emphasized personal exemplarity and equalitarianism, and a peculiar modern artificialism, the thesis described subjectivity as an ‘immediate’, self-orienting and projecting, self-asserting and ‘creative’ form of life. Recognizing subjectivity on these terms meant that discussion looked at modernizing sociality as an unstable social world that ‘is’ what it is created and reproduced ‘as’. Subjectivity, itself, was said to bring into generalized contention what the world ‘is’, while also ‘concretizing’ what it can be.

This meant that the approach was developed around a suggestion that subjectivity be seen as the source of forms of authority and value criteria that ‘go on’ in particular conditions, as well as the socially created and reproduced ‘limit’ of arbitrariness and contingency. Seeing modernization’s forms of authority and value criteria as the arbitrary and contingent effects of particular societal and relational dynamics — of practical and discursive normative conditions that humans create and reproduce — meant that sociality and subjectivity were said to endure, in space, over time, through institutions, and ‘in’ the bodies of subject-agents. That is, recognizing that particular normative conditions can be seen to predominate in particular social worlds meant that these could be seen to ‘go on’ amidst a material-physical ontic contextuality that is itself socially created and construed in relation to the socialized embodied job of ‘being’ human. Moreover, the discussion suggested that patterns of access to and monopolies over materials, practices, and discourses, manifesting amidst an ontic contextuality, could be said to frame situations in and through which a particular formation of liberal individualism predominates. Subject-agents might be said to ‘go on’ amidst certain material-physical ‘ontic’ contexts, and to create and reproduce practical and discursive ‘normative’ conditions that enframe a form of life ‘in-dominance’: a dominant subjectivity.

Around these suggestions, the thesis set out to discuss current theories and practices of subjectivity. The discussion identified four key methodological points, and used them as problems that framed the development of an approach to making claims about the empirical world. To recap briefly, the first and second points implied a need for theory that avoids going ‘too deep’ or ‘too shallow’. It meant the approach needed to account for subjectivity as the socialized embodied creation and creator of social worlds that always involve norm-based and relational contexts. The third point implied that the approach avoid transposing ‘means into ends’, by recognizing that
humans create and reproduce forms of authority and value criteria, as well as sustaining challenges to the ‘legitimacy’ of them. This meant that the approach took sociality’s normative conditions to be bound-up intimately with the situations that humans create and reproduce in order to ‘go on’ in space, over time, and amongst others. The fourth point meant that the approach would avoid imbricating subjectivity within sociality as if a functional unit in a system-like social complex.

Together, these four points framed the approach in ways that meant the inquiry itself worked across ontological and normative registers, in relation to the claim that the job of ‘being’ human always and already involves socialized embodied subject-agents and norm-based and relational contexts. In effect, this meant that the inquiry looked at subject-agents as self-orienting liberal individuals as both enframed and acting to ‘materialize’ situations and, so, create and reproduce conditions for a dominant subjectivity. The approach was structured around the suggestion that social conditions — created and reproduced where subject-agents imagine ‘real’ worlds, and ‘materialize’ them as they ‘go on’ — can be seen to ‘normalize’ a particular form of life. The particular form of life that subject-agents were said to create and reproduce in and through market-oriented and liberal-democratic Anglo-American societies was seen as something ‘inalienable’. That is, the source of forms of authority and value criteria, as well as challenges to these. The approach looked at liberal individualism as the ‘inalienable’ motor and anchor point within the job of creating and reproducing contemporary Anglo-American social worlds.

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Seen in this way, a key problem that discussing subjectivity in contemporary conditions raised for the thesis was one of reconciling ‘strong’ empiricism — manifest where modern artificialism is said to obtain as a generalized condition of subjectivity — with normative claims about an empirical world. That subject-agents can be said to ‘live’ as an ‘immediate’ socialized embodied reality was taken to imply that explanations reducible to personal-will objectives were unsustainable. The suggestion here was that normative conditions can be seen as always and already co-dependent with the material-physicality of ‘being’ human. The thesis took the irreparably ‘broken-down’ atomization of ‘objectively true’ referents as the cue for inquiry itself to step-back, and link its normative claims with an ontic commitment to normativity, as the norm-based and relational condition that ‘being’ human always and already ‘is’. Rather than specifying or defining the locus for normative claims about sociality and subjectivity, the thesis based its critique
in the suggestion that human-being ‘goes on’ as a norm-based and inter-relational condition amidst a problematic \textit{reality} that is itself socially created.

