

A SATREAN ACCOUNT OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NARRATIVES IN THE
IDENTITY-FORMATION AND SELF-CONCEPTION OF THE QUEER AND INTERSEX

SUBJECT

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BIANCA JEWEL PHILLIPS

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ABSTRACT

Successful, fully-fledged identity-formation and positive self-conception are contingent on the availability and sufficiency of social narratives. Following a Sartrean account of the human subject, identity will be shown to depend on externally-derived features (termed facticity). Facticity contains both material and social components. This thesis will show the two to be inextricably interlinked, and in so doing endorse Judith Butler's view that the material comes to us already seeped in social meaning. The interactive relationship between the discursive and the material will be illustrated by examining the phenomenon of intersexuality, in which the prevailing narrative of a dichotomized two-sex system has, through surgical, hormonal, and psychological procedures, become written into the flesh of non-binary individuals. The absence of affirming, diverse, and pluralistic narratives surrounding intersexuality, coupled with the imposition of the two-sex script, has (negatively) affected the material experiences, and subsequent identity-formation, of intersex individuals.

Given the reliance of identity on socially-constituted facticities, the pursuit of flourishing, dignity, and an authentic and cohesive sense of self requires inclusive and diverse social scripts. Drawing on Miranda Fricker, I will elucidate how lacunae in the hermeneutical resource have resulted in confusion, unhappiness, and a lack of proper self-conception for individuals belonging to subjugated groups. Conversely, the availability of positive, diverse, and inclusive narratives will be shown to allow for more self-aware, self-determined subjects. I will ground my advocacy of inclusive, diverse social narratives in an examination of the beneficial genesis and development of the identity politics present in LGBTQIA++ movements (such as "Out and Proud", recognition of queer identity, and the development of non-binary gender). Assuming that self-understanding, authenticity, and flourishing are ethical goods that are valued, inclusive and affirming narratives for subjugated groups will be shown to be a normative necessity.

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenological subject relates to the world through an unalleviable subjectivity that is both forged from and feeds into socially-available narratives—the human subject, that is, is both socially-situated and socially-affecting. This thesis takes its point of departure from what Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes as the impossibility of “rising above the human condition altogether” (Godway, 2007, p.71). To contextualize this claim, and the broader paradigm of this thesis, one need understand the motivations and focus of the phenomenological project. I will explain the nuances and reasoning underpinning the phenomenological project in Chapter 1. However, for now it suffices to say that phenomenology disregarded inquiry into “Absolute Truth” and “Objective Reality”, and instead focussed on “the world as it appears to consciousness” (Martin, 2002, p.1). A detached perception of the world and the objects in it, absent of the human subject’s perspective, ideals, and experiences, was declared to be both impossible and irrelevant to human experience and understanding. The futility of a metaphysical perspective (that is, knowledge of the world in its true form, removed from human subjectivity) and, more significantly, its irrelevance to the human experience and interpretation of the world led to phenomenologists placing emphasis on human subjectivity. Elanor Godway gives a summation of the existentialist phenomenological project, and outlines the convergence of theorists like Husserl, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty in their decision to “turn away from a focus on the object to reflect on our experience of it” (2007, p.72). Given the purported inescapability and significance of human subjectivity to our experience of the world, phenomenological thought necessitates an inquiry into *human being itself* as a pre-condition for the understanding of our experience, engagement, and interpretation of the world at large.

Thesis Overview and Objectives

Whilst it is important to understand the philosophical trajectory that led to the phenomenological focus on consciousness and the relation thereof to our understanding of the

world, I will draw on phenomenological thought largely in relation to its account of the human subject. I will not employ the Sartrean account of the subject to establish a resultant ontology of the world; rather, I will work from the phenomenological presupposition of the world as contingent on consciousness in order to analyse the development, constitution, and effects of human subjectivity. However, it must be noted that the phenomenological account of the world and the human subject are inextricably interlinked. Furthermore, the former (the world as experienced and perceived by human beings) will prove relevant to my project (and thus be analysed) in that it is undeniably integral to the formation, self-conception, and understanding of the situated subject.

I will examine questions regarding identity-formation, human engagement with the world and other subjects, and the normative prospect of flourishing human identities within a Sartrean framework. I will argue that human subjectivity, which is the basis of our experience and understanding of the world, can only be fully realized via the availability of multiple and diverse narratives of the self since these narratives provide the social scripts upon which subjectivity is constituted. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to defend the necessity, development, and availability of heterogeneous, affirming, and inclusive social scripts for fostering authentic, cohesive, and flourishing human identities, particularly for queer and intersex¹ bodies that do not conform with dominant social scripts.

Chapter Breakdown

To this end, my thesis will be divided into three chapters. In the first two chapters, I aim to elucidate a philosophical framework within which the dependence of human subjectivity on social narratives can be satisfyingly explained. In Chapter 1, I begin by exploring the phenomenological picture of consciousness, which is based on subject-object relations. In showing the effect of the human subject on objects in the world, and vice versa, the

¹ Given the plurality of genotypic and phenotypic variations of intersexuality, and the import of self-identification by individuals in their sex and gender classification, it may appear problematic to use the homogenous term intersex. However, it must be noted that I use this term merely to demonstrate the different associations that have accompanied the very real, material, and relatively common existence of human bodies that fall outside of our current binary classifications. I am not suggesting that non-binary bodies should homogeneously be classified as intersex, but merely that if one were to use the singular and broad category of intersex to refer to non-binary bodies, this categorization would (and historically has) had varying connotations.

intersubjective nature of the self will be illustrated. The Sartrean notion of “being-for-others” will be employed to demonstrate the interplay between subject and object, in which human beings are claimed to pendulum between the mode of subject and object in every interpersonal exchange. The affecting nature of the mode of “being-for-others” on the conscious subject, inevitably experienced by every human being, will be used to illustrate, first, the mutually-affecting interaction that occurs between subject and object, and, second, the dialogical nature of human identity. To further substantiate the interactive relationship between subject and object, I will turn to Merleau-Ponty’s concept of meaning creation, in which he asserts human perception of objects (even elementary, instantaneous sensory perception) to be contingent on interpretative frameworks of meaning (1974, p.5). These frameworks of meaning will be shown to act as a permeable membrane of sorts through which the subject and object influence the constitution of one other. I will fully unpack this claim in Chapter 1, however it currently suffices to state that the superimposition of these frameworks of meaning onto the world, which define and determine phenomena within it, demonstrates the effect of the subject on the object. Thus, the phenomenological subject and object are relational, rather than self-contained and isolated. This account of subject-object relations will prove highly relevant to my subsequent examination of the experiences, identity-formation, self-conception, and interactions that collectively forge the human subject.

In Chapter 2, I will analyse the constitution of the human subject, as consistent of both transcendence and facticity. The latter constituent (that of facticity) will be further broken down into the components of embodied material features and attached socio-symbolic meanings. The attached socio-symbolic meanings (which I will largely refer to as social narratives or scripts) will be shown to be integral to the subject’s experience, interpretation, and understanding of both her own materiality and the materiality of other subjects. Transcendence will be shown to be similarly responsive to, and even reliant on, said socio-symbolic meanings. I will draw briefly on Schema Theory, Rortian pragmatism, and the Linguistic Turn to provide further support for the claim that the subject’s identity and engagement with the world is hinged on available social scripts. Identity-shaping scripts will be

shown to be constructed, localized and malleable (as implied by the term *social scripts*), and simultaneously to be tangible and materially-affecting.

I will also draw on Anne Fausto-Sterling's research into culturally-divergent concepts and experiences of sex and sexuality to substantiate my claim that the social scripts surrounding the material features of identity are contextual and malleable. The tangible effects and lived material realities engendered by such scripts will align with the Butlerian argument that our experience and understanding of the material is discursively defined and contained. This relationship will be shown to prove especially relevant to the often overlooked lives, identity-formation, and flourishing of intersex individuals. Socially normative frameworks of sex, consistent of the male/female binary, will be shown to eradicate the visible existence of sexually-ambiguous subjects. Whilst I subsequently proceed to problematize the absence of affirming and diverse scripts surrounding intersexuality, I will initially make reference to intersexuality to demonstrate that the available and dominant discourse manifests in a literal and material way, affecting embodied facticity itself.

In the remainder of the chapter, I will more broadly explore the origins, manifestations, and propagation of the social narratives that influence the formation of the human subject. I will argue that the human subject is not only influenced by social narratives, but herself influences, reproduces, and (potentially) modifies and changes social narratives. The interactive, mutually-affecting relationship between subject and object outlined in Chapter 1 will be reflected in my analysis of the relationship between the socially-situated subject and social scripts.

Finally, in the third chapter, I will explain how oppressive, exclusionary, and hierarchical social scripts undermine positive identity-formation and intersubjective engagements for members of subjugated social groups, with a particular emphasis on the identity construction of intersex and queer subjects. I will employ Mirander Fricker's concept of *lacunae* to show the detrimental effects of absent, insufficient, or ill-suited scripts on the subject's understanding of her experiences, interactions, and capacity for self-determination. These unsatisfactory social scripts will be shown to impinge on the subject's self-conception, autonomy, and ability to navigate the world.

Given that the normative purport of this thesis lies in the positive identity-formation and self-conception of subjects, I will subsequently explore the narratives and conditions required for this end. Drawing on empirical evidence from identity politics and case studies regarding various reclamation movements, such as intersex solidarity and awareness groups and LGBTQIA++ campus conventions, I advocate an expansion of existing social narratives as a necessary condition for fostering authentic, cohesive, and self-actualized human subjects that will subsequently contribute to the development of further pluralistic narratives. I will elaborate on the *particular* narrative features required to forge positive social scripts pertaining to derided and oppressed collective identities; the provision and availability of affirming, inclusive, and diverse social scripts will be proposed as necessary to the positive identity-formation, self-conception, and flourishing of subjects belonging to subjugated social groups. Thereafter, the epistemic conditions that facilitate the cultivation and provision of beneficial social scripts will be investigated. In line with standpoint theory, I will argue that the recognition of malleable, localized perspectives, and the potential for self-critique and revision of social paradigms and understandings are the epistemic foundations upon which inclusive, affirming, and heterogeneous social scripts can be constructed.

CHAPTER 1

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS: SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATIONS

Phenomenology focuses on understanding the human experience of the world and in particular how meaning is constituted through the human subject's experience. In so doing, it makes three moves to explain the phenomenological encounter with the world: a move away from metaphysics, a subsequent focus on human consciousness, and, finally, unpacks the components of human consciousness. Human consciousness is constituted by an interactive subject-object relationship. The phenomenological bidirectional relationship between subject and object (in which each affects the other) will mirror the framework I subsequently provide to explain the formation and constitution of human identity as simultaneously socially-situated and socially-affecting. Thus, my initial explanation of the components of subject and object, and the relationship between the two, will prove relevant and necessary to the aims of this thesis for two reasons. First, it offers a thorough account of how human reality is corseted by consciousness. Second, it provides a correspondent explanatory basis for human identity, which similarly possesses object-like and agential properties (an exploration of this will ensue in Chapter 2). Prior to unpacking the components of which consciousness consists, and the interaction between these components, the phenomenological trajectory that led to the recognition of human consciousness as integral to our experience, interpretation, and understanding of reality warrants further explanation.

1.1 The Context and Focus of the Phenomenological Paradigm

As briefly mentioned above, phenomenology entails "an escape from high flown metaphysics" (Godway, 2007, p.71) which seeks to provide an account of the *essential* nature of reality. As later endorsed by Rortian pragmatism and the postmodern turn, the inaccessibility of such a pursuit renders it irrelevant to the human experience of the world, and thus to the phenomenological project. As both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger argue; knowledge of the essential nature of objects, and the reality they collectively constitute, requires an unattainable

“onto-theology”². Furthermore, understanding the true and essential nature of objects requires a corresponding objective and detached perceptual mechanism. Such a perspective necessitates either the alleviation of human subjectivity or an omniscient “God’s eye-view”, both of which require a subject “separate and immaterial, observing its objects from outside and above” (Godway, 2007, p.71). The perceptual mechanism required for a pure metaphysics, then, is contrary to the human condition and so is, as Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger argue, untenable. By contrast, phenomenology embraces the inevitable human lens through which we encounter and understand the world. As Godway puts it, “the breakthrough of phenomenology may be described as the outcome of taking subjectivity more seriously” (2007, p.71).

1.2 The Constitution of Human Consciousness: The Meaning and Role of Being-In-Itself and Being-For-Itself

For the phenomenologist, proper awareness, comprehension, and knowledge of what constitutes human reality is contingent on an understanding of the nature of consciousness itself. In what follows, I will largely refer to the Sartrean explanation thereof, in which consciousness is depicted as a relationship between subject and object. First, I will explain the relational nature of consciousness by positing it within the parameters of the phenomenological endeavour. Second, I will explore the constituents of subject and object; their meanings, and respective and collective roles in engendering consciousness. Third, I will assert that the phenomenological subject and object are mutually-affecting in various ways, thereby rendering both the components of consciousness and consciousness itself fluid and malleable.

The Sartrean view of consciousness, which is nicely elucidated by Tom Martin’s work in *Oppression and the Human Condition*, proposes consciousness to be fundamentally an interaction between subject and object. Martin writes that “for Sartre, consciousness is not some *thing* that contains ideas or representations. Consciousness is a relation to things out there in the world and *contains* nothing” (Martin, 2002, p.2). Implicit in this statement is, first, the claim that consciousness is not a self-contained state or entity but rather exists *in relation*

² Onto-theology is a Husserlian concept which means a view from everywhere and nowhere that is required for knowledge of what is True and Real (Godway, 2007, p. 71).

to other things, and, second, that consciousness does not equate to either the object or the subject. The relational nature of consciousness, in which it is distinct from objects themselves, is validated by the *very nature* of the phenomenological project. As earlier stated, the phenomenological project displaces inquiry into the existence and properties of objects in-and-of-themselves with a focus on the human experience of objects instead. The differentiation between consciousness and the human subject is affirmed by the distinction between phenomenological inquiry and philosophy of mind. Phenomenology is not an attempt to understand the human mind in isolation, but rather its involvement with the world. Thus, it follows that the phenomenological inquiry into consciousness is focused on the *relation* between subject and object.

Consciousness encompasses a subject's awareness, experience, interpretation, and understanding of objects in the *Lebenswelt*³. From this, it is evident that consciousness exists as a relationship between subject and object, in which each component is necessary for the existence of consciousness. I will describe the mode of being present in objects and subjects, and explain the role of both the object and subject in the constitution of consciousness.

Consciousness may be termed "doubly situated" (Martin, 2002, p.4). First, it is situated insofar as it requires an object of intentionality. This object is termed "being-in-itself", and it may (but need not) refer to a literal object, idea, or situation. Being-in-itself is not limited to literal, tangible objects, but rather "is broadly defined in the work of Sartre to include objectified consciousness (such as past consciousness, the ego, and the consciousness of another) as well as simple material objects" (Martin, 2002, p. 13). It is not the properties of the thing itself that make it exist in the mode of being-in-itself, but rather how it is experienced and perceived. Being-in-itself qualifies as such when it exists as an object in the consciousness of another. Furthermore, being-in-itself is necessary to the existence of consciousness; Sartre writes, "All consciousness is consciousness *of* something" (1967, p.36). As such, consciousness is directed outward in relation to an object. Its existence is thus contingent on objects encountered in the world.

³ This refers to Husserl's concept of a life-world or the world as experienced by human beings. This experiential reality is determined by both inherited sociological meaning and subjective perception.

However, consciousness is simultaneously mind-dependent; it requires a conscious being, or “being-for-itself” (Sartre, 1967). Being-for-itself refers to a bearer of consciousness – that is, a human subject. Whilst I will explore the properties of the conscious being fully in Chapter 2, in which I explain transcendence, facticity, and the role of social meanings in the constitution of the subject, it currently suffices to state that the human subject comes to be through a process of identity-formation, self-awareness, and self-conception. As such, being-for-itself is constantly in flux – it simultaneously consists of its past states and “a perpetual flight from presence into the future” (Martin, 2002, p.17).

Being-for-itself is capable of being both the conscious subject reflecting on the world, and the object it is reflecting on post-factum. It must be noted that in stating that being-for-itself can be the experiential object or object of reflection, I am referring to the subject being thus *for herself*. The possibility of the subject existing as an object in the consciousness of another has already been inferred, and will be subsequently explained by the mode of “being-for-others” later in this chapter. However, it is not relevant to the current explanation of the conscious subject. Rather, what is relevant here is the capacity of the conscious subject *to be the object of her own consciousness* upon reflection. This is termed, by Sartre (1967), as “reflective consciousness” (Martin, 2002, p.9). To clarify, reflective consciousness refers to the subject’s ability to “reflect on what it has been before; on memories, past emotions and projects” (Martin, 2002, p.9). This capacity is highly significant to the phenomenological subject, in that, first, it differentiates her from a mere object of consciousness, and, second, illustrates the transcendence that is integral to the Sartrean subject (which, as stated, I will further explain in Chapter 2). Unlike being-in-itself, being-for-itself is not static or fixed. The mutability of the subject is shown by the fundamental freedom asserted as a pivotal property of the human condition.

“My freedom, the fundamental power which I enjoy of being the subject of all my experiences, is not distinct from my insertion into the world. It is a fate for me to be free, to be unable to reduce myself to anything I experience” (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.34).

Having explained the nature of the human subject, I will now argue for its necessity to consciousness. The absence of a conscious being that is aware of the object would, for Sartre,

render that awareness equivalent to the object-itself (Martin, 2002). Consciousness of the object would, thus, simply become the object. The fact that there is a distinction between *consciousness of an object* and the *object-itself* reveals that the former requires an additional component to that of the mere object. Consciousness requires both a conscious being and an object, and is located in the relationship between the two. Thus, the relationship that constitutes consciousness contains both material and mind-dependent components.

Consciousness, the subject (or being-for-itself), and the object (being-in-itself) are simultaneously distinct from each other, and interrelated. This is shown in *Oppression and the Human Condition*, in which Martin states:

“Consciousness is born supported by a being which is not itself’ and so consciousness cannot be the source of that being. The world is really out there and it does not depend on consciousness for its existence. On the contrary, the reverse is true. It is consciousness that depends on the world for its existence” (Martin, 2002, p.3).

As previously stipulated, and further endorsed by the above quotation, consciousness requires a being, but is distinct from that being. The subject, or being-for-itself, is necessary for consciousness, but is not identical to it. Similarly, consciousness is reliant on the *Lebenswelt*, and the objects within it, but does not equate to it. Furthermore, the independence of the material world means that it is distinct from consciousness, and precedes consciousness in its existence. Thus, the conscious subject and the objects of which she is conscious are simultaneously necessary conditions for consciousness, and distinct from the state of consciousness itself.

1.3 The Interactive Relationship between Subject and Object

The distinct nature of consciousness, the subject, and the object does not mean that they are not interrelated or mutually affecting. Whilst the interrelated nature of subject, object, and consciousness may be somewhat self-evident from what has been said above, the idea that the subject and object are mutually-affecting warrants further explanation. Being-for-itself and being-in-itself are not simply interrelated in a static sense. The phenomenological project discards the notion and relevance of a fixed and static nature, in relation to both the conscious being and the object of intentionality. Instead, it asserts that both the conscious being and the

objects of which she is conscious are experientially-influenced. The presence of a subject and object are not fixed conditions that collectively and unvaryingly bring about the phenomenon of consciousness. By way of comparison, the relationship between subject and object is not like that between hydrogen and oxygen when reacting to form water. In the latter case, hydrogen and oxygen necessarily and, in certain, fixed proportions (two parts hydrogen, one part oxygen) form water. Whilst subject and object are necessary (albeit distinct) components of consciousness, they may affect each other in a plurality of ways, and thus are variable in their constitution. A two-way traffic exists between them. Given that consciousness requires a subject and an object for its very existence, it follows that the “nature” or manifestation of consciousness will vary in relation to the subject and object present. However, the subject and, more contentiously perhaps, the object too will vary in relation to each other.

First, I will show that being-for-itself is malleable, contextually-derived, and subject to the influence of objects. Embedded in the phenomenological project is the assumption that the subject is not a fixed, essential entity. An assertion to the contrary would necessitate an appeal to the metaphysical that contradicts the focus of this particular philosophical framework. The metaphysical prospect of either a fixed human nature or a contingent, but nonetheless determined one is irrelevant to the phenomenological focus on the human experience of reality and identity. The *experience of freedom*, in relation to both the subject and her interaction with the world, is crucial to any description of human reality. “Being-for-itself is conscious and free, and to this is being-for-itself’s lack of fixed identity” (Martin, 2002, p.17). The freedom definitive of Sartre’s being-for-itself renders subjectivity malleable. The objects that the subject encounters and perceives affect her subjectivity (consistent of identity-formation, self-awareness, and subsequent self-conception). Merleau-Ponty illustrates this by exploring the temporality and alterability of the human subject in relation to experience. He states:

“Tomorrow, with more experience and insight, I shall possibly understand it differently, and consequently reconstruct my past in a different way. In any case, I shall go on to interpret my present interpretations in turn, revealing their latent content” (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.403).

Thus, one’s self-conception develops from the retrospective analysis of one’s past experiences. The resultant self that is present and active stems from past experiences and subsequent

reflection and retrospection. As such, it differs from the previous self. Whilst being-for-itself is free due to its capacity for self-reflection, it is important to note that this capacity does not exist in a vat. As stated by Martin, “being-for-itself is not an utterly unconstrained movement towards the future” (Martin, 2002, p.18). The self-reflective capacity of the conscious being is contingent on its previous interactions; in a sense it is tethered to its past. Past actions, thoughts, and interactions, which constitute the conscious being, occur in relation to objects in the world. Thus, being-for-itself is contained by, rather than “disconnected from the world” (Martin, 2002, p.18). In Chapter 2, I will explore this in greater depth by analysing the components of facticity and transcendence that collectively constitute the human subject; I will explain the primacy of the former over the latter, the past as an aspect of human facticity, and the interactive relationship between the two components. However, for now it is sufficient and relevant to simply state that the freedom of the subject, and the potential reconstitution of her subjectivity, is contingent on objects encountered. Thus, the human subject is formed and reformed in relation to objects in the world.

Let us now turn to the effect of subjects on objects. The subject affects objects in the *Lebenswelt* in three main ways. First, and most directly, the influence of the subject on the object is demonstrated by the subject’s perceptions and interactions with other individuals. As earlier stated, the objects encountered need not be literal, material objects, absent of a subjectivity of their own. Instead, within the phenomenological paradigm, an object merely refers to an object of intentionality, which may often denote other subjects. Merleau-Ponty concurs with this, and states: “Now, another person would seem to stand before me as an in-itself” (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.148). To understand the effect of subject-object interactions, in which the latter is in fact another subject, one needs to understand two things; first the fluid nature of subjectivity, and second the experience of what existential phenomenologists call “the Gaze”. The malleability of the human subject, coupled with the influence carried by the Gaze, collectively reveal the potential change that a subject may elicit on an object.

One type of constitutive and influential experience that a subject may encounter is the transformative Gaze or “being-for-others.” “Being-for-others is a mode of being in which the being-for-itself exists as an object for another consciousness” (Martin, 2002, p.94). As such, it is

a rather particular and special “species” of being-in-itself, as it refers to an object-like state and yet applies to a conscious being. When the conscious being encounters objectification - she is in a sense “an object in the world of an other” (Martin, 2002, p.95) but nonetheless retains self-awareness and an awareness of her state of objectification. Sartre’s famous example of the voyeur demonstrates a distinct awareness of being seen as an “in-itself.” The voyeur, upon realizing that he has been witnessed by another, “sees himself fixed in the present state with the qualities he imagines his observer perceives him to have” (Martin, 2002, p.95). Thus, the voyeur experiences himself reductively, in that both the complexity of his subjectivity and his potential for autonomy are curtailed. In being thusly perceived, he is akin to an object. However, he differs from a table or a chair, in that he retains self-awareness of the state he, for a period of time, occupies in the view of another.

Within the phenomenological account of modes of being, being-for-others is seen as an inevitable feature of human interaction. Given the inescapability of subjectivity in the human experience, the perceiving, experiencing subject delineates and determines her experiences of objects in the world. The inevitability of subjectivity to the phenomenon of consciousness means that the subject’s point of view is integral to her experiences, perceptions, and understandings of human reality. This means, according to Merleau-Ponty, that she will be “the sole constituting agent” (1974, p.350) in all interactions. Consequently intersubjective interactions involve, and in fact necessitate, the transformation of the other subject into an object. However, the value judgment placed on a state of being-for-others varies. Whilst Sartre largely casts this mode of being as degrading and limiting, indeed alienating, it is arguably affirming in certain contexts. Martin shows this by stating, first, that positive expression (and reception) of the Gaze, such as the glance of a loved one, is validating (2002, p.98). Second, he states that the mere recognition of one’s existence present in being-for-others grants one’s identity a solidity and stability that is, perhaps, relieving to the “floating and indeterminate” (Martin, 2002, p.98) causal nature of anguish. I mention this here, as the variable value of external perception and its effect on identity will prove significant in the latter sections of this thesis, in which the necessity of diverse, inclusive, and affirming social scripts is explored in relation to the intersex subject. Regardless of the value attached to being-for-others, it

demonstrates that the subject is simultaneously autonomous and dynamic, and contingent on the perspectives of others. The possession of these dual, and seemingly contradictory traits, explains the effect wielded by subjects on others in intersubjective exchanges.

Whilst the subject may at times be reduced to her object-like properties through the mode of being-for-others, this is, first, inclusive of self-awareness and, second, is a temporary state of being; the fluidity and self-determination of being-for-itself means that the subject cannot wholly and continually be reduced to an “in-itself.” However, the experience of being-for-others may nonetheless influence the continued subjectivity of being-for-itself. This is best explained through the process of internalization, in which through encountering a state of being-for-others, the subject’s self-conception is radically altered through the view that another holds of her. The fluidity of being-for-itself means that the subject may incorporate the actions and perceptions of other subjects directed towards her present and future-directed conscious being. Sartre explains the potential causal clout carried by the Gaze on self-conception with his statement:

“In the midst of this world already provided with meaning I meet with a meaning which is mine and which I have not given to myself, which I discover that I ‘possess already’... the for-itself experiences itself as an object in the Universe beneath the Other’s look ... here I suddenly encounter the total alienation of my person: I am something which I have not chosen to be” (1967, p.61).

Therefore, being-for-others demonstrates one way in which subjects may significantly influence objects, or rather influence subjects *perceived and experienced as objects* in their consciousness. The manner in which subjects and objects necessarily interact within the phenomenological paradigm means that one’s human complexity, self-conception, and future self-determination are therefore affected by the actions and perception of other subjects.

Second, the being-for-itself’s interpretation and engagement with objects occurs within interpretative paradigms or schema constructed and provided by human subjects. The schema through which the object is experienced and understood is a human construction that imbues the object with certain qualities and values. Put differently, the meaning of the object that the subject encounters is contingent on the schema or paradigms she employs in her perception and interpretation thereof. It must be noted, somewhat self-evidently, that the subject can only

employ schema that are societally available for her use; thereby rendering her experience and understanding of the world contingent on socially-prescribed frameworks. Thus, the interpretative frameworks used by the subject in her experience, interpretation, and understanding of objects infuse the objects with particular meanings. The effect that the subject wields over the object, in this way, is best explained by what Merleau-Ponty calls “perceptual fields” (1974, p.3). He explores the interpretative paradigms imperative to the subject’s experience of the object. First, he shows that a “pure” experience of an object, unfiltered by expectations and association, is not possible. Second, he explains the manner in which human subjects *do* in fact encounter the world. He states:

“Pure sensation will be the experience of an undifferentiated, instantaneous, dot-like impact. It is unnecessary to show, since authors are agreed on it, that this notion corresponds to nothing in our experience. Instead, we experience and perceive the world, and the objects within it, within a broader perceptual field” (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.2).

He claims that we perceive each object with accompanying meanings, associations, and values. He draws on the very literal example of a white circular space on a differently coloured, “homogenous background” (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.3). Merleau-Ponty claims that we perceive this white circular space in a particular way. We do not perceive it as individual white pixels or as two conjoined white semi-circles. Rather, we perceive it as a cohesive shape distinct from the background upon which it is placed. As such, “Each part arouses the expectation of more than it contains, and this elementary perception is therefore already charged with a meaning” (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.3). Thus, in perceiving the object, we imbue it with expectations, demarcations, and similarities.

It is important to note that the subject does not distinguish these perceptions of the object from the object itself. She does not claim that “I perceive a circle present”, rather she simply claims “There is a circle.” As such, the subject’s relationship with the object occurs within a greater perceptual field that infuses it with meaning that appears integral to the object itself. A similar example is outlined by Merleau-Ponty in which the subject encounters a mask that he deems terrifying (Merleau-Ponty, 1974). However, whilst the property of the “terrifying” attributed to the mask is undoubtedly a human construct, and arguably a subjective construct

at that, it is not perceived or presented as such. Rather, in exclaiming that the mask is terrifying, the subject suggests this property to belong to the mask itself. The object is rendered a certain way through the perception of the subject. Thus, the similarities, differences, and associations used to identify objects (and thus directly attributed to objects) by the subject further demonstrates the effect of the subject on the object⁴. The necessity of perceptual paradigms to our identification and experience of the world, coupled with the fact that we experience those paradigms as inextricably linked to the object itself, further reveals the effect of the subject on the object.

Third, the subject affects the object through contributing to the overall “pool of meanings” (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.5) that may be attached to the object in question. Hence, her perception of the object may be further disseminated in a way that affects the perceptions held by other subjects. In so doing, she affects, first, the meaning attached to objects, second, the identification and experience of these objects themselves, and consequently, the subjectivities of others. It must be noted that the greater “perceptual field” that contributes to the experience and meaning of the object is not “fully determinate and developed” (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.5). Thus, meaning-attribution possesses a malleable and variable quality. Merleau-Ponty explains this through showing that memory and association are integral factors that impose “meaning on the chaos of sense-data” (Merleau-Ponty, 1974, p.5). The contextuality and variability of memory means that the properties of this sense-data similarly vary. Moreover, the collective quality of memory and association adds a social dimension to the meaning (and thus experience and perception) of objects. Consequently, it follows that the subjective interpretation of objects contributes to the meanings attached to objects.

In the next chapter of this thesis, I will argue that the human subject is similarly constituted by object-like properties, an available and interpretive pool of social meanings, and potential self-determination. The interaction between these various constituents forms human identity and eventual self-conception. The components necessary for consciousness, as outlined in this

⁴ Recall that the phenomenological account is not denying the *a priori* existence of the external world. In fact, it concedes “the world is really out there and it does not depend on consciousness for its existence” (Martin, 2002). However, it focuses mainly on *human reality*, and within this paradigm shows the influence of the subject on objects.

chapter, and the manner in which they interact with each other will be shown to correspond with my ensuing account of the human subject.

CHAPTER 2

SCHEMATA AND HUMAN IDENTITY: THE SOCIALLY-REFLEXIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUBJECTIVITY AND NARRATIVES

Having laid the foundation of consciousness in subject-object relations, the second chapter of my thesis will focus in more detail on the components that constitute the human subject. The previous description of consciousness as a relationship between subject and object reveals the foundational necessity of the human subject in our engagement with the world. Recall that the field of phenomenology itself “may be described as the outcome of taking subjectivity more seriously” (Godway, 2003, p.70). Given the part that human subjectivity plays in the formation of consciousness, and thereby in awareness, interpretation, and interaction, it is necessary to explore the constituents of human subjectivity itself. I will deconstruct the Sartrean paradigm of subjectivity into the components of facticity and transcendence, and will show that our interpretation and experience of our facticity is hinged on socially-available scripts.

In *Oppression and the Human Condition*, Martin states that being-for-itself contains “aspects that are object-like, governed by the principle of identity, and are collectively termed facticity” (Martin, 2002, p.18). Examples of these object-like properties are an individual’s race, gender and sexuality. In this thesis, I will largely deal with embodied facticities of this kind.

Transcendence refers to the ability of the being-for-itself to exercise agency in its interaction with facticity, and the interpretation thereof. Denial of the capacity for transcendence, whereby the subject perceives itself as wholly reduced to its facticity, amounts to bad faith. Thus, being-for-itself means, and actually necessitates, “freedom with respect to the interpretation or evaluation of one’s facticity” (Martin, 2002, p.18). The conscious subject, much like consciousness itself, is doubly situated. It is simultaneously corseted by facticity and able to revise the meaning(s) of its facticity. However, prior to examining the human capacity for transcendence, and its relationship to facticity, the constituents of facticity itself warrant further explanation.

2.1 The Material and Socio-Symbolic Features of Facticity: The Antecedence of Social Meanings to Self-Conception

An examination of the earlier given examples of race, gender, and sexuality reveals that our facticities have both material and symbolic features. The material features refer to brute physical facts, such as one's literal skin colour or the possession of certain genitalia. The symbolic features refer to the social meaning attached to the materiality of one's facticity (arguably the more significant component thereof). Whilst the meaning attributed to one's facticities is contextually variable, and may even be attributed new connotations by the subject herself⁵, Sartre states that one "cannot choose the very existence of the facticities themselves" (1967, p.67). Thus, embodied, material facticities are thrust upon the subject.

Social meaning, the second component of which facticity consists, is integral to, and perhaps inextricable from, our perception, experience, and interpretation of the materiality of facticity. One neither experiences nor conceives of one's material features without drawing on the social meaning of these features. For example, we do not experience or perceive race as simply the pigment of our skin. Even less "contentious" facticities, such as say the colour of one's eyes or one's height, are not experienced in and of themselves, detached of all social meanings. The relationship between object and subject that constitutes consciousness, wherein the former is dependent on the latter, is mirrored in the relationship between materiality and the social meanings that forge the subject's facticity. As Merleau-Ponty states "perceived things themselves are obviously accessible only through perception" (1974, p.4), and hence require both a perceiver and a broader perceptual framework. His description of objects as "charged with a meaning" and "part of a perceptual field" (1974, p.4) show the human experiential and epistemic reality to be contingent on broader paradigms. Thus, the subject in question interacts with objects in the *Lebenswelt* through a process of pattern detection and recognition.

⁵ In the final chapter of this thesis, I will argue that the inevitability and antecedence of the material features of facticity, and their accompanying inherited social meanings, renders the provision of affirming and inclusive social scripts of immense importance to identity formation. Subsequently, I will explore the effects of a dearth of scripts for certain sociological groups. I will later argue for the normative imperative of the availability of new scripts for interpreting one's facticity.

Similarly, the materiality of facticity, which consists of object-like properties, is contingent on the attached and available social meanings.

To prove the phenomenological claim that facticity is initially externally determined and socially-derived, I will first briefly explore the claim that our epistemic and experiential engagement with the material is mediated and affected by broader interpretative categories. In line with the thinking of the Linguistic Turn of the 20th Century, Rortian pragmatism, and Schema Theory, I believe that we neither experience nor understand “raw materiality” in a vat. Materiality will be shown to be accessed and experienced through socio-linguistic paradigms. In so doing, I will evaluate the “nature” of these categories, and show them to be socially-inherited. The variability of the social meanings attached to fixed material phenomena will be shown to correspond with varied experiences, understandings and interpretations of the phenomena in question. Second, through proving our understanding and interaction with the material world to be social, the contingent point of facticities as steeped in social meaning will be similarly affirmed. Further, I will draw on Social Learning Theory and Narrative Theory to more directly illustrate the necessity of social scripts to the formation of identity. Third, I will explore the relationship between socially-situated facticities and transcendence, and in so doing show the former to be antecedent to the latter.