The thesis’ critique sprang from recognition that ‘normativity’ — socialized, embodied, norm-based and relational ‘going on’ — is the condition of ‘being’ human. The approach considered ongoing sociality to be created and reproduced by socialized embodied humans that imagine ‘real’ worlds, and ‘materialize’ them in order to and because they ‘go on’ in particular ways that have a relation to ‘normativity’. Practical and discursive normative conditions and material-physical ontic contextuality were seen to raise problems \textit{because} the job of creating and reproducing them works to legitimize the always difficult and problematic (Natural) ‘order of the universe’ and, so, creates demands and requirements for ‘legitimation’ in theory and practice. The societal and relational enframing of subjectivity has been seen as a norm-based and inter-relational ‘affair’ that involves the creating and reproducing of plastic and violable forms of authority and value criteria, which may include challenges to authority, resistance to hierarchies, expressions of similarity or difference, as well as problematic material-physical ontic contexts. These suggestions were taken to imply a critical method that sees the bearing of norm-based and relational claims upon structured and institutionalized conditions as an important potential means for constraining and for ‘legitimating’ the exercise of constraints upon its many problematic and often destructive effects.

As such, the thesis looked at the series of examples through an approach that recognized contemporary sociality enframes subjectivity in ways that do not necessarily disqualify, but nonetheless undermine and destabilize prior ways of understanding norm-based activity. This process is therefore intrinsically destabilizing, even as it might be enthralling and attractive. Looking at the examples through this approach meant that contemporary Anglo-American liberal-democratic societies were seen to hold out possibilities that norm-based and relational conditions within core arenas might in some ways flourish. Hence, the examples focused upon practices and discourses that emphasized things like occupational rights, social justice, and environmental issues, as well as self-care and well-being. However, using the approach also meant that the examples highlighted ways that conditions obtaining within Anglo-America societies worked to destabilize possibilities that these might affect the relatively complex, abstract, and extended ways of creating and reproducing it. The relational contexts affecting the job of creating and reproducing sociality throw the normative responsibility back upon self-orienting individuals. Norm-based and relational contexts that almost consistently require ‘creativity’ and emendation of the self make achieving sovereign desires for satisfaction, or expressing their dissatisfaction central to the Anglo-American ‘way of life’.
The argument has not claimed to bear witness to conditions that would see the end of the individual, or a generalized negation of subjectivity. Nevertheless, contemporary conditions do seem to frame subject-agents amidst myriad elaborations of individuated desiring, and these do tend to prioritize so-called immaterial goods and services, and disembodied, aestheticized modes of societal and inter-relational engagements. It superordinates a particular form of life. The examples elaborated across the thesis helped to suggest that in relatively complex, abstract, and extended, market-oriented and liberal-democratic Anglo-American societies, patterns of monopoly over and access to materials, practices, and discourses privilege situations that ‘go on’ as if embodied subject-agents were themselves ‘hyper-real’. Contemporary conditions that frame such a dominant subjectivity were said to ‘go on’ as if human-being were not anchored in space, over time, and amongst others, but in an immaterial world of ‘footloose’ global networks and ethereal cyber-spherical ‘sensations’.

The dominant frame of Anglo-American sociality, according to this argument, effectively marginalizes engagements not premised upon ever-further assertions of individual autonomy and sovereign choices over possible satisfactions. One of the dominant modes of responding to sources of stress and fatigue, and the exploitation of the self, others, or the environment, was shown to have become largely a matter of private dissatisfactions. In such conditions, a pervasive kind of velveteen enveloping of Anglo-American social life was said to occur, wherein subject-agents seem increasingly to be called-upon as self-orienting individuals to make their way in the world.
V: End Matter – Appendix & Bibliography
Appendix

This brief Appendix sets out some empirical material in support of claims concerning the scope and reach of phenomena discussed in the examples elaborated in Part IV.