Our experiential and epistemic engagement with the material world, including the material components of facticity, is contingent on socio-linguistic paradigms. I will draw on Richard Rorty’s pragmatism to show that our understanding and interaction with objects in the world is tethered to our social and linguistic practices. As Rorty argues, if

“all our awareness is under a description, and descriptions are functions of social needs, then “nature” and “reality” can only be names of something unknowable - something like Kant's “Thing-in-Itself”” (1999, p.41).

The implications of this statement are three-fold, and reveal three things about our interactions with the world and ourselves. First, it entails that there is no accessible, essential “Way the World Is”. Second, it shows that our means of engaging with the world is contingent on linguistic descriptions. Third, it entails that these descriptions are reliant on social context. The first claim is inductively derived from the second, in that Rorty examines our interaction with

the world and shows that we only do so *qua* language. This assertion appears intuitively true, in that one cannot conceive of anything in the absence of description. I will not spend too much time unpacking this claim. The phenomenological framing of this project, as outlined in Chapter 1, shows the necessity of the subject to conscious interaction with the world, and the impossibility of a God's eye-view. As such, it shifts our focus away from what we might call the inherent nature of objects. Second, the "nature" of the descriptions attached to objects are asserted as possessing social properties. Hence they are not directly representative of the object. One may draw on Jastrow's famous Duck-Rabbit experiment here to show the variability in our identification and depiction of objects. Jastrow presents an optical illusion of sorts in which both a duck and a rabbit are present in a depiction. However, the exposure of the viewer to certain phenomena, and the representations thereof, determines which of these creatures is identified in the image (Wittgenstein, 2001, p.9). A subject *au fait* with a duck will perceive a duck as opposed to a rabbit, and vice versa. Neither depiction is "truer" than the other, or more inherently embedded in the image. Rather, processes of social exposure influence what the viewer perceives.

It must be noted that it is beyond the scope of this work to engage with Cartesian skepticism about the external, material world. This work neither discards the prospect of an objective reality nor confirms it. The prospect of a metaphysical reality is not dismissed, but rather the relevance and accessibility thereof to the human experience is refuted. Inversely, the possibility of idealism is not denied either. Instead, a position of epistemic agnosticism in regards to objective reality is adopted, with an alternative focus on experiential reality. However, this work does rely on the assumption that we experience material components of the world, and actively concedes that how we encounter this materiality is not of our choosing. The phenomenological school of thought, which I have chosen to employ, is hinged on both of these assumptions. The necessity of objects to the state of consciousness and the inescapability of facticity in human subjectivity both demonstrate the phenomenological presupposition that our existence entails a material component. Given the phenomenological framing of this project, and of human subjectivity within it, it is evident that hard materiality is not denied. Instead, the conditions that constrain and influence our encounter with materiality are where the focus of

this thesis lies. Our *experiential encounter* with the world – which is at the heart of phenomenology - is corseted by broader interpretative paradigms. Whilst I concur that our interaction with objects in the *Lebenswelt* is socio-linguistically mediated, this thesis will not thoroughly examine the social contingency of our understanding and experience of the world as a whole. Rather, it will more narrowly examine the contextual contingency of our experiential and epistemic position in regards to the *social world*, and particularly in relation to our understanding and experience of identity. I will argue that human beings relate to the material components of their facticity through narratives, and narratives are (at least initially) socially constructed and inherited.

Thus, this thesis relates narrative theory to the phenomenological subject. Human subjectivity, and its constitutive parts, refers to the perceptions, understandings and experiences of the human agent, which together form her identity. Appiah defends this picture of subjectivity, in which there is:

“neither an authentic of selfhood, the core that is distinctively me, waiting to be dug out, nor [the capacity to] simply make up any self that I choose. Rather, we make up selves from a toolkit of options made available by our culture and society” (1994, p.156).

Herein one can refer back to the Sartrean idea of the self as consisting of both facticity and transcendence. Hence identity is not essentialist and monological, nor wholly free-floating and self-determined. Furthermore, Appiah’s work pertains to the social meanings embedded in and particular to one’s facticity, which become incorporated into one’s identity. Appiah employs the terminology of dialogical identity to describe the integral role played by available social meanings in shaping the self. He claims:

“identity is crucially constituted through concepts and practices made available to me by religion, society, school, and state, and mediated by varying degrees by the family. Dialogue [not only] shapes the identity I develop as I grow up, but the very material out of which I form it is provided, in part, by my society, by what Taylor calls its language ‘in a broad sense.’” (1994, p. 154).

Whilst Appiah is speaking of the role played by social meanings, and the institutions from whence they stem, in forging human identity in a broad, overarching sense, I will more

narrowly apply the societal concepts and practices of which he speaks to the material features of facticity.

Homosexuality, both as a physical act and a sexual preference, has, for example, had a plurality of terms and values attached to it. In her engaging and thorough text *Sexing the Body*, Anne Fausto-Sterling examines some of the differing accounts of homosexuality over the centuries. Cross-cultural anthropological studies reveal that the phenomenon of same-sex relationships (although this too is contingent on the socially-situated categories of what constitutes sex) have occurred in a variety of arrangements in various societies. Some of these include age-structured homosexuality, gender-reversed homosexuality, role-specialized homosexuality, and the modern “gay” movement. Through this examination, Fausto-Sterling shows, first, that our interpretative schema regarding human sexual behaviour has varied through the ages. However, second, and more significantly, she shows how this has affected the experience and expression of sexuality. Again, one may refer to anthropological accounts of past homosexual experiences and identifications to reveal this. In Ancient Greece, the sexual schema was not premised on the homosexuality/heterosexuality binary, but rather based on the roles of penetrator and penetrated. Consequently, a man who engaged in same-sex intercourse was not, and would not, identify as homosexual, but rather according to one of the prescribed sexual roles. As such, the sexual facticity of the subject is influenced by the available social scripts. Both our perceptions of the material features of facticity and our experiences thereof are contingent on context.

Thus, human identity is contextually derived. Whilst I have given some validation for this, it is not within the scope of this thesis to disprove the notion of fixed and inherent identity.

Rather, I offer some support for identity consistent of constructed subjectivity, and deconstruct the various properties of which this is comprised. In the subsequent section I will explore the origins and effects of the social meanings attached to the various facets of identity. However for now it suffices to say, in Butlerian terms, that the “material comes to us tainted” (Anne Fausto-Sterling, 2002, p.12) or that the materiality of human facticity is steeped in social meaning.

2.2 A Psychological Account of the Development of Individual Identity through Social Relations

Whilst an abstract, anthropological perspective and conceptual account of identity has been employed to demonstrate the social constitution of the material self, I will now turn to psychological theory to provide an account of the formation of the individual. I will draw on Social Learning Theory to dissect the developmental process, whereby personhood is forged, to illustrate the necessary, inescapable influence of the social on self-conception. In so doing, I will place particular emphasis on the effect of social categories on embodied physical features possessed by individuals. Two pieces of Social Learning Theory may be employed to assert that one's facticity is initially socially constituted. The first deals with the primary role of external influences on identity formation. The second explores the development of self-conception and determination, and will prove relevant to the Sartrean account of transcendence and its relation to facticity, which I will explore below.

Social Learning Theory states that from birth we mimic the behaviour and norms of others (Bandura, 1977). It asserts that exposure, observation, and reinforcement are crucial and influential features in the adoption of certain traits and modes of behaviour. As Bandura claims:

“patterns of behaviour can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behaviour of others. The more rudimentary form of learning, rooted in direct experience, is largely governed by the rewarding and punishing consequences that follow any given action” (Bandura, 1977, p.3).

According to Social Learning Theory, the actions, reactions, and traits that collectively solidify into behavioural patterns, which form the basis of identity⁶, largely stem from a process of “modelling” (as described above). Modelling may be causally influential in two ways. The first and most direct manner in which modelling wields causal influence over identity is through a process of exposure, coupled with reinforcement. As suggested, this process is two pronged. Children's behavioural patterns are derived, first, from imitations of norms and behaviours witnessed in the surrounding environment, and second, by the value judgments attached to

⁶ As previously stipulated, I am working from the premise of the constructed self (and the various contributory components thereof), as opposed to the inherent self. Consequently, identity is the amalgamation of a plurality of behavioural stimuli environmentally present, resultant repeated adoption of traits and mannerisms, and eventual self-awareness and self-determination.

their adoption of various behaviours and mannerisms they witness. Thus, a child may be exposed to a multiplicity of potential influences and may imitate various forms of this, however is likely to adopt the behaviour and traits that produce favourable effects; “Through a process of differential reinforcement successful modes of behaviour are eventually selected from exploratory activities, whilst ineffectual ones are discarded” (Bandura, 1977, p.3). It must be noted that I am working from the assumption that children (and more broadly human beings) are responsive to positive and negative reinforcement. Operant conditioning is commonly conceded psychological theory, and thus I will not unpack or validate this claim further.

The cognitive complexity of human beings means that a second, indirect form of modelling, whereby identity is forged, also occurs. This indirect causal influence on identity formation is similarly contingent on the responses to and reinforcement of certain behaviours, however it does not require direct imitation of norms and traits to gauge the reaction with which they will be met. Direct imitation of behaviours is not the only means whereby their reception can be evaluated, and consequently either adopted or discarded. Observation of the behaviours of others and the reception of the behaviours in question may lead to the child formulating hypotheses and predictions about the outcomes of certain modes of being (Bandura, 1977, p.4). Thus, observation and perceived reception (of one’s own potential employment of the observed behaviours) may influence the adoption of behavioural patterns. However, in the formative years of a child’s psyche, it must be noted that their means of gauging responses are based mainly on direct experience of positive or negative reinforcement.

Two conditions necessary for the constitution of the self can be derived from this account of psychological development. Both forms of modelling, asserted by Social Learning Theory as an integral process to identity-creation, are reliant on socially-available modes of being or, as expressed by this thesis, social scripts. These scripts or narratives often initially take the form of everyday, first-hand interactions experienced and observed by children, as opposed to detached representations thereof. Nonetheless these are socially-derived modes of being that shape the behavioural patterns and eventual sense of self established by children. The second condition on which modelling is dependent is relatability. Children will generally imitate or more closely observe the behaviour and traits of those with whom they closely identify. This

understanding developed out of Freudian psychoanalysis, which asserts that identification is located in one's interactions with a parent of the same sex. However, Social Learning Theory offers a more diverse view of identification, and claims that a child can potentially relate to any significant person in their life. The cause of identification with certain models will be explored further in the mutually-affecting relationship between hegemony, available scripts and socially-situated subjectivities, which will subsequently be provided. However, for now, it suffices to state that the cause of identification is as contextually contingent as identity itself. I will unpack this claim in relation to materiality.

Behaviours and norms are constructs that are frequently mapped onto certain material variables. Thus, those born with certain material features will encounter correspondent norms and behaviours (with which they may or may not identify). A simple (but enduring and relevant) example thereof is the provision of pink colour schemes and genteel mannerisms to babies declared female. However, the correspondence between particular material features and related norms vary widely. Both the attachment of certain norms to particular material features, and the content of the associated norms themselves are contextual.

Again, one may turn to the work of Fausto-Sterling for empirical validation. In *Sexing the Body*, she undertakes a detailed cross-cultural investigation of the history, perception, and treatment of intersexuality. In the Classical Era, intersexual individuals were considered holy and transcendent beings, which were descendent of Aphrodite and Hermes, and embodied an ideal combination of masculinity and femininity that was inaccessible to binary cisgender people (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 32). In contrast, Western societies in the 20th century (and in some cases, even the 21st century) have considered intersexuality a "deformity" that needs to be "corrected immediately" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 46). This shows that the materiality of the intersex condition (whether it be purely gonadal, hormonal, or chromosomal) has had a variety of normative practices and values attached to it. Thus, models of sexual difference (and more broadly material difference) consistent of physiological and psychological practices, norms, and values, are contextual. The contextual categorization of individuals (and here one may think of the Foucauldian concept of bio-power, which I will examine in further depth later) affects identification and successive self-conception. Whilst identification will influence imitation,

observation, and subsequent perceived or actual reinforcement, reinforcement similarly influences the process of identification. Thus, in a gendered society, a female child will generally be encouraged to relate to her mother and other female figures. Consequently, her behavioural patterns will occur in relation to this model.

Second, Social Learning Theory states that it is not until ages 3-4 that a child forms a basic self-conception (Bandura, 1977, p.7), never mind the ability for self-determination. Thus, prior to this it simply absorbs what it is exposed to. The meanings and values it encounters are not yet open to reinterpretation and re-evaluation in a self-determined narrative. Thus, the social models of behaviour that it encounters, and with which it identifies, precede agential self-conception. As such, societal narratives underpin and influence subsequent self-determination. Thus, developmental psychology shows facticity, consistent of socially-inherited meanings, to be the precursor to transcendence in the formation of the human subject.

2.3 Transcendence and the Human Subject

I have thus outlined the role played by socially-situated meanings in forging the experience and interpretation of facticities upon which human subjectivity is contingent. Whilst the relationship between the subject's identity and the socially-situated meanings that inform it warrants further explanation, I will first finish the basic Sartrean analysis of the subject. I will subsequently explore how transcendence – the counterpoint to facticity – is also a component of human subjectivity. First, I will explain transcendence, bad faith, and the constitution of the authentic human condition. Second, I will show transcendence to be intertwined with, but (as implied) causally secondary to, facticity. Thereafter, the effect of the resultant human subjectivity in broader human interactions will be explored by placing it within the framework of subject-object relations. As earlier stated, transcendence (sometimes termed freedom) refers to how the being-for-itself perceives and understands her facticity. Transcendence refers to the fact that she does so with a degree of self-determination. In line with Martin's scholarship on Sartre, I have rejected the idea of a free-floating consciousness comprised of a wholly self-determined subject. Martin stipulates:

“In opposition to readings of Sartre that maintain that his account of human reality presents “man” as unbridled transcendence, I will argue for an alternative interpretation in which human reality is understood as involving an ambiguous relationship between freedom and situatedness in the world” (Martin, 2002, p.1).

Similarly, I endorse the idea that “human reality is transcendence *and* facticity” (Martin, 2002, p.4). This view is validated by Sartre’s explanation of bad faith as consistent of either a denial of transcendence or a denial of facticity, which shows both to be integral to the authentic human condition.

2.4.1 Bad Faith: Human Being as Exclusively Transcendence

My earlier explanation of the integral role of social-meanings in the constitution of material facticity may be employed to refute the form of bad faith that over-emphasizes transcendence and identifies it as the sole mode of being. The analysis of subjectivity that I provided - composed of both brute materiality and attached social meanings - shows the inevitability of socially-derived aspects of identity. A more direct confirmation of the necessity of facticity to the human subject may be found in an examination of Sartre’s account of bad faith. His famous (and potentially problematic) example of the homosexual evidences the inescapability of facticity to the human condition. In this example, he describes a man who has both participated in homosexual activities and experiences same-sex preferences or attractions. He stipulates that whilst said individual is not wholly defined by such preferences (as this too would be a form of bad faith) and may possibly alter his preferences (assuming that he desires to do so), he cannot deny that in the past he has engaged in homosexuality. Sartre concludes that whilst the man’s being cannot in its totality be defined as homosexual, he is (in relation to his facticity) a homosexual. This demonstrates, first, that one’s past constitutes a part of one’s facticity.

Martin’s explanation of the components of facticity verifies this:

“My facticity includes things such as my past acts, the limitations of my body, my situation, and so on. Although I, as a free being, can interpret these facts in various ways (as indeed I can with other objects), they are facts, with an existence in the world like objects.” (Martin, 2002, p.33).

The aspect of being that refers to one’s past actions and choices, and is a part of one’s facticity, is termed *temporal ekstases*. Second, as also revealed by the above quotation, Sartre’s case of

the homosexual shows that the components of one's facticity cannot be denied and are inextricably tied to one's personhood (or in Sartrean phrasing an authentic experience of the human condition). Thus, this account of bad faith coupled with my earlier exploration of socially-situated identity shows that being human cannot be simply a flight into transcendence, consistent solely of an act of will.

I have gone to lengths to validate an account of the human subject that shows facticity to be integral to authentic human existence. My reasons for doing so are three-fold. First, working from the Sartrean premise that the experiential is tantamount to the "real", or rather reality of the human condition, it appears that authentic human existence is circumstantially situated. Human subjectivity cannot be conceived of or experienced in the absence of the corporeal, social context, or one's past choices. Any assertion of agency that occurs is propositional, in that it occurs in relation to something. This *something* is necessary for the existence of freedom. Thus, modes of being (inclusive of transcendence) require facticity. Second, and related to this, the common misreading of Sartre that equates human being solely with transcendence requires clarification. Many Sartrean scholars believe that "bad faith consists only in a denial of transcendence" (Martin, 2002, p. 40), and in so doing imply that authentic human being is entirely a matter of freedom. The import of facticity to identity counters this misinterpretation of the Sartrean subject. Third, the normative thrust of this thesis, which points towards the necessity of inclusive and heterogeneous social scripts, is hinged on the import held by socially-situated material features to subjectivity. If facticity, consistent of corporeal features understood and experienced within social epistemologies, is integral to human subjectivity, then the flourishing of human subjectivities relies on a positive conception and experience of one's facticity. Consequently, affirming and expansive social epistemologies need to exist in relation to various embodied facticities.

2.4.2 Bad Faith: Being Over-determined by Facticity

However, it must be noted that transcendence is similarly integral to being human. I will explore and validate this for two reasons of a similar nature. The first reason rests on the Sartrean account of an authentic, experiential human subject. Our experience of ourselves as

possessing choices renders transcendence an irreducible part of human existence, regardless of the outcome of determinism debates. This may seem contrary to the existence of a form of bad faith that ignores or downplays transcendence. Given that one can be over-determined by one's facticity, the experience of freedom as fundamental to the human condition may be questioned. However, bad faith (of either manifestation) is said to be "unstable" (Martin, 2002, p.40). I will first explain this claim in order to then unpack the undeniable role of transcendence as a mode of being.

Bad faith consistent of confining oneself to facticity ignores the ambiguity of the human condition that always straddles two modes of being; it is an attempted escape from the human condition that is both deceptive and unsustainable. As such, the experience of freedom crucial to the human condition will inevitably resurface. The co-existence of perceived over-determination by one's facticity and transcendence is thus not paradoxical, but simply self-deceptive. The very process of being over-determined by one's facticity requires an evaluation and conscious dismissal of the various components of one's being. Ironically, this conscious engagement is utilized for the end of eradicating the awareness and perception of oneself as a conscious being. However, in the process of doing so the reflection and self-awareness key to being-for-itself is employed. Thus, transcendence is an undeniable aspect of the human condition.

I will draw on Sartre's example of the waiter to prove that reducing oneself to object-like properties is an attempt to deny authentic human existence that, in its very pursuit or employment, is contradictory. Through analysis of the automaton-like characteristics of the waiter, Sartre concludes that he "is playing at *being* a waiter" (Sartre, 1984, p.59) in the same sense that a chair is a chair. As such, he is asserting his profession to entail the totality of his identity and "tries to identify solely with his facticity" (Martin, 2002, p.39.). However, Sartre stipulates that this attempt to evade choice nonetheless remains a choice. Thus, the attempt of the waiter to be rendered entirely waiter-like is not only a denial of the reality of human being, but is a self-defeating form of denial. Bad faith that involves a flight from transcendence is ironically dependent on an active and deliberate choice. Whilst the subject in question may attempt to conceal this from themselves, this continual concealment and attempted reduction

to the mode of an “in-itself” requires observation, recognition, and negation regarding the precise qualities of the “in-itself” s/he tries to embody. This process of engagement means that the subject will exist in the mode of a “for-itself.”

Second, and related to the aim of this project, I stress the importance of transcendence to human being as it lends value to the provision of inclusive and complex social scripts. The dominant scripts frequently provided to subjugated groups fail to recognize the transcendence possessed by members of the groups in question. These scripts are reductive and inauthentic as they purport that the identities of certain groups of individuals consist exclusively of constraining and often degrading facticities. Here one may think of the scripts often attached to blackness wherein the black individual is defined primarily and holistically as a negro. Fanon’s famous example of being-for-others in *Black Skin, White Masks* in which he is identified as “a negro” by a small white child demonstrates this. In the process of being-for-others, Fanon is both stripped of his radical freedom and lathered in the demeaning connotations of blackness as perceived by the colonizer. He states that through the Gaze of the colonizer he is:

“responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: "Sho' good eatin'." On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object” (Fanon, 1967, p.2).

In contrast, inclusive social scripts recognize the authenticity of the human condition, as they do not reduce the subject in question to a singular, definitive thing. Here one may think of the concept of intersectionality that has recently developed and recognizes the various social features that may be attached to the identity of a single individual. In so doing, the multifaceted complexity, potential malleability, and freedom present in the human subject is recognized. Whilst social scripts are a component of facticity, they should not assert the meaning attributed to the materiality of the subject to be all-encompassing. The social meanings embedded in the subject’s material features should not override either the other social features possessed by the subject or their co-existent transcendence.

2.5 The Primacy and Significance of Facticity in Self-Conception

Whilst I have shown both facticity and transcendence to be integral to the human condition through an analysis of bad faith, I will argue that facticity precedes transcendence in terms of the constitution of the self. Given that facticity consists of the inseparable amalgamation of materiality imbued with social meanings, it is clear that the random inheritance of material features, the social nature of linguistically-mediated materiality, and the trajectory of self-development outlined by Social Learning Theory, all point to the primacy of facticity in identity formation. Whilst the unsustainable phenomenon of bad faith in which the subject confines her being to her facticity ironically necessitates transcendence, the mechanisms used to evaluate and reconstitute one's subjectivity (that is, the exercise of transcendence) are derived from a state of facticity. The very tools used by being-for-itself to engage with her sense of self (either in an attempt to refute her freedom or to exercise it) are acquired in the mode of being-in-itself. The imperative mechanism of language required for engagement with (and even conception of) objects in the life-world, including one's subjectivity, is socially-acquired. Reconstitution of one's self-conception still occurs in the linguistic medium, thereby rendering transcendence dependent on socially-acquired, external features (which are a facticity of a form).

The importance and inescapability of the subject's past to authentic human being shows that facticity underpins transcendence in three ways. First, transcendence of one's past can never fully eradicate its connection to one's subjectivity thereby showing that facticity (which, in part, consists of one's past choices, experiences, and actions) supersedes and encompasses transcendence. As stated by Martin, "My past acts are a part of my facticity, and to the extent that I am my facticity I am my past acts" (2002, p.37). One may again think of Sartre's homosexual, in which "attempts to live a pure transcendence" through denial of "attachment to his past" (Martin, 2002, p.39) by the subject constitutes a form of bad faith that is inauthentic and unstable. Given that the converse is thus necessary and authentic to the human condition, it follows that in transcending one's past, one nonetheless remains tethered to that past (and hence connected to a facet of facticity.) The "being-for-itself's history, while it is the product of past choices, now is beyond its control, has those past acts attached to it regardless of how those past acts are evaluated" (Sartre, 1984, p.466). Second, reconstitution of one's

past (whether this entails an altered perception of the past or a vastly divergent course of future action) occurs in response to past actions and choices. Thus, one may make the strong claim that transcendence is a direct reaction to facticity, or at the very least, posit the weaker claim that it is *shaped* by one's past facticities. Facticity thus both curtails and allows for transcendence. As such it both precedes the exercise of transcendence, and acts as its constant co-efficient.

Lastly, the developmental primacy of facticity in the formation of the subject's self-conception means that the initial experience and perception of her facticity may limit and even stunt the subsequent exercise of her transcendence. Prior to realizing her radical freedom (which, as explained, only ensues in the developmental process subsequent to exposure to stimuli and available schema within which stimuli are categorized) the subject may reductively internalize the value and meaning attached to the object-like properties thrust upon her. The scope of her transcendence may be limited by this initial self-conception. The antecedence of facticity in self-conception (and the potential lingering effects thereof) differs from the previously explained indissoluble connection between the subject's past and her subsequent transcendence. The latter is an inevitable feature of being-for-itself, and the recognition thereof thus constitutes good faith. The former puts the subject at risk of entering into bad faith, in that the internalization of her facticity may stunt her realization of her transcendence. This is particularly true of individuals who are a part of sociological groups whose material facticities and accompanying narratives are negative and/or reductive.

The limitation of bodily comportment and the timidity of behavioural mannerisms on the part of women raised in patriarchal societies demonstrate how the antecedent role of facticity may hinder the female subject's future transcendence. The social meanings attached to the materiality of being female often disseminates into the female subject's spatial occupation and exertion of physical force. In her paper "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality", Iris Marion Young examines the different physical conduct displayed by men and women in contemporary patriarchal Western societies. She observes that women tend to constrain their use of their physical capacity. She does not examine the sexual differences in strength and size themselves, but rather the *use* of the

physical capacities possessed by males and females (1980, p.138). Hence her inquiry is not focused on anatomical differences themselves (and from whence they stem), but rather on the gendered subject's interaction with their anatomical capability. She draws on the psychological experiments and investigations of Straus and Erikson, in which pre-adolescent girls are observed to withhold their physical strength, be wary of engaging with physical tasks, and retreat from outdoor spaces to indoor occupations (1980, p.149). From these observations, she concludes that women display "a failure to make full use of the body's spatial and lateral potentialities" (1980, p.142) and inquires about the causes of this phenomenon. Given that they are neither causally derived from "anatomy nor physiology, and certainly not [from] a mysterious feminine "essence"" (1980, p.152), she deduces that socialization must be the basis for the vastly varying use of motor and spatial abilities.

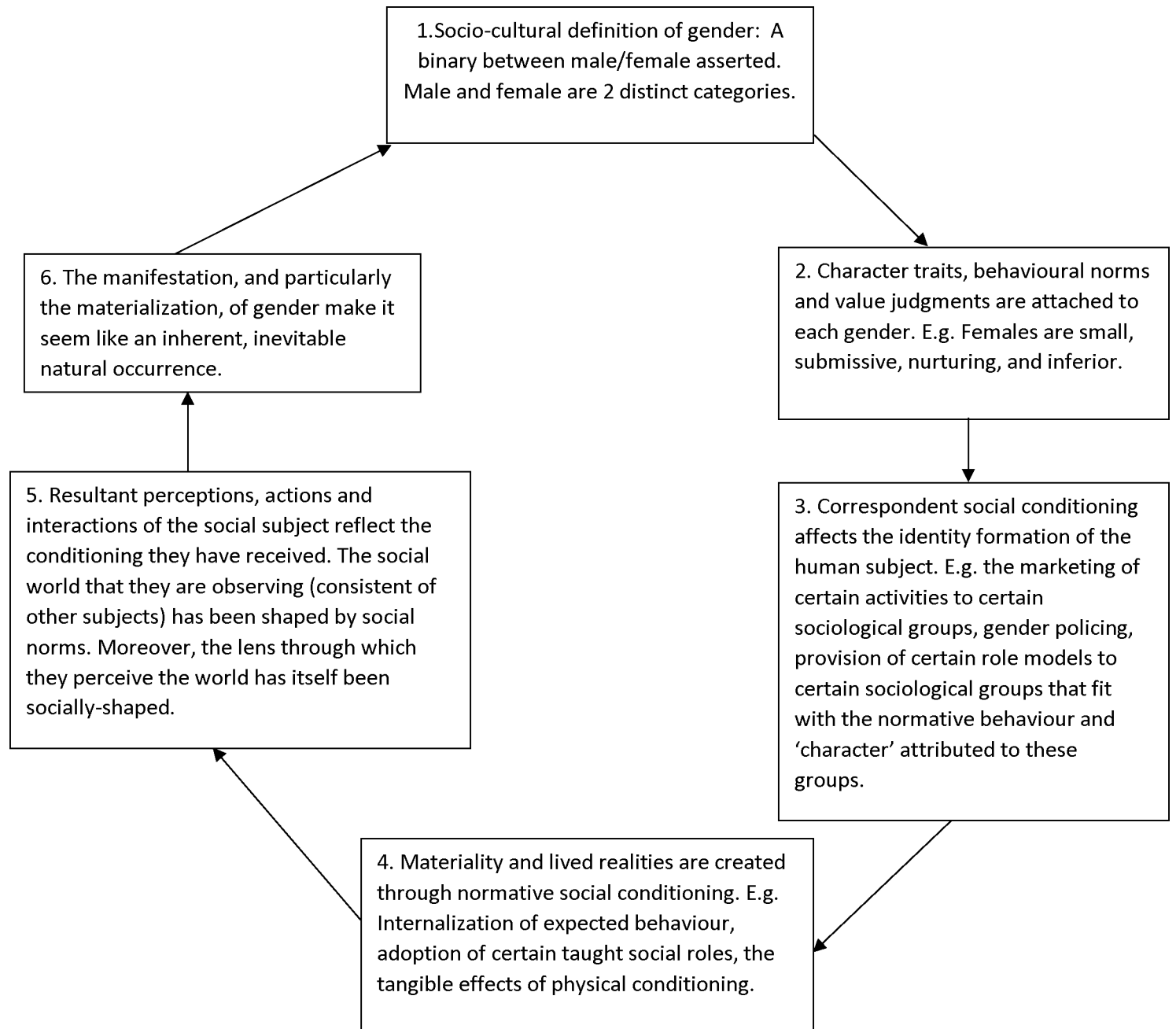
I will explore the socio-contextual narratives and practices that lead to gendered behaviour shortly, however it is well conceded that assertive body language, participation in sports and outdoor activities, and displays of strength are encouraged in males, and are either dismissed or actively discouraged in females. Consequently, even though in a literal sense women may have the capacity to manoeuvre their bodies with more range and exercise greater strength, the discursive meanings attached to their female identity render them unaware or uncertain of this. As stated by Young, "a space surrounds them in imagination which we [women] are not free to move beyond, the space available to our movement is a constricted space" (1980, p.143). The naturalization and reinforcement of the meaning of feminine comportment in relation to the body may lead to women undiscerningly assuming that this is "simply the way things are", and even assuming that it is inherent to the way they are.

The social connotations ascribed to female materiality that discourage female exercise of physicality and result in recalcitrance by women to occupy and utilize their anatomical abilities impedes female transcendence. The social meanings that permeate sex from birth ingrain a feminine conditioning that obstructs the prospective freedom (and thus authenticity) of women. The social meanings attached to sex are so persistently and insidiously espoused that the subject may experience and perceive her identity in the mode of being-in-itself, in which

she is over-determined by the facticity of being female. This demonstrates the fundamental nature of facticity.

2.6 The Bidirectional Relationship Between Social Scripts and Human Subjectivity

I have shown facticity to be fundamental to the formation of the phenomenological subject, and to consist of both material and symbolic components. The significance of facticity to human subjectivity means that its constitution warrants rigorous analysis. I shall further explain the relationship between its two constituents of material features and symbolic meanings. The components and processes that give rise to the localized, socially-situated subject will be addressed. Furthermore, whilst human subjectivity is initially and inevitably reliant on socio-contextual scripts, subjectivity similarly affects the social production and availability of these scripts. The reciprocal influence of the human subject on the socio-cultural context they inhabit will therefore also be explored. This mirrors the two-way traffic existent between subject and object, which I explained in Chapter 1 of my thesis. I will draw on social-constructionist gender theory to demonstrate the bidirectional relationship between socio-cultural context and the identity of the human subject. In so doing, the interactions between social context, normativity, identity formation, and the subject's engagement with the social world will be demonstrated. The simple diagram below demonstrates how gender-identity is both shaped by and shapes social context and norms. Whilst it refers specifically to gender, the bidirectional relationship shown applies to the interaction between any set of norms and collective sociological identity.



Thus, human identity is contingent on socio-cultural context and simultaneously shapes this context. The former is demonstrated by link 3 in the model above, which shows social norms and contextual expectations of gender identity to disseminate through role learning, the marketing of certain toys to each sex, and gender policing. For example, the cultural expectation of strength and stoicism in males is enforced through ridiculing boys who cry or display emotion (Jaggar, 1989, p.157). Thereafter, social norms and expectations become internalized and perhaps even materialized (link 4); “We absorb the standards and values of our society” (Jaggar, 1989, p.159). Testimony of this is the inability of men in contemporary Western society to express, or even experience, emotion (Jaggar, 1989, p.157). Thus, the psychological and physical identity of the human subject is forged through a normative process.

2.6.1 The Interactive Nature of the Social and the Material

I am not claiming that there is no materiality to the human subject, or that conditioning precedes materiality. In a sense, the human subject is obviously material. We consist of organs, flesh and blood prior to entering the (social) world. However, once born, our material existence is unthinkable apart from the regulatory norms that influence it. From birth the “social acts upon nature” (Butler, 1988, p.4) and imbues it with cultural meaning and normative expectation. This is not the same as asserting that discourse is the causal basis that underpins material differences and particularities. Instead, in the Rortian vein of thought, I recognize the possibility of inherent, biological sexual differences. However, not only are they inaccessible and irrelevant in-and-of-themselves, but their causal contribution to our experience of sexual differences cannot be isolated from the social mechanisms that affect sex. Similarly, their potential role or contribution cannot be dismissed.

The binary between the material and the social must be challenged and replaced with the realization that the two are intertwined. The recognition that the material and the social are interactive (rather than distinct) in relation to identity-formation needs to occur on two levels: (1) in terms of the causal mechanisms that collectively create identity and (2) in relation to the resultant “product” of selfhood. In addressing the causal role of the social and the material in shaping identity (1), it must be conceded that from birth an infant is plunged into an effecting

world of immediate and constant social influences and narratives. Thus, any *a priori* manifestation of potential biological forces on the cultivation of identity cannot be isolated or gleaned. Consequently, the emergent sense of self (2) will be a combination of the hypothetical (and inaccessible) biological causes *and* social influences. The absence of the material/social dichotomy in the resultant subject (2) warrants further explanation. Not only can the two not be torn asunder in that they collectively forge the subject, but the assumption that social influences cannot be materially affecting must be discarded. It is often falsely presumed that a fixed, inherent, and biological cause is necessary for material consequences. Instead, social narratives, practices, and related norms often entail tangible, material consequences. This can be seen in relation to gender construction, in which social norms and expectations actively create the material gendered differences they assert as intrinsic. Thus, facticity consists of a combination of symbolic and material features that are inextricably interwoven.