Global Corporate Sustainability

Evidence for the claim that corporate sustainability, social responsibility, and the triple bottom-line have become relatively widespread phenomena across Anglo-America in recent decades includes primary and secondary sources, such as company reports, government papers, business, marketing, and management theory journals, and news media, such as magazines, trade journals, and newspapers. Across the 1990s and into the 2000s, an increasing number of business concerns took up an array of strategies that are, more or less, commensurate with notions of ‘sustainability’. These may develop, produce, distribute, or manage a range of commodity goods and services, which include petroleum, other chemical products, biotechnologies, communications, information, and mass-media, personal-use consumer goods, ‘lifestyle’ and ‘leisure’, finance, logistics, banking, or investment services, for example.  

By 2001, “45% of the global ‘top 500’ corporations” had prepared and made public annual audits conforming to the “guiding principles of the triple bottom-line”. Many major global sustainability strategies are based upon similar ‘full-cost’ accounting or auditing packages, such as the AA8000 Standard International Standard. By 2004, the Carbon Disclosure Project annual survey “sponsored by several US and European foundations led by the Rockefeller philanthropic fund as well as 95 prominent institutions had [USD] $10 trillion invested on global markets”. As well as directly practicing sustainability, socially responsible community investment “by companies quoted in the FTSE 100 index increased by almost a third over 2001-02 to [USD] $1.4bn” in Britain alone.

Business and management studies courses at major Anglo-American universities, colleges, and management schools also research, teach, and theorize ‘sustainability’. Contemporary Masters of Business Administration courses have been “developed for individuals that understand the role business can and should play in improving the world … [and recognize] growing demand for business leaders to focus on the link between social, environmental and economic returns”.

business schools at universities across the United States, Britain, and Australia also offer graduate programs dedicated to “good corporate citizenship”. Research and teaching of sustainability also extends beyond business schools, and into the social sciences. The Institute for Applied Anthropology at the University of Alabama, for example, offers “research in the ethnography of corporate social responsibility”.

Because businesses that deploy such strategies are bound to maintain or enhance profitability within capitalistic markets, the communicating of sustainability credentials often involves extensive promotional and advertising campaigns. These may aim to alert governments, other businesses, raw materials and components, service providers and, of course, consumers, of a firm’s adherence to a Code of Conduct, or set of standards, for example. Corporations may deploy sustainability practices through such Codes, the UN Global Compact is an example, or develop them ‘in-house’. In 2006, *General Electric* (GE) — “the world’s largest maker of [nuclear] reactors” — launched a “new *Ecomagination* marketing drive, which seeks to improve the environmental impact of all of GE’s products, from locomotives to light bulbs, and plastics to water treatment plants”. Interestingly, GE’s *Ecomagination* coincides with suggestions by vice-president Lorraine Bolsinger that the firm’s key interest in nuclear power “will take a major public education campaign to make it acceptable”.

Corporate sustainability practices are also widely criticized. Challenges to sustainability practices include confrontations with ‘capitalism’ *per se*, moral-philosophical objections to market-driven globalization, shareholder activist campaigns, and *laissez-faire* ‘neoliberalist’ criticisms that allege sustainability interferes with the natural tendency towards equilibrium said to emerge, should markets allowed to work solely through ‘self-interest’. As suggested in Chapter 13, many single

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414 These include the Center for Responsible Business at The Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley, at the Center for Social Innovation at Stanford Business School and, the Initiative for Corporate Citizenship at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth. In Britain, the University of Nottingham and Bath University, for example, offer Masters of Business Administration courses in Corporate Social Responsibility. And, in Australia, Southern Cross University, and Deakin University, for example, provide research and teaching facilities oriented to what I am describing as TBL-type strategies. See, www.nottingham.ac.uk/business/mbas/N107.html, www.bath.ac.uk/capp/msc.htm, http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts/cecr/, http://www.unisa.edu.au/corpsocialresp/, Lucas and Lafferty, “The Risky Business of Being a Good Corporate Citizen.”, Business Editors/Education Writers, *New Mba Program in Sustainable Management Brings the Concept of Triple Bottom-Line Principles to the Next Generation of Business Leaders* (May 5) (Business Wire, 2003 [cited October 21 2003]).