2.6.2 The Effect of Social Paradigms on the Constitution of the Subject

Whilst the enmeshed nature of the material and the social means that the isolated effect of inherent, material, biological forces on selfhood cannot be gleaned, the lack of universality to the current manifestations of human identity (even for individuals who possess the same material variables) can be ascertained. An absolutist and overriding universal causal basis for human identity should hypothetically result in a correspondent universal human identity. Thus, the absence of the latter, which is clearly evidenced, corrodes arguments about the existence of universal, inherent causes of identity. Instead, the variation in the manifestations of human identity points to, and corresponds with, a multiplicity of differing socio-contextual causes. The effect of social narratives and practices on the construction of the human subject is evidenced by both the congruity between discursive norms and resultant human identity, and simultaneously by the deviation from the regulatory norm that occurs. The successful and integral effect of discursive paradigms on identity creation is shown by the correspondence between socially-endorsed gender categories and respectively located individuals' identification with the categories in question. For example, the dominant Western socio-gendered paradigm of the male/female dichotomy means that cis-male, cis-female, trans-male and trans-female

are the most common forms of gender identification. However, the social recognition of a third gender in some societies, such as the hijra in Pakistani culture and the kothis in some Indian cultures, has resulted in sexual and gender identities of a demographic that does not have an equivalent in our society. This demonstrates, first, the absence of both a universal ontological and epistemic foundation to gender, and, second, that the gender epistemology of a society shapes the identities of its inhabitants.

However, whilst the “forcible reiteration of regulatory norms” (Butler, 2011, p. 12) often gives rise to perceptions and experiences of human identity congruent with contextual and social norms, there remains deviation from these norms. The fact that the reiteration of social norms is necessary is a “sign that materialization [or social identity construction] is never quite complete, that subjects never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled” (Butler, 2011, p.12.) There are individuals who fall outside of the socially prescribed gender binaries (both materially and psychologically), despite reiteration of normative conditioning. Masculine women, feminine men, homosexuals and intersexuals are but a few of the individuals who do not fit into the prescribed, normative gender binaries (within Western societies). Their existence evidences the lack of universality to our conception of gender.

2.6.3 The Effect of the Subject on Social Paradigms

Having explored the effects of socio-cultural context and discursive norms on the constitution of the human subject, the effects of the human subject on social context must be explored. The perceptions and experiences of the socially-constituted subject do not exist in isolation, but causally affect the social and material context encountered by other subjects. It is somewhat self-evident that the actions and views of an individual affect those around her. The materiality of a subject’s actions, such as how she exercises her political voice or spends her capital, shapes the broader socio-economic milieu. A basic example that demonstrates this is the effect of the buying power of the gendered subject in sustaining certain business models. This concretely affects the material and political facticities experienced by others. More abstractly, the social mechanisms that forge the physical and psychological constitution of the gendered subject are so effective that they usually “produce the effects they name” (Butler, 2011, p.12). Role

learning, targeted advertising, and gender policing occur from birth. Consequently, gender norms become tacit in most of our actions, views and even “gut-responses” (Jaggar, 1989, p.159). Interpersonal interactions are thus dotted with prescribed gender behaviour with such frequency that this behaviour appears pre-cultural (links 5& 6). As such, the socially-situated nature of identity-formation regularly conceals its genesis. This, in turn, further enforces and reproduces the normative gender paradigm.

The effect of the subject on socio-cultural contexts may be examined by positing it within the interactive phenomenological framework of subject-object relations outlined in Chapter 1. As stated, the subject affects other subjects, first, directly through the process of being-for-others, in which the other subjects encountered are rendered temporarily object-like, which thereafter may influence their recommenced subjectivity. Second, the subject influences social scripts and context indirectly by creating and reinforcing interpretative paradigms essential to the experience and understanding of the object itself. Given Merleau-Ponty’s assertion that our experiential and epistemic engagement with objects occurs within a “pool of meanings”, employment and perpetuation of meanings contributes to our future experience of objects. Just as the phenomenological encounter with the object does not exist *a priori*, neither do the frameworks within which we encounter the object. The origins and conditions of the perceptual fields within which experiential encounters of objects are posited will be examined in my investigation of hegemony. However, whilst I will not immediately delve into the *origins* of such frameworks, I will explore their solidification and perpetuation.

2.6.4 Maintenance of the Dominant Social Scripts

The experiences, perceptions, and interactions of individuals that deviate from the prescribed norms are usually, as stated by Butler, either “rendered invisible” or confined to the “domain of the abject” (2011, p.13). Prior to this, deviation from prescribed gender binaries is initially met with the attempted enforcement of regulatory norms. Examples of this are the conversion therapy of homosexuals, the classification of homosexuality as a disease until 1987, and the surgical and psychological conditioning inflicted on intersexual individuals from birth, which commonly occurred until the 1990s (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). If the normative social conditioning

in question was not successfully adopted or internalized, individuals were either written out of history, or seen as anomalies. As such, they are excluded from our perception of social reality, thereby maintaining links 5 and 6 in the given model. Consequently, constructed gender norms continue to be perceived and portrayed as universal truths. Thus, a bidirectional, mutually-affecting relationship exists between the human subject and the social narratives that inform her identity. Subjective experience is not only structured by existing political arrangements, but affects and structures these arrangements in turn.

2.7 Genesis and Hegemony

Whilst I have explored the bidirectional, mutually reinforcing relationship between socially-situated subjects and social scripts, the genesis or driving force that underpins this relationship has not yet been investigated. To address this, I will draw on, but re-contextualize, the Butlerian inquiry into the source of constructivism. I will explore her refutation of two potential positions in regards to this, and then offer a third and more nuanced explanation for the process of social constructivism. The first account of social constructivism that Butler refutes posits a wholly determining external agent. As she puts it:

“If the subject is constructed, then who is constructing the subject?” In the first case, construction has taken the place of a godlike agency which not only causes but composes everything that is its object; it is the divine performative, bringing into being and exhaustively constituting that which it names, or, rather, it is that kind of referring that names and inaugurates at once. For something to be constructed, according to this view of construction, is for it to be created and determined through that process” (2011, p.16).

I have shown that constructed identities both rest on and reinforce dominant social narratives, and thus am not employing Butler’s analysis to evaluate the *source of such identities themselves*. However, her inquiry proves relevant to the investigation of the *interaction* between social narratives and identity. Put differently, one may ask “From whence comes this two-way traffic between social scripts and socially-constituted identities? Does it have a genesis?” Two questions are embedded within this. The first is related to the origins of the dominant social scripts themselves. The second is focused on how the relationship between script and subject works - its origins and emergence, operation, and dissemination.

The first position outlined and critiqued by Butler (and demonstrated by the quotation provided above) assumes the necessity of an abstract puppeteer of social discourse – a removed instigator of social norms and identities. The causal force implied by this position lacks validation, and contradicts the very premises of social constructivism. In seeking to explain social constructivism, it appeals to something that exists beyond the parameters of the socially constructed. Furthermore, the transcendence of the socially-situated subject (that is integral to the phenomenological account of being human) is discarded by this deterministic position since the subject is wholly determined by an external force.

Whilst Butler is evaluating (and refuting) potential causal bases of socially-situated identities, one can similarly apply her analysis to the origins of social scripts (that shape subjectivity), and the socially-reflexive relationship present between such scripts and identity-formation. In so doing, one can infer that the precondition of a detached and inexplicable prime-mover, or originator of social narratives (and their socially-reflexive interaction with human identity, which I will explore shortly) is unsubstantiated and lacks causal explanation itself. Furthermore, given the malleable and variable nature of social scripts surrounding material features, it is evident that they are not static or interminable. Consequently, the causal forces beneath the construction of these scripts are unlikely to be fixed either.

The interactive framework existent between identity and social narratives similarly changes in its mechanisms and operations. Whilst dominant discourse permeates social relations through social practices, modelling, and reinforcement, the vehicles through which these occur differ vastly in different contexts. For example, in a society with limited production of and access to media, visual representation of “desirable” gender archetypes will not be the primary medium used to produce and regulate gendered identity and relations. Similarly, a collectivist society that does not emphasize the nuclear family as the main unit of interaction and child-rearing would not entail a form of modelling wherein the child’s behaviour and traits develop largely in relation to their parent of the same-sex. The different manifestations and mediums of social interactions provide different means for the transmission of norms, values, and behaviours, which cohesively form social narratives. Socially-situated subjects interact with other subjects through the available and encouraged social mechanisms. This interaction not only instils and

propagates the dominant social values, but also affects the mechanisms of transmission themselves. The malleability of the mechanisms that propel and allow the interaction between social narratives and identity-formation is evidence of the lack of a singular, detached cause behind this relationship.

The second position that Butler critiques in regards to the construction of social identities and relations is the presupposition of “a voluntarist subject who makes its gender [or social identity more generally] through an instrumental action” (2011, p.16). The subject purported here is wholly unfettered by social determinants, and seemingly floats free of her discursive position. Whilst this position eradicates the problem of an intangible, deterministic and unexplained causal force that generates social reality, it nonetheless requires a position-less, self-contained subject who stands apart from the social reality that she cultivates. The phenomenological framework of the human subject that I have employed is at odds with this, as is the psychoanalytic account of the development of human identity.

As stated, my aim here is to apply Butler’s enquiry and critique to the socially-reflexive matrix present between identity and social scripts. Her refutation of a detached, albeit agential, instigator of social processes is relevant to the analysis of the cultivation of social scripts. The existence of an asocial, but socially-influential subject (in this case, a writer of social narratives) lacks validation because such a subject would be removed from discursive norms and practices, and yet would still be able to affect and perpetuate discourse – that is create social scripts themselves, and propagate the interaction between these scripts and subjects. One may pose two objections against the existence and influence of such a subject. First, as implied, the source and constitution of her own identity is free-floating and absent of justification. Second, it is not apparent how such a subject could harbor awareness of and influence over social narratives, and their relation to human subjectivity, without being affected (in some capacity) by said discourse herself. An omnipotent, Machiavellian subject of sorts, that defies both probability, and the paradigm of the phenomenological subject provided by this thesis, is required. This is vastly discordant with the commonality and human being implied by the terminology “voluntarist subject” (Butler, 2011, p.16), in which it is suggested that every human subject is an agential and discrete architect of their identity. Thus, the construction of a

bidirectional relationship between social scripts and human subjectivity cannot be adequately explained by appealing to either an external “godlike agency”, or a self-constituting subject.

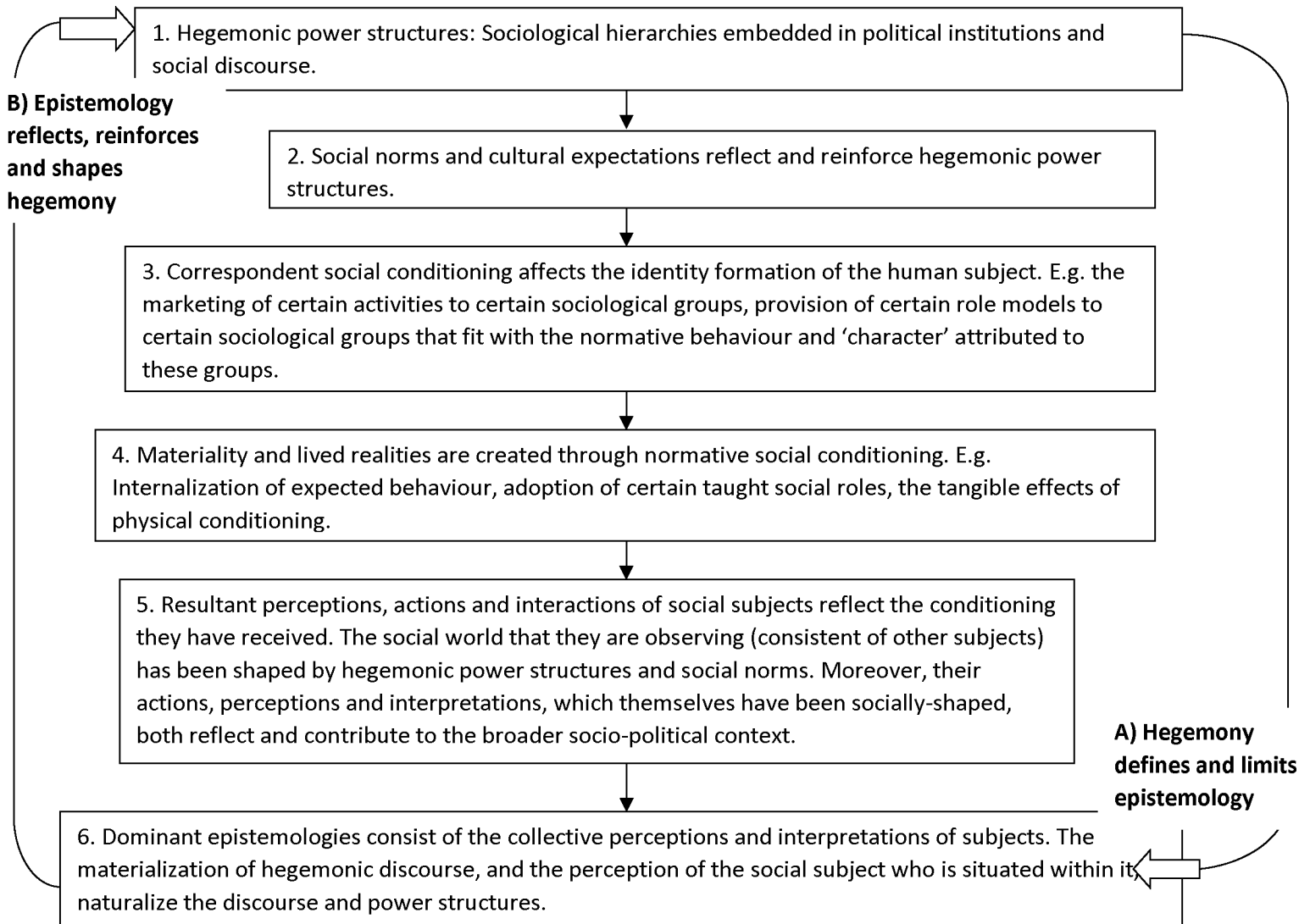
Prior to addressing the genesis and workings of the bidirectional relationship between dominant social scripts and human subjectivity, the nature of this claim must be more clearly unpacked. This claim is focused on the weight carried by dominant social scripts, and the reasons that underpin this weight, rather than the causes of social scripts themselves (or put differently, why interpretative schema affect human identity and engagement with the world). This was adequately and thoroughly addressed by my earlier exploration of Merleau-Ponty’s “perceptual fields” necessary for the phenomenological subject’s engagement with the world, and by the analysis of schema theory provided. It is apparent that human beings map out the material and social world conceptually, and experience and understand it in accordance to these epistemic co-ordinates. My inquiry here is rather more specific, in that it is focused on the pervasiveness and predominance of *certain social scripts*. Expressed differently, one may ask “From whence comes this narrative power?” I will argue that the predominance and propagation of certain social narratives (and their relationship to human identity) is underpinned by a socially-reflexive interaction existent between hegemony and epistemology.

Dominant social scripts, and their interaction with human subjectivity, do not possess a singular origin or originator. Rather, the bidirectional relationship between dominant socio-symbolic meanings and the socially-situated human subject exists within, and reinforces, a larger, socially-reflexive structural framework of hegemony and epistemology. This framework is one wherein the structures of hegemony and dominant epistemologies interact in a socially-reflexive manner. Given that the constitution of the human subject is contingent on socio-cultural scripts, the cause of the influential social contextual norms need be queried.

The dominance and propagation of certain social scripts is best explained through the concept of hegemony. Hegemony refers to the dominance of one social group over others, which may be solidified through various social, political, and economic institutions and practices.

Furthermore, given that the human subject influences socio-cultural meanings, it need be queried *how* her experiences, perceptions, and interactions significantly do so. Collectively, the

subject's socially-affecting experiences, perceptions, and interactions form dominant epistemologies. Thus, the interaction between social norms and the human subject is hinged upon, and informs, a larger framework existent between socio-political hegemony and dominant epistemology. The relationship between hegemony and dominant epistemology, inhabited and influenced by the socially-situated subject, is demonstrated below:



Having explored the generation and propagation of the relationship between dominant social scripts and socially-situated identities through hegemony, one may inquire about the manifestation, genesis, and perpetuation of *hegemony itself*. Hegemony, consistent of an asymmetrical distribution of power and the maintenance of this inequality, may be material, political, or epistemic in nature (and often entails all of these features). Thus, hegemony does not manifest in a single, homogenous way. Whilst I concede that addressing the cause of dominant social scripts by referring to hegemony may appear to beg the question, it must be noted that hegemony (in its various forms) does not possess a single cause. There are a myriad of social, geographical, and economic historical contingencies that have enabled the rise and fall of various empires. I do not intend to focus on the *particular* causes of *particular* hegemonies. A more general focus on hegemony (and one more relevant to the generation of dominant social scripts) rather warrants inquiry into its perpetuation. As shown above (B), hegemony does not only influence dominant epistemologies, but is upheld and reinforced by them. Mirander Fricker attests to the relationship between hegemony and epistemology by stating:

“it is obvious that certain material advantages will generate the envisioned epistemological advantage – if you have material power, then you will tend to have an influence in those practices by which social meanings are generated. And in the hermeneutical context of social understanding, it is also clear that, at least sometimes, if understandings are structured in a certain way, then so are the social facts” (2007, p.147).

As previously described, the reiteration and reinforcement of norms and practices that correspond with hegemonic ideals, along with the sanctioning of those that do not, creates human identities that largely conform to the assumed hierarchies present in hegemony. In so doing, the dominant (often discriminatory) epistemologies are maintained and naturalized.

Whilst power is disseminated and preserved by the interaction between hegemony and epistemology, this may be intentional (and thus be instigated by particular individuals) or unintentional. However, regardless of intent or motivation, the possession and solidification of power into hegemonic structures does mean that the powerful often preside over the mechanisms of knowledge production, propagation, and accessibility. Given that “Our

interpretative efforts are naturally geared to interests, as we try hardest to understand those things it serves us best to understand” (Fricker, 2007, p.152), hegemonic structures (and the groups that inhabit them) may propagate social schema that are exclusionary and serve particular interests. Whilst I will explore this further in Chapter 3 through engaging with Miranda Fricker’s concept of hermeneutical lacunae and hermeneutical injustice, for now it suffices to state that certain (exclusionary) social scripts may be maintained as “the powerful have no interest in achieving a proper [or inclusive and malleable] interpretation, perhaps indeed they have a positive interest in sustaining the extant [exclusionary] misinterpretation” (Fricker, 2007, p.152). However, this need not be, and often is not, a deliberate and intentional “gate-keeping” of knowledge. Rather, hegemony and the correspondent exclusionary epistemologies “may be working purely structurally, in so far as there may be no social agent (individual or institutional) identifiable as responsible for the marginalization” (Butler, 2011, p.154). Thus, just as there is not a sole originator of social scripts, there is not a singular source of hegemony or even a deliberate conservation thereof.

It must be noted that in positing the socially-situated subject, and the influential social scripts with which she engages, within the socially-reflexive matrix of hegemony and dominant epistemology, human agency is not being refuted or displaced. I will offer two main reasons for this. First, as is implicit in the phenomenological framework utilized by this thesis, agency is situated rather than free-floating. Just as the agency of the subject is contingent on situated and contextual socio-symbolic meanings, the socio-symbolic meanings are similarly situated. The variation in the socio-symbolic meanings existent and employed, along with the absence of metaphysical justification for their *a priori* existence and universality, necessitates that they are contextually derived. However, the location of both subjectivity and social scripts within influential and delineating parameters does not refute agency, but rather is necessary for the very existence and exercise of Sartrean agency as shown in Chapter 1.

Second, the influential role played by hegemony does not wholly undermine human agency as agents may alter the boundaries of the hegemonic-epistemic matrix. Butler stipulates that whilst hegemonic constructions wield significant influence over human identities, and self-reproduce through the repetition of norms and rituals, it is also “by virtue of this reiteration

that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions” (Butler, 2011, p.19). Human subjects, either individually or through gathering collectively in consciousness-raising speak-outs, mass mobilizations, or reclamation groups, can (and have) reveal(ed) cracks in hegemonic social constructions of meaning. The historical existence and influential role played by women’s liberation movements and Black Consciousness movements in altering political paradigms, legislation, and social perceptions is testimony to the power of human agency in the destabilization of hegemonic institutions and epistemologies. Thus, while the socially-situated subject acts as a “vehicle” for the interplay between hegemonic power structures and dominant epistemologies (links A & B in the model), whereby hegemony is maintained, they may also destabilize and reconstitute the assumptions and operations of hegemonic structures and epistemologies. In the subsequent chapter, I will expand on the normative necessity of hegemonic destabilization and narrative revision for the end of flourishing human identities and self-conceptions.

In this chapter I have provided a nuanced and in-depth explanation of the origins, processes, and constituents that collectively forge the human subject. A Sartrean account of human subjectivity, consistent of facticity and transcendence, was employed to explain both identity-constitution and the subject’s subsequent experience and interaction with the *Lebenswelt*. In this account, the antecedence and specificities of facticity were unpacked. The socio-symbolic meanings, integral to the subject’s facticity and identity-formation, were shown to be socially-inherited, and thus contextual and malleable. Thereafter, the properties, causes, and effects of socio-symbolic meanings, or social narratives, in relation to human identities were explored. The mutually-affecting relationship between social narratives and socially-situated subjects was thereafter posited within a broader socially-reflexive matrix in which hegemony and dominant, exclusionary discourses interact in a self-perpetuating manner.

CHAPTER 3

THE RECLAMATION OF IDENTITY FOR SUBJUGATED GROUPS: THE NORMATIVE NECESSITY OF INCLUSIVE AND AVAILABLE SOCIAL SCRIPTS

Given the significance of social narratives to the constitution of human subjectivity, and the subject's subsequent relations to the world and other subjects, as defended in Chapters 1 and 2, I now defend the argument that the availability of diverse, inclusive and affirming social scripts is required for successful identity-formation, which in turn is required for a healthy self-conception, and thereby a healthy relationship with the world and other subjects.⁷ That is, if both the flourishing of individual humans and the health of social interactions are valued, then the conditions that facilitate the formation of healthy identities need be similarly valued and fostered. I will argue that healthy human identities are both authentic and cohesive, and reveal a significant degree of self-understanding on the part of subjects. Healthy and flourishing self-conceptions (born out of positive identity formation) will be shown to be contingent on the availability of diverse, inclusive and affirming social scripts.

The bulk of this chapter lies in establishing those types of social scripts that aid or foster the (assumed) human good of a positive self-conception; and will subsequently investigate the epistemic conditions that enable the creation and provision of such scripts. First, I will explore *the features of narratives themselves* that are necessary to successful identity-formation, and thereby a healthy self-conception, which will predominantly be gauged through accounts of the impact of oppressive social scripts, on the one hand, and reclamatory social scripts, on the other. Here I will identify the features present in each type of script as well as their effect on identity formation, resultant self-conception and, ultimately, human flourishing. Second, I will investigate the *epistemic conditions* that facilitate the creation and provision of narratives which possess these features, and in so doing will draw on standpoint theory and the Foucauldian notion of bio-power.

⁷ I am assuming here that positive self-conceptions are both valued and valuable, rather than investigating and providing an ethical paradigm to validate this as doing so is beyond the scope of this thesis.

3.1 The Value of Authenticity, Cohesion, and Self-Understanding to Identity-Formation: A Brief Sartrean and Psychosocial Account

To begin I will explore the detrimental effects of negative social scripts or the absence of social scripts pertaining to certain facticities on the identity-formation of individuals who embody these facticities. In so doing, negative and/or absent narratives will be shown to undermine or be contrary to the end of positive identity-formation, self-conception, and human well-being. From this conclusion, I derive the features of narratives that are necessary for positive human identities. Prior to this, the role of authenticity and cohesion in positive identity-formation and self-conception will be explored. Whilst I have stipulated that my focus does not lie in thoroughly establishing the various components of a positive self-conception, the phenomenological paradigm that I have employed to explain human subjectivity advocates good faith (in which one is neither taken to be over-determined by one's facticity nor over-emphasizes one's transcendence) as necessary to the acknowledgment of human reality. Social scripts that propose that the identities of individuals within a social group be wholly determined by the material features and attached social meanings of their facticity therefore violate this Sartrean principle of authenticity.

Negative and reductive narratives often lead to internal conflict and confusion for the subjects to whom they refer, and in so doing destabilize the formation of a cohesive identity. Cohesion *simpliciter* refers to unity present in something by virtue of the consistency between its various components. In relation to human identity, the meaning and value (which will subsequently be explored) of cohesion are best explained by drawing on narrative theory. Given the role of social scripts in the formation of the Sartrean subject, it follows that narrative theory should be employed to explain the components required for a flourishing human identity. Narrative theory rests on the premise that "Our lives are, in some sense, lived narratives of which we are the authors. Our lives are somehow only comprehensible through a narrative explanatory structure" (Goldie, 2012, p.1). There are two main ways in which narrative theory is relevant to the meaning and value of cohesion in relation to human identity:

(1) The socially-constituted, relational nature of human identity means that the meta-narratives embedded in structural and social forces affect the human subject. This claim has been firmly established in the two preceding chapters. However, it is further elucidated by the three dimensions of a narrative explained by Brian Margruder: cultural-scenario narratives (the normative frameworks of identity endorsed at a societal level), interrelational narratives (interpersonal modes of being available in social groups or dynamics), and intrapsychic narratives (personal conceptions of identity consistent of the subject's retrospective, current, and future-orientated thoughts, actions, and ideas). These three dimensions of narrative are mutually affecting and interrelated. I will delve further into this in relation to Margruder's research on homosexual identity development and homosexual narrative provision. For now it suffices to state that a subject is exposed to various narratives through multiple institutions, organizations, and interactions. The narratives provided may not always correspond with each other. For example, the subject may encounter an affirming interrelational queer narrative through a same-sex relationship that differs from the homophobic socio-cultural narrative purported by broader society. Consequently, she may encounter conflicting accounts of her sexuality. In this chapter, I will argue that this (a) may result in a confused, damaged self-conception; (b) usually stems from demeaning or insufficient social scripts (whether in the cultural-scenario, interrelational, or intrapsychic dimension); and (c) warrants the creation and provision of more diverse, inclusive and affirming social scripts pertaining to the facticities of subjugated groups. I will currently focus on (a); an exploration of (b) and (c) will ensue in the remainder of the chapter.

(2) The multifaceted nature of the human subject means that she will embody numerous facticities, and thus will draw on multiple different narratives that relate to each respective material feature of her facticity. For example, the identity of a black lesbian is constituted by both racial and homosexual facticities (amongst many other features of course). Consequently, scripts pertaining to both blackness and lesbianism (and perhaps scripts about where they intersect) will prove relevant to her experience, interpretation, and understanding of her identity.

Cohesion, in terms of identity, thus requires that the three dimensions of the subject's narrative (1), and the different socio-symbolic meanings (or narratives) attached to different material features (2) do not contradict one another. Appiah endorses this by stating: "Cross-culturally it matters to people that their lives have a certain narrative unity; they want to be able to tell a story of their lives that makes sense" (1993, p.160). Given that identity is constituted by cultural-scenario, interrelational, and intrapsychic narratives (1), contradiction between these narrative constituents may result in a conflicted sense of self. Robert Neimeyer describes disruption between the different dimensions of self-narrative as damaging to identity-construction (2004, p.53). Furthermore, the multifaceted nature of the human subject (2) requires intersecting narratives that, whilst different, should not oppose each other. Continually contending with conflicting beliefs about one's identity, or various facets of that identity, may render action difficult, and result in a bewildered, anxiety-ridden, and unstable self-conception.

Erikson's comprehensive and largely conceded theory of psychosocial development verifies the value of cohesion to human identity. The theory asserts that in order for the ego to fully form, it needs to resolve role confusion, with a dissipation of internal contradiction and conflict (Erikson & Erikson, 1992, p.73). The inability to successfully resolve this psychological phase of development may result in identity-crisis, withdrawal, and depression (Erikson & Erikson, 1992, p.75). Given that these are generally acknowledged as negative states of being, it can be inferred that a cohesive self-conception (that inhibits these negative states) is desirable. Social scripts that allow for the cultivation of a cohesive human identity, as opposed to one fractured and wrought with cognitive dissonance, are essential to the development of a fully-fledged and flourishing sense of self.

Moreover, absent or unsatisfactory, ill-fitting narratives may limit the subject's self-understanding. Self-understanding consists of the subject's comprehension of her experiences and her ability to adequately express them, both of which are necessary to the process of identity-formation (Fricker, 2007). The inability to make sense of her experiences may impair the subject's emotional resolution and cognitive clarity, again causing depression and a lack of confidence. Furthermore, in the absence of the adequate epistemic tools with which to fully

elicit meaning and understanding of her experiences and place in the world, she may turn to repression or self-deception (which are at the heart of bad faith). A lack of self-understanding may also entail pragmatic harms due to the subject's inability to articulate her experiences and perceptions to the world. The inability to express herself may, for example, impinge on the social recognition necessary for human beings to navigate the world successfully. Thus, self-understanding fosters authenticity, resolution, self-expression and social recognition, and happiness all of which are arguably necessary to positive identity-formation and self-conception.

3.2 The Impact of Negative and/or Absent Social Scripts on Identity-formation

The experience of damaging and reductive social scripts is demonstrated in Lisa Tessman's feminist text *Regretting the Self One Is: The Damage of Moral Damage*, in which she presents the reader with a subject (a woman) who is unable to forgo certain conditioning that she has experienced on account of her sex (2005, p. 4). Tessman thus illustrates the potential internalization and perpetuation of reductive and damaging narratives. The subject in question has certain sexual and romantic preferences that have been influenced by patriarchal value systems. These include submissiveness and objectification (2005, p.4). Despite becoming radically politicized and abhorring the meanings and values layered onto being female, she is unable to unpick certain conditioning (2005, p.4). If one examines the facticity of Tessman's subject, one can see that the materiality of being born with certain genitalia has had certain social meanings attached to it. However, Tessman's subject realizes both the socially-constructed nature of such gendered connotations, and that she need not be determined by them. As such, she realizes her radical freedom, as Sartre would say. However, the subject is unable to renege on certain values and preferences.

The moral harm for this subject is located, first, in her inhibited transcendence, and, second, in the unhappiness and cognitive dissonance she experiences. The antecedence of facticity (which is experienced, interpreted, and understood through social scripts) means that she is unable to wholly reconfigure her sexual identity. That is, the prevalence of submissive social scripts

surrounding female sexuality has hindered her sexual self-determination⁸. The second moral harm outlined lies in the conflict between her feminist ideology (political identity) and personal preferences (sexual identity), causing her to experience internal turmoil and a fractured sense of self. We might say that the predominance of hetero-patriarchal female sexual scripts has influenced the formation of the subject's sexual identity in a manner that is incongruent with her political identity and desired overarching self-conception. Thus, authenticity and cohesion are absent in the constitution of her identity. Furthermore, given the interplay between subject and object that occurs in the process of being-for-others, the subject's self-conception in turn affects how she experiences and relates to the world. The social scripts that Tessman's subject encounters and subsequently internalizes may therefore also result in an indirect moral harm located in the perpetuation of the damaging and patriarchal narratives that have influenced her own identity.

Further to negative or damaging social scripts, absent or insufficiently available social scripts may thwart the subject's ability to understand and articulate her experiences to herself and others. Absent, insufficient social narratives, and their detrimental effects on human identity, are best explained by Miranda Fricker's notion of lacunae in the hermeneutical resource. I will explain the concept with reference to her text *Epistemic Injustice*, posit it within the context of discriminatory structural inequalities, and then elucidate the damages thereof to a flourishing human identity.

A lacuna in the hermeneutical resource refers to a gap in the collective interpretation of certain experiences pertaining to particular social groups. The result of the lacuna may obscure the meaning of the experiences encountered, to both the experiencing subject, and to those around her. This "hermeneutical darkness" is caused by an absence of social scripts, and undoubtedly results in frustration, confusion, and isolation for the subject in question. However, given that this thesis investigates the role played by socially-situated scripts on the *identity-formation of subjugated groups*, it will only focus on lacunae in the hermeneutical resource that are underpinned by and perpetuate discriminatory social conditions. Here

⁸ It must be noted that I am referring to her *experience* of autonomy and self-determination, rather than the metaphysical capacity for free will.

Fricker's concept of "systematic hermeneutical injustice" proves relevant. The experience of a hermeneutical lacuna may only be termed a "systematic hermeneutical injustice" when both the causes and effects are positioned within a socio-political framework of unequal power relations. The absence of satisfactory social scripts must thus not incidentally exclude certain social groups due to an epistemic oversight, but rather result from a structural "prejudice [that] affects people in virtue of their membership of a socially powerless group" (Fricker, 2007, p.155). Furthermore, in order to constitute a systematic hermeneutical injustice, the effects of the lacuna encountered need to reflect and reinforce the unequal framework of social power relations. For example, the lack of recognition of marital rape in some hetero-patriarchal societies constitutes an injustice because the lacuna in question allows the infliction of harm on certain members of its society (in this case, largely wives) and not others. The inability of married women to comprehend and express their experiences of marital sexual violence (to themselves and others) is potentially harmful to female members of the society, but not so for the men of this same society. Thus, it entails an "asymmetrical disadvantage" (Fricker, 2007, p.153), which is the basis of the concept of injustice, and reflects, and may reinforce, the structural identity prejudice from whence the lacuna came.

Whilst I concur with Fricker that injustice is contingent on unequal power structures and relations, and with her subsequent condemnation of this inequality, I am primarily interested in the resultant harm to *the individual's self-conception* caused by the structural hermeneutical injustice (and the unequal power relations beneath it). Given my focus on the constituents of the socially-situated self, and the conditions required for flourishing identities, the relevance of hermeneutical injustice lies in its revelation of a) The social conditions and related narratives that aid or impinge on positive identity-formation and self-conception, and b) The effect that the socially-situated self has on the hermeneutical resource going forward and thus on further narrative creation.

The harms caused by structurally prejudicial and inadequate social narratives on identity-formation are illustrated by, for example, the societal outlook and practices

surrounding intersexuality⁹. Heteronormative power structures and binarized gendered relations have propagated lacunae in the hermeneutical resource that have resulted in confusion, unhappiness, and a lack of a proper self-conception for many intersex individuals. The lack of recognition of intersexuality (until the 1990s) imposed ill-fitting and oppressive narratives on many individuals. The expectation of binarized sex was frequently imposed on infants born with an ambiguous sex. Until the 1990s it was presumed (by both doctors and parents) that “intersex births [were] urgent cases” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.51) that needed to be rectified by “reshaping the sexually ambiguous body so that it [could] conform to our two-sex system” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.80). Consequently, intersexuality was rendered invisible. Both the prospect of self-determination by intersexual individuals as non-binary and self-identification as a sex of their choosing were eradicated. I am not evaluating the abstract value of autonomy *qua* autonomy, but rather will subsequently explore the detrimental effects of this deprivation of agency on the identity-formation, self-conception, and flourishing of intersex individuals.

Given that many individuals born intersex later reject their assigned sex, undertake gender transition, or feel betrayed by their deprivation of choice, it is evident that the binarized sex narratives (and related social and medical practices) are insufficient and “crucially dissonant” (Fricker, 2007, p.163) to the self-conception of some intersex individuals. In cases where their intersex condition is revealed to intersexual individuals who were re-assigned a sex at birth¹⁰, their existent sense of self is often shattered. This is harmful, first, to a cohesive self-conception, and second, to the individual’s retrospective sense of autonomy. This may undermine their ensuing recognition and faith in their agency, and as such may lead to bad faith. Furthermore, the absence of intersex social scripts means that the intersex individual is dispossessed of the hermeneutical resources necessary to understand her experiences and

⁹ I am referring here to a particular social discourse, and accompanying set of practices, employed largely in Western societies in the twentieth century in relation to intersexuality.