416 Porter, "General Electric Warms up a Slice Nuclear Pie," 2.

firms have attracted criticism. As well as Dow Chemical, General Electric, Nike, Nestlé, and Sanyo, these include UN Global Compact signatories such as pharmaceutical manufacturer Aventis, domestic commodity conglomerate Unilever, mining concerns Norsk Hydro and Rio Tinto, and major petroleum producers Royal Dutch Shell and British Petroleum, for example.418 Similarly, global retailer Wal-Mart, accused of perpetrating both environmental pollution and social injustice, has launched a project to “democratize sustainability” based around a “green strategy”. Both the Sierra Club, and the Environmental Defense Fund, which has “an office in Bentonville with an employee wholly dedicated to coordinating with Wal-Mart”, publicly support the firm.419

Sustainability also seems a pervasive theme in contemporary business, management theory, and scholarly journals, the reports of ‘think-tanks’, industry conferences, current-affairs broadcasts, popular magazines, newspapers, and other publications. These may range in scope from minimal and formulaic business auditing packages, to metatheoretical and philosophical treatises on ethics and morality, from multidisciplinary management theory guidelines to entrepreneur-as-hero hagiographies, and from stock market booster-ism to liberal ‘green consumer’ manifestoes.420


Management academics, corporate directors, international bureaucrats, and industry association leaders often link advice on relatively mundane operational matters and organizational strategies to comments on ‘globalization’, international politics, economic theory, public ethics, and moral philosophy through the discourses of sustainability. Industry leaders publicly embracing sustainability include Niall FitzGerald, Chair of Unilever, Helmut Panke, Chief Financial Officer of BMW, Robert Ingram, Chief Executive of Glaxo-Welkome, and Lukas Mühlemann, Chief Executive of the Credit Suisse Group. FitzGerald, while Chief Executive of Anglo-Dutch conglomerate Unilever — “who does not kid himself or anyone else about the role corporations can play in policing global social responsibility” — expresses concern with the “precarious state of the world trade liberalization talks”. Fitzgerald led Unilever’s purchase of Ben & Jerry’s Ice Creamery in 2000, with the declared aim of making the well-known “social capitalist enterprise” the public face for the corporation’s “CSR efforts”.

Social Messaging and Sustainability

Indeed, business and marketing pundits increasingly recognize “ethical investment” as a “mainstream investment strategy”, and issue warnings to the effect that, “Financial institutions and businesses … need to take ethical investors seriously going forward”. From 1996 to 2002, the sum of amounts invested in “Ethical Managed Funds in Australia” are said to have “grown from AUD $216.64 million to AUD $1 761 million”, while Deutsche Bank Australia “forecasts an AUD $35-40 billion increase in Socially Responsible Investments over the next decade”. From 1997 to 2000, “socially responsible investment funds under management in the United Kingdom increased 82% to USD $2.159 billion”. While in the United States, “socially screened funds are estimated at...
Ethical investment attracts criticism similar to those directed at sustainability practices. Critical media, activist, and academic critics seem to argue it is little more than a thinly veiled attempt to discourage environmental or social regulation, a form of Greenwash, or “corporate spin”, for example. Market-oriented commentators also criticize ethical investment. On the one hand, neoclassical economics-oriented critics argue it distorts the market while, on the other hand, investment ‘gurus’ criticize ethical investment ‘opportunities’ for lacking transparency. These seem to focus on how “[I]ncreased competition has raised concerns that some financial institutions might be more focused on maximizing sales rather than building investment portfolios which are an accurate reflection of clients’ moral beliefs” or, on the problems that arise when “Following your conscience could cost you investment returns”. In this sense, what is interesting here is the absence of a broad institutionalized platform for determining ethics in relation to market activity per se: “Social responsibility is how [a business] deals with community issues like occupational health and safety, corporate governance, environmental standards — regardless of what industry [it] is in”.