¹⁰ Intersexuality, even when “treated” at birth, often manifests in later life due to hormonal irregularities. This leads to physiological and hormonal tests in which the intersex condition is disclosed to the subject. Other circumstances in which the intersex condition may be revealed to the subject may occur due to hormonal and surgical treatment through childhood and adolescence, that the parents deem necessary, but may warrant explanation. Sex dysphoria experienced by the subject may also lead to their inquiring into their hormonal and chromosomal makeup.

rebuild her sense of self. Lindsay Kelland states that recovery from an interpersonal harm requires “both the language with which to construct a narrative, and a willing and receptive audience to receive it” (2016, p.731). Intersexuality is either not recognized by society, or when rendered visible is relegated to the realm of the abject, humiliating, and perverse¹¹. Given the intersubjective nature of selfhood, these deficient or demeaning narratives may harm the initial identity-formation of intersex individuals, and prevent the subsequent reconstitution of self that is necessary for human flourishing.

The deficit of social narratives about intersexuality also entails what Fricker terms “practical secondary harms”(2007, p.162) – these stem from the primary harm of hermeneutical marginalization and often relate to logistical or pragmatic struggles experienced by the marginalized subject. Research into the surgical and hormonal procedures imposed on intersex children at a young age, preceding their consent, ability to consent, or even knowledge of their condition, reveals detrimental physiological and psychological effects on intersex individuals.

“Several recent studies have confirmed that early surgical treatment on genitals often results in psychological and sexual problems rather than better social adjustment (Alizai et al. 1588; Creighton 219; Creighton et al. 124; Zucker et al. 300). The social power and authority of the medical establishment combined with fear and lack of awareness in the general public allows these surgeries to go on unquestioned, inflicting lifelong pain on those defined as intersex” (Weasel & Koyama, 2002, p.3).

Thus, the exclusionary narrative of a two-sex binary, wherein a male/female classification is deemed necessary, has resulted in suffering, stigmatization, and deprivation of autonomy for intersex individuals. The absence (and deliberate eradication) of a social narrative that recognizes this particular collective identity has impinged on the self-understanding, dignity, and potential self-determination of such individuals. Therefore it is evident that a deficit of social scripts and/or the presence of negative social scripts, generated by unequal power structures, negatively impacts on the identity-formation of members of subjugated groups.

¹¹ I have explored this in Chapter 2, in which identities that conflict with the normative hegemonic ideals are either seen as anomalies, or undesirable perversions that Butler terms “the abject.” The consequence of this is the maintenance and perpetuation of the status quo.

3.3 The Impact of Positive or Affirming Social Scripts on Identity-formation

Conversely, a relationship exists between positive identity-formation and the availability of inclusive, affirming social narratives. To demonstrate this, I will draw on case studies and first-person reports of individuals who belong to reclamation groups that have enabled the provision of social scripts of this nature to individuals from previously (and currently) subjugated social groups. In so doing, I will tease out the properties of social narratives that help further the ethical end of flourishing and authentic self-conceptions. Thus, the main normative claim of this thesis, that inclusive and affirming social narratives are integral to healthy identity-formation, self-conception, and human flourishing, will find empirical support by drawing on the identity politics present in LGBTQIA++ movements (such as 'Out and Proud', recognition of queer identity, and the development of non-binary genders).

While exploring the detrimental impact of negative scripts and the positive impact of affirming scripts on the identity formation and self-constitution of the subject, Appiah writes:

“One form of healing the self that those who have these identities [that is, the collective identities of subjugated groups that have been negatively perceived and portrayed] participate in is learning to see these collective identities not as sources of limitation and insult but as a valuable part of what they centrally are.” (1994, p.161)

Appiah is suggesting that one liberatory move open to members of subjugated groups involves the reversal of the value judgments attached to collective identities so that the facticity of subjugated groups becomes imbued with positive value judgments as opposed to demeaning, negative ones. Examples of movements that engage in this reversal of value include the Negritude Movement and Neofeminism. Such movements embrace the collective narratives attached to the embodied material facticities of subjugated social groups and reclaim them as both empowering and valuable. The new (reversed) meanings attached to material facticities subsequently often become consolidated into new, more affirming collective identities, shaping the lived realities of social groups from that point on.¹²

¹² Empirical evidence on the positive impact of this reversal of value--whether it be (1) in the reclamation of a word or label previously used to demean members of these groups, or (2) in the affirmation of a characteristic that is stereotypically associated with members of certain groups and was previously taken to be negative--means that it would be dismissive to reject these reclamatory moves as merely *ressentimental*.

However, alongside the (re)affirmation of existent collective identities, I propose that a greater plurality of collective identities (or narratives about such) needs to be developed. Diversity and multiplicity of the social scripts through which embodied facticity is experienced, understood, and expressed are required in order to light the hermeneutical darkness encountered by many members of subjugated groups. Given the reductive, insufficient, and unjust nature of many of our existent social scripts, it follows that we need new and *different* scripts that allow individuals to make sense of their lived experience and forge authentic self-conceptions. Thus expansion of the *content* of these scripts, and not merely revision of their ancillary value, is necessary. I will subsequently argue that during the process of identity formation, the human subject needs access to multiple heterogeneous narratives to cultivate a cohesive, authentic self-conception that enables their own flourishing, and subsequently contributes to a positive nexus of social meanings. Whilst affirmation of the value of the existent scripts attached to subjugated social groups is reclamatory, I argue that *more* social scripts need also be fostered in which previously suppressed social identities are rendered visible.

3.3.1 The Role of Inclusivity and Diversity in Social Scripts

An examination of the contemporary approach to intersexuality evidences the value of a greater variety of available and inclusive social scripts that not only reverse the value associated with facticities previously steeped in negative meaning, but also provide more nuanced, heterogeneous accounts of embodied facticities. The invisible or concealed nature of intersexuality has prevented the development of intersex social scripts to which to attach a value (be it positive or negative). The glaring absence of social narratives surrounding intersexuality shows that the revision of value judgments is irrelevant and inapplicable to the members of social groups that embody concealed facticities. Instead the creation of new and diverse social narratives (accompanied by positive value) is necessary for the flourishing of members of groups that embody previously concealed material facticities.

The recent change in practice to not assign a sex at birth to intersex children, and rather allow for self-determination of one's sex at a later stage of development, coupled with the provision of intersex narratives has assisted many intersexual individuals to feel dignified and happy. If

one trusts that first-person accounts are a sufficient (or at least telling) means of verifying the subject's relationship to their sense of self, then the reaction of intersex individuals subsequent to the provision of previously unavailable scripts shows this provision to be overwhelmingly positive. INSA (the Intersex Society of North America) asserts:

“We believe that intersex people have the right to know all the information currently available about conditions we experience, and determine for ourselves what is done to our bodies. . . .We oppose the idea that eliminating our physical differences is the way to address social issues we may encounter; rather, we believe in addressing social difficulties intersex people may experience through social and psychological interventions” (Weasel & Koyama, 2002, p.1).

INSA is the first advocacy group for people with intersex conditions, and focuses on consciousness-raising, narrative-creation, and the provision of support for intersex individuals and their families (Weasel & Koyama, 2002). The solidarity sought in such a society and the favourable testimony about it by its members evidences the necessity of varied and inclusive social narratives.

3.3.2 The Relationship between Affirming and Accessible Sexual Social Scripts and Cohesive Identity

The provision and accessibility of positive scripts about alternative sexualities has had a similarly affirming effect on the identity-formation and self-conceptions of queer individuals. Prior to providing case studies and accounts of queer individuals who have found value in such scripts, I will examine in more detail Margruder's research on the development and role of sexual social scripts¹³. Margruder states that the move towards the legal and social acceptance of homosexuality in the Western world post-1980s¹⁴ caused a shift in the nature of sexual orientation research from the 1990s. Previously, research had focused on investigating the causes and consequences of homosexuality¹⁵, and subsequently focused instead on social processes such as homosexual identity development (1993, p.1). Much of the research

¹³ Whilst Margruder deals specifically with homosexual identity, and surrounding social narratives, his research and analysis may be more broadly applied to the relationship between sexual identity formation and narratives.

¹⁴ The declassification of homosexuality as a disease in the DSM illustrated the move towards social destigmatization of homosexuality. Similarly Denmark and Norway provided legislation recognizing same-sex partnerships in the late 1980s/early 1990s.

¹⁵ This potentially stemmed from the assumption that it was a pathology that needed to be cured.

investigates and confirms a relationship between successful homosexual identity development and the availability of affirming sexual social scripts. Magruder's sexual script perspective mirrors the socially-reflexive relationship surrounding identity I provided in Chapter 2 of my thesis, while placing a more nuanced and particular focus on sexuality. First, I will briefly outline the features of homosexual identity development *qua* the parameters of the research. Second, I will explain the features of sexual social scripts explored by the research, and the effects thereof on sexual identity development.

It must be noted that, for Magruder, sexual "identity is one of several identities incorporated into an individual's concept of self" (Magruder, 1993, p.3). It is not the primary or defining feature of identity, but is one of many facets of human subjectivity. According to Magruder, each aspect or facet of human identity functions on three levels. Following Cass, Magruder explains this in relation to homosexual identity, stating:

"the homosexual identity may function as a self-identity, a perceived identity, a presented identity, or all three. The homosexual identity is a self-identity when people see themselves as homosexual in relation to romantic or sexual encounters and engagements. It is a perceived identity in situations where people think or know that others view them as homosexual. It is a presented identity when people present or announce themselves as homosexual in concrete social settings, i.e. occupational environments" (Cass as cited in Magruder, 1993, p.4).

Given the previously explained value of cohesion to self-conception, self-identity, perceived identity, and presented identity should ideally be consistent and correspond with each other. An absence of consistency between the functioning of self-identity, perceived identity and presented identity may involve bad faith, internal conflict, repression, or shame for the subject. Furthermore, sexual self-conception should not stand in contradiction with other aspects of one's self-image. For example, an individual who perceives herself as moral in most facets of her being should not simultaneously hold the view that her same-sex attractions or interactions render her immoral, as it may entail similar damaging mental processes to those already outlined. Thus, successful homosexual identity development should entail both self-acceptance, and social recognition. These processes often manifest in the disclosure of one's sexual

orientation, forging homosexual relationships, and a positive gay¹⁶ self-image (Magruder, 1993, p.4).

The idea of sexual scripts is derived from schema theory in which, as previously explained, inherited social paradigms and processes are asserted as necessary to experiencing, ordering, and understanding objects, events, and interactions. Sexual scripts merely apply schema to the experience, interpretation, understanding, and expression of sexuality;

“In short, sexual scripts are typologized by three distinct, yet interconnected, levels of analysis. Cultural scenario scripts dictate the normatively accepted or shared values attached to sexuality. Interrelational scripts guide the contexts of relational sexuality. Intrapsychic scripts define the motivations, fantasies, and desires for individual sexuality” (Magruder, 1993, p.5).

The three “types” of sexual scripts affect each other, as the values attached to sexual practices and desires (present in cultural scenario scripts) will shape the contextual manifestations of sexual behaviours and lifestyles (interrelational scripts), and vice versa. Intrapsychic scripts will be influenced by both social normativity, and the existent, recognized sexual dynamics and interactions. It must be noted that this is not akin to the claim that sexuality itself is a result of socialization, but rather refers to the expression and understanding of sexual identity (in oneself and others). Just as Fausto-Sterling is tentative in affirming the nature of bedrock desire absent of socio-cultural forces, sexual “schema theory does not necessarily explain why a certain phenomenon may occur, as much as it focuses on the interpretation of the phenomenon by individuals” (Magruder, 1993, p.6). Similarly, the sexual script perspective examines the role of the individual in perpetuating particular phenomenological interpretations. Thus, the experience and adoption of intrapsychic scripts by subjects will reinforce and/or modify cultural scenario and interrelational scripts.

¹⁶ The use of the word “gay” here, imbued with positive value, is an instance of the kind of reclamatory move exemplified in Appiah’s assertion provided earlier.

3.3.3 The Role of Available Interrelational Queer Social Scripts in Positive Queer Identity and the Subversion of Heteronormative Cultural-Scenario Scripts

The alteration of many countries' macro-political and legal frameworks to recognize the rights of LGBTQIA++ individuals and groups constitutes a positive shift in relation to the availability of positive social scripts for the queer community. Whilst this has undoubtedly allowed for the cultivation of multiple, affirming interrelational scripts and resultant positive intrapsychic scripts surrounding queer identity, broader structural and cultural arrangements (such as religion, socio-political discourse, and familial patterns) remain largely heteronormative. Given the affliction of lingering heterosexist institutions on dominant cultural scenario scripts, the role of *positive interrelational queer scripts in particular* is integral to queer self-conception. Again, Magruder offers extensive research into the role played by gay social support networks in the identity-formation of homosexual adolescents. He investigates "whether perceived, homosexual-supportive resources and the salience of homosexual identity increased the probability that gay adolescents would disclose their identity to their family" (1993, p.32). His research, consistent of 172 anonymous surveys involving American self-identified homosexual teenagers, reveals that the availability of LGBTQIA++ resources and support-groups strongly influenced the teens' sexual expression and disclosure of sexual identity to their communities and families (1993, p.45). Given the importance of cohesion between the three levels of human identity, as outlined above, it can be concluded that alternative sexual scripts foster more positive self-conceptions. Furthermore, in cases where familial support was lacking, LGBTQIA++ support-networks were shown to be significant in preventing gay teen suicide and runaways (1993, p.39). Thus, on a pragmatic level (in which the continued will to live and maintain familial-social bonds are intuitively acknowledged as essential to a positive human identity) the provision of diverse and affirming sexual scripts appears to be a necessary condition for flourishing identities.

Relatedly, a study conducted by Renn and Bilodeau (2005) explores the role played by LGBTQIA++ campus societies and conventions in American Midwestern universities on the queer-identity development of student participants (2005). The LGBTQIA++ campus societies in

question focus on providing safe spaces for coming-out stories, support groups, extracurricular social activities, and participating in LGBTQIA++ rights-centric activism (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005, p.54). It must be conceded that the data collected in this particular study is limited, and engages with students from only one university and attendees of one particular conference (The Midwest Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay Transgender and Ally College Conference- one of the largest, most attended conferences of its type across the USA). However, it confirms the positive effect of interrelational scripts (and the societies and communities that provide them) on queer identity-formation. One participant in the conference stated that his attendance aided him in coming-out, and in so doing “provided a release from his anxiety and depression” (Renn & Bilodeau, 2002, p.56). A leader of a Midwestern LGBTQ society present stated that she found the experience “empowering” (Renn & Bilodeau, 2002, p.57). The most significant commentary (for the purposes of this thesis) that displays the relationship between interrelational scripts and self-conception came from conference attendee Denise, who stated:

“Seeing all those people is like a glimmer of hope. Oh, my gosh! There’s so many of us out there and you just don’t know. I think indirectly and directly it helped me to get to the point where I am today” (Renn & Bilodeau, 2002, p.58).

Thus, Denise’s encounter with the LGBTQIA++ community provided social scripts surrounding queer identity that were both accessible and affirming. The provision of queer scripts through a community of belonging meant that queer identities were, first, rendered visible (and so made available), and, second, imbued with positive, accepting connotations. The prevalence and ordinariness of queer identities displayed at the conference removed the negative connotations of deviance, immorality, and perversion often imposed on homosexual facticity in heteronormative societal narratives. Instead, the commonality (and simultaneous diversity) of queer identities present at the conference normalized queer identity, and in so doing imbued it with an affirming value. Thus, communities of belonging in which social scripts of acceptance are available to members of subjugated groups aid the flourishing of previously suppressed identities.

I have unpacked the necessity and value of authenticity, cohesion, and self-understanding to identity-formation, self-conception, and subsequent human flourishing and healthy

interpersonal interactions. Furthermore, given the contingency of human subjectivity on social narratives, I have explored what type of social narratives foster positive identity-formation and self-conception for the human subject. In order to form an authentic, cohesive, and self-aware (and self-actualized) identity, individuals (particularly those belonging to subjugated social groups) need access to affirming, pluralistic, and heterogeneous narratives.

3.4 The Epistemic Conditions Necessary for Positive Narrative Creation and Flourishing Human Identities

I have drawn on accounts and experiences of individuals belonging to subjugated sociological groups who have recently accessed affirming, inclusive, and diverse social narratives to demonstrate the role and availability of such narratives in positive identity-formation. Having employed case studies and accounts of members of reclamation groups to this end, I will now explore the epistemic conditions that impede or enable the creation and provision of affirming, inclusive, and heterogeneous social narratives. In order to do so I will draw on standpoint theory, as revised along poststructuralist lines, with particular reference to Susan Hekman's interpretation thereof. Through an analysis of standpoint theory (particularly feminist standpoint theory), I will derive the conditions that allow for the development of beneficial narratives. First, I will explain and contextualize the development of standpoint theory – both in terms of its aims and the post-1990s revision of its epistemology – and show how it mirrors the phenomenological framework of human being. Second, I will show that, in conjunction with the Foucauldian notion of bio-power, it reveals the conditions detrimental to positive narrative creation and provision. Third, I will explore its potential to destabilize the naturalization of hegemonic discourse and to open up “numerous fluid conversations” (Code, 1991, p.309) which are useful to the identity formation and self-conception of subjugated groups. Finally, and in relation to this, I will establish the properties that allow for the development of social scripts that cultivate authentic, flourishing human identities.

3.4.1 Standpoint Theory, Dominant Discourses, and Situated Knowledge

Standpoint theory recognizes, in a similar vein to phenomenology, that the life-world “like every other human activity, is discursively constituted” (Hekman, 2013, p. 345). However, it

focuses on our *knowledge* of the life-world rather than our experience of it. As such, it identifies the role of social institutions and discourses in shaping our perception, understanding, and interpretation of the world. Standpoint theory offers an epistemic paradigm that is akin to that of existential phenomenology, as it shows knowledge to be contingent on the relationship between subject and object. As such, the epistemic framework is hinged on the same components and relations identified as integral to the Sartrean paradigm of consciousness. Furthermore, I will not employ standpoint theory simply to show that knowledge exists as a relation between subject and object, akin to that of posited consciousness. Instead, I will explore the “nature” of this epistemic relationship. Once again, the manner in which the subject engages with the object will be shown to depend on, reflect and (potentially) reinforce socio-cultural meanings and values. Prior to an examination of the components of this epistemic paradigm, and the relationship between them, a brief account of standpoint theory need be given.

Standpoint theory originally focused on investigation into the hegemonic discourses that allowed for the oppression of subjugated groups. Through revealing that “reality” was “socially and materially constructed”, it was shown, firstly, to be constructed in a “partial and perverse” way that favoured the interests of certain groups (Hekman, 1997, p.345), and, secondly, to be potentially alterable. Herein lay the political clout of the theory. Whilst standpoint theory initially focused on the socially located nature of *dominant* perceptions and practices, the post-1990s revision of the theory by theorists like Ruddick, Hekman, and Haraway conceded all epistemic positions to be perspectival and discursive (Haraway, 1988). The initial thrust of the theory claimed that dominant societal discourses and practices were social constructions used to justify and perpetuate unequal social relations, whilst the perspective of subordinated groups laid bare the truth of the situation. This position begs the question of what constitutes the objective truth (Hekman, 1997, p.346) and how the subjugated are able to elude perspective and discourse to access reality *a priori*. However, it nonetheless made the important assertion that the dominant epistemic position both reflected and reinforced power structures. As such, it revealed that knowledge existed within an interactive framework of hegemonic power structures, and socially-influenced understanding. From the 1990s, some

tendrils of standpoint theory extended its subjectivist conception of knowledge to include the perspective of the subjugated (Hekman, 1997, p.346). Subjugated sociological groups contained a multiplicity of diverse experiences and views. The political import of creating a heterogeneous space that accommodated all these potential voices led to some standpoint theorists renouncing of a paradigm of “True material reality”.

Standpoint theory mirrors the Sartrean conception of subject-object relations. Just as consciousness is posited in relation to an object, knowledge is similarly located. According to standpoint theory, the “nature” of the relationship or interaction between subject and object is contingent on broader social discourse. Thus, the manner in which the subject perceives, understands, or interprets an object occurs within a nexus of social meaning. The related exploration of the bidirectional relationship between socially-available meanings, experience of the *Lebenswelt*, and the formation of human subjectivity offered in Chapter 2 of this thesis was largely a descriptive, experiential account of human identity and interaction. Whilst my ensuing analysis of standpoint theory mirrors this explanation, it additionally offers a nuanced evaluation of hegemonic epistemology, and thereafter normatively points towards the epistemic conditions required for the creation and provision of inclusive, affirming, and diverse narratives that enable the flourishing of human identities.

Given that knowledge of an object relies upon a subject, it is safe to say that knowledge of an object will never entail neutrality or weak objectivity (I will elaborate on the meaning of weak objectivity and the consequences of its absence in evaluating social phenomena shortly). Early standpoint theorists, such as Nancy Hartsock, were primarily interested in revealing the role of hegemony in shaping material and political structures, and, more significantly, shaping the perception and interpretation of these structures. Hekman outlines the examination of the workings of hegemonic epistemology undertaken by Hartsock by stating:

“Hartsock asserts that material life structures and sets limits to an understanding of social relations. It follows that the dominant (ruling) group in society will label its perspective as real and reject other definitions.” (1997, p.343).

The above statement illustrates two main effects of hegemony on human reality. The first is the creation of the material and social conditions that generate human identity and relations

themselves, and the second is the hegemonic control and regulation of the mechanisms whereby the resultant human reality is understood. The two are undoubtedly interlinked, and are mutually affecting, as I explained thoroughly in Chapter 2. Given that the normative end of this thesis proposes narrative creation for subjugated sociological groups, it is necessary to specifically investigate the epistemic conditions that either abet or impede this end. The epistemological nature of early standpoint theory placed emphasis on the role of hegemony in delimiting and curtailing the *understanding* of human relations. The exclusion of certain groups from knowledge production (both in terms of the concepts dealt with and the methodology used), coupled with the assertion that this conceptual apparatus is universal and objective, led to the exclusion of certain perspectives.

To solidify the idea of epistemic hegemony and resultant exclusion of the perspectives of marginalized groups I will relate the Foucauldian notion of bio-power to the classification, understanding, and “treatment” of intersexuality. Through illustrating the effects of bio-power on sex-classification, one can more broadly decipher the principles or conditions that may underpin the exclusionary epistemic matrix of (various) sociological classifications. Standpoint theory and the concept of bio-power are thus necessary to reveal and challenge the biases and self-perpetuation of dominant epistemologies. It is only subsequent to this that a paradigmatic and conceptual shift that includes new and different standpoints can occur.

3.4.2 Bio-power, Hegemony, and Dominant Epistemology

Bio-power refers to the methods utilized to obtain and maintain power over living bodies, both on an individual level and in relation to the broader biological operation of a population (Foucault, 1990). Whilst Foucault offers a particular, historical account of bio-power that emerged amidst industrialization in nineteenth century European societies to aid economic processes, the concept can be applied more broadly outside of the confines of this particular genealogy (Foucault, 1990). The classification of social groups and the members within them was (and to some extent still remains) generally attributed the status of epistemic (and often scientific) objectivity. Bio-power identified the social normativity frequently implicit in the motivations and methodology used to classify and organize members of society (Foucault,

1990). The concept of bio-power was thus key to illustrating the disparity between the supposed objective properties present in social classification and the socially-situated, value-laden nature of classification. Similarly, dominant epistemologies are often generated by hegemonic socio-political structures and imbued with corresponding normativity, yet are asserted as objective systems of knowledge. In being thusly presented, dominant epistemologies endure through rejecting the validity (or even possibility) of counter-discourse.

3.4.3 Sex-Classification, Normative Discourse, and Purported Objectivity

Sex-classification rests on a premise of a universal, *a priori* male/female binary that is disparate to the epistemic tools used to verify its existence. First, I will briefly unpack the absolutist and objective status attributed to the category of sex, regardless of the specific features used to identify it. Second, I will explore the methodological requirements needed to ascertain the supposed fixed, absolutist properties of sex. The meaning and conditions of objectivity will be explored. Third, sex determination and the broader conceptual category of sex will be shown to rest on epistemic assumptions and social values. Whilst I will show that sex-classification contradicts and opposes the principles of objectivity necessary to verify its premise, the main point of exploring the short-fallings of sex-classification is not the refutation of the male/female binary in-itself (valid as this may be). Rather, I wish to explore the relationship between bio-power and sex-classification as a vehicle to demonstrate:

- a) The mechanisms of dominant epistemologies.
- b) The integral role and value of counter-discourses in breaking the hold of hegemonic discourse.
- c) The potential inclusive and alternative narratives that may arise from (and are necessarily contingent on) the evaluating and reconfiguring epistemic processes.

Sexual classification and determination of sexually ambiguous bodies, in which they are generally rendered male or female, is premised on the assumption of a universal and pre-social male/female binary. Whilst the precise features used to identify or define sex have changed, the broader nature or classification attributed to it has not. Subsequent to the distinction

between sex and gender, sex has been considered pre-social, universal and static. Whilst the determining features of sex have ranged from genitalia to chromosomal tests, its broader properties or categorization have remained static. The constituents of sex have been revised and contended, however it has remained classified as an *a priori* biological fact. Testimony of this is its distinctness from gender as a concept. The differentiation between the two requires that sex contains properties that gender does not. Fausto-Sterling explains the asserted differences between the two by stating that “sex [has been taken] to refer to physical attributes and [thus to be] anatomically and physiologically determined. Gender [in contrast] has been seen as a psychological transformation of the self – the internal conviction that one is either male or female (gender identity) and the behavioural expressions of that conviction” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.4). The definitional features of sex are secondary to the premise that sex is a biological fact, consistent of inherent, absolute and fixed properties. Sex is largely considered to be an objective truth, regardless of the constituents or methods whereby that truth is established.

The proposed objective phenomenon of sex necessitates a correspondent epistemology or means of measurement. To unearth a “truth” or brute fact, one requires similarly true and correct methods of observation and evaluation. Objectivity may be divided into product objectivity and process objectivity (Sprenger & Reiss, 2014). The former refers to the phenomenon itself that is deemed objective or existent in the world outside of human perception (such as sex). The latter refers to the processes and methods utilized to access and measure a phenomenon (in the case of sex, these may vary from phenotypic characterization to chromosomal identification). These are termed objective if they are not altered by the “social and ethical values, nor the biases of the scientist” (Sprenger & Reiss, 2014, p.5). Product objectivity is thus contingent on process objectivity.

A distinction between strong and weak process objectivity need also be drawn. Strong objectivity requires a non-perspectival epistemic process. The phenomenological account of human subjectivity, the linguistic turn, and poststructuralist ideas of social reflexivity demonstrate the untenability and irrelevance of this version of objectivity to human reality. However, the socially-situated nature of knowledge need not be a death-blow to the epistemic

accuracy required for objectivity for two reasons. First, it is hypothetically possible that a socially-situated methodology may accurately determine a fact in the world. Second, the descriptive properties of what we deem objective processes do not entail absolutism or stasis, but rather simply imply that it is the best epistemic means currently possessed. A weaker version of objectivity is thus frequently employed to establish accurate research and theories. Weak process objectivity, by which one gleans, measures, and assesses an objective phenomenon, should not add, alter, or detract from the phenomenon. It entails intersubjective confirmation, a lack of bias and normative judgments, and a reliable epistemic community. I will show these conditions to be absent in the classification, verification, and determination of sex. Consequently, I will illustrate that sex-classification and determination (which acts as just a singular example of social classification) entails a social normativity that contradicts the objective phenomenon that it claims to corroborate. My ensuing exploration of this particular and pertinent phenomenon will reveal the self-perpetuating nature of dominant and exclusionary epistemologies through their false appeal to objectivity.

The flaws of the current methodologies and assumed categories used to verify the existence and properties of sex render them unable to confirm its objectivity. A disparity exists between the inherent, universal, and pre-social nature attributed to sex and the contextual and affecting means used to categorize and measure it. Epistemic rigour, inter-subjective confirmation, and critique and revision in the classification of sex are lacking. The absolutism and universality attributed to our binary categorization of sex is thus assumed, rather than investigated. As stated by Fausto-Sterling, “research into the normal distribution of genital anatomy, as well as many surgeons’ lack of interest in using such data when they do exist” (2000, p. 8) undermines the accuracy of sex classification, and thus our conclusions on the nature of sex. The objectivity of the phenomenon of sex is hinged on the supposedly universal and inherent binary between male and female. However, the epistemic means used to establish the sex binary are flawed. The premise (or process objectivity) of sex thus lacks validation, and begs the question.

Classification and practices pertaining to intersexuality are embedded in a value-laden and affecting epistemology. The debates and practices surrounding intersexuality evidences the inaccuracy of our binaries of sex classification, and the normative influence that creates and

enforces this binary. Fausto-Sterling provides extensive research and analyses of chromosomal and anatomical variations that cause intersexuality. The research given reveals that intersexuality is not uncommon, and “in some populations, the genes involved with intersexuality are very frequent” (2000, p.51). The relative commonness of bodies that “exhibit sexual ambiguity” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.51) questions the male/female binary classification of sex. Given that intersexuality is more common than albinism (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.51), statistical frequency is seemingly not a consistent basis for genotypic and phenotypic categorization. The dismissal of mixed-sex bodies, and the relegation of these bodies to the categories of male and female, shows that the epistemic categorization of sex entails distortion and presupposition.

The malleability of the classification and “treatment” of intersex bodies reveals first an absence of a universal epistemic standard, and, second, the influence of social normativity in sex classification. The lack of a singular standard by which to categorize sexually ambiguous bodies evidences an indeterminacy and malleability to the epistemology of sex. Whilst most medical practitioners attempt to “correct” intersexuality at birth, the “medical practice in these cases varies enormously. There are no national or international standards to govern the types of intervention that may be used” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.46). Chromosomal makeup, even with intersexuals who do neatly possess an XX or XY chromosome, is not consistently used as the deciding factor for sex (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.46). “Functionality”, in terms of either longevity or reproductive ability, has not acted universally as the basis for sex choice either (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.30). The disregard for the physical and psychological well-being of intersexuals displayed in the treatment thereof shows that basic health and alleviation of suffering fails to motivate sex choice. As stated by Fausto-Sterling “there is strong evidence that early genital surgery does not work: it causes extensive scarring, requires multiple surgeries, and often obliterates the possibility of orgasm” (2000, p.30).

Sex determination and sexual differences are largely hinged on social values and contextual perceptions of functionality. The externally-determined sex choice of intersexual people has been, and generally continues to be, commonly decided on the basis of aesthetics and social utility. The decision to render an intersexual infant male is contingent on the whether the penis

size of the infant will make it possible for them to urinate standing up and have “successful” penetrative intercourse (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p.54). Implicit in this sex determination is a heteronormative expectation of sexuality, value of certain toiletry practices, and cosmetic preferences for particular sizes and shapes of male genitalia. The social nature of intersexual sex relegation illustrates a normative dimension to the epistemic process whereby sex is decided. Thus, sex classification is both inconsistent and normative. Furthermore, and perhaps more significantly, the epistemic tools whereby sex is determined and classified do not merely lack the detachment to objectively verify this phenomenon, but they actively affect and alter it. In so doing, they eradicate the possibility of sex being a static and natural phenomenon. The “urgent” assignment of intersexual individuals to either the category of male or female is a social enforcement of sex criteria claimed to be inherent. Thus, the epistemology used to understand, interpret, and categorize sex is affecting rather than objective.

3.5.1 The Epistemic Conditions Detrimental to Positive Narrative-Construction and Subsequent Identity-Formation

The dominant epistemology used to categorize and determine sex (both in terms of the features definitive of sex, and the methods used to decipher defining sexual features) is steeped in socio-contextual normativity, but purports to possess objectivity. In its declaration of objectivity, sex-classification is imbued with authority and thus assumed to accurately verify the male/female binary. In so doing, sex binaries (and the related social narratives for gender identities and relations) are maintained. Whilst the analysis provided refers specifically to the social discourse, epistemologies, and resultant experiences surrounding sex, it is revelatory of the mechanisms of dominant epistemologies that delineate and confine the experience, expression, and understanding of social reality more broadly. Standpoint theory, and concepts like bio-power, disclose epistemic conditions which obstruct the availability of inclusive, diverse, and affirming narratives for certain social groups. These theories have been pivotal in uncovering the conditions and origins of exclusionary epistemologies. They have shown unfounded appeals to absolutism, universality, and objectivity, which curtail the creation and accessibility of positive narratives necessary to positive identity-formation, to be embedded in

dominant discourses. Furthermore, standpoint theory and bio-power explored the role of hegemony in creating and sustaining epistemic conditions of this nature.

3.5.2 The Role of Critical Investigation of the Power-Knowledge Relationship: Cultivating the Epistemic Conditions Necessary for the Creation, Provision, and Availability of Inclusive, Heterogeneous, Affirming Narratives

The influence of dominant discourses in the creation, perception, understanding, and experience of collective identities and relations, identified by standpoint theory, and the presentation of such understandings and experiences as objective, as pointed out by concepts like bio-power, loosen the hegemonic hold of such discourses. Consequently, notions of fixed, universal social realities and the absolutist, detached epistemic paradigms used for their interpretation are challenged and potentially destabilized in three ways. First, the recognition of dominant perspectival epistemologies as falsely attributed the status of objectivity undermines the assumed absolutism of the resultant social relations that they interpret. Susan Hekman outlines the effect of standpoint theory on our conception of epistemology in her statement:

“feminist standpoint theory defines knowledge as particular rather than universal; it jettisons the neutral observer of modernist epistemology it defines subjects as constructed by relational forces rather than as transcendent” (1997, p.356).

Thus, standpoint theory undermines the claim of privileged knowledge whereby the proposed truth of social reality is established. The process objectivity in the assessment of social relations is contested, resulting in the questioning of the product objectivity of the existent, normative social relations themselves.

Second, the realization that dominant discourses and modes of being are not fixed, universal, and intrinsic, embedded in standpoint theory, allows for the possibility of their alteration. It allows for the potential inclusion of new perspectives. The disavowal of the universality and absolutism attributed to the dominant discourse not only chips away at the clout carried by the dominant discourse itself, but casts doubt on an “absolutist, subject-centred conception of truth” (Hekman, 1997, p.356). In so doing, it elucidates the situated, local, and variable nature of human experiences and understandings. The “situated, local, and communal constitution of

knowledge” (Hekman, 1997, p.356), recognized by standpoint theory, allows for the creation and inclusion of new perspectives, narratives, and resultant identities. Furthermore, implicit in standpoint theory’s recognition of the localized nature of human experience and knowledge is an understanding of the multi-faceted, intersectional nature of the identity of a singular individual. The multiplicity of the collective facticities embodied by a subject, coupled with the variety of social meanings she encounters, renders the identity of a single subject diverse and intersectional. This is verified in Hekman’s statement “Women speak from multiple standpoints, producing multiple knowledges” (1997, p.363). This intersectional understanding of identity is likely to enable malleable, diverse, and constantly shifting social narratives, that are responsive to an individual’s particularity and experiences as opposed to blanket imposition of an assumed, all-encompassing meta-narrative.

As stated, theories that investigate the relationship between power structures and knowledge production cultivate epistemic conditions conducive to positive narrative creation through the subversion of notions of absolute