Social messaging of this order might signal what Elsie Maio calls “a business’s purity of intention”, and forms an important means for both attracting subject-agents as personal-use commodity ‘consumers’, or in many cases as an adjunct to tendering with other firms, or governments, which set tendering or contracting pre-requisites based in observation of sustainability ‘principles’. For example, the Victorian State government in Australia legislated in 2003 to prompt privatized energy suppliers to “inform households and businesses how much greenhouse gas was produced to supply their electricity”. In 2004, the same government introduced a televisual and print campaign to “alert individuals of their greenhouse contributions’


In the United States, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) attracted widespread media and activist condemnation in late 2004 when “issuing four directives that would have allowed organic farmers to use chemicals of unknown provenance on crops, to treat organic dairy cows with antibiotics, and to feed organic cattle with non-organic fish meal”. A number of organic, consumer, and farming lobby groups opposed the USDA directives, and argued “the Bush Administration moves to lower the threshold for organic goods are merely the prelude to a relaxation of standards, paving the way for agribusiness to market itself as organic” and join a “USD $13 billion dollar per year industry”. While in Britain, the “organic movement” split in 2006 — between groups supporting the “industrialization of organic food production” and those seeking to maintain “the principles of organic production” — over “intensive lobbying by supermarkets … to lower standards so they can fully exploit a billion-pound industry” is also interesting.\footnote{Glaister, “Crowding the Market,” 18, Laville and Vidal, “Supermarkets Accused over Organic Foods,” 10.}

In relation to the scope and reach of ‘ethical’ and “green consumerism”, FairTrade-certified goods alone reached sales of USD $1.4 billion in 2005. Meanwhile, the “trade in certified organic fruit and vegetables” is said to be “a USD$1.6 billion business in Britain alone” and “worth USD $13 billion” in North America. As Chapter 14 suggests, such public concerns draw a considerable amount of media attention and academic debate. Academic debates around ethical and green consumerism might, on the one hand, champion such activities as manifestations of “democracy through the wallet”, or, on the other hand, criticize these as some “of many efforts aimed at linking social responsibility to free market capitalism”.\footnote{Teather, “Global Sales of Fairtrade-Certified Goods Grew by a Third to $1.4 Billion in 2005,” 26. Collins, "Can We Learn to Live Differently? Lessons from 'Going for Green'", 237, Glaister, "Crowding the Market," 18, James, "Consumer Activism and Corporate Accountability," 1-11, Johnston, "Consuming Social Justice: Consuming Fair Trade Chic.", Kuroweska, "Sustainable Consumption," 237-38, Vidal, "Fairtrade Sales in UK Hit £100m a Year," 23, Vidal, "Retail Therapy," 29. Linton, Chiayuan-
Several personal-use commodity producing firms began, in the 1990s and 2000s, to include social messages in their promotional strategies. *Benetton’s* controversial strategy using images of dying HIV/AIDS patients and Death Row prisoners in the early 1990s, *Nike* and *Diesel*, using the slogan “Action! This is a wake-up call for the rebel inside of you. Seize the day! If you want to live a successful life you have to fight for it”, have orchestrated a series of *faux* ‘demos’ to promote shoes, clothing, personal hygiene products, and sunglasses. Similarly, the *Kenneth Cole* clothiers based their promotion on images, superscripted with slogans, such as “Mid-east peace is the must-have for fall”, “Not voting is so last season”, and “Gun safety … it’s all the rage”, over photographs of models wearing the firm’s latest products. Indeed, the *Ralph Lauren-Polo* clothing company has sponsored ‘volunteer’ projects, “G.I.V.E.”, *Get Involved, Volunteer, Exceed*; *Polo Jeans* mission is to inspire community service through volunteerism. In our search for promising leaders, we found dedicated young men and women who are making a difference*.\(^{428}\) However, like major corporate sustainability practitioners, clothing companies such as *Benetton, Diesel*, and *Kenneth Cole*, have received strong mainstream media criticism for appropriating “the politics of protest … to sell clothes. [T]he trend of using social messages to sell fashion … is just an empty stunt to stir up an empty controversy to sell an empty brand".\(^{429}\)


\(^{429}\) *Pitelen, "Ready to Care,"* 19-23. *Campbell, "Social Messages Now in Fashion,"* 22.
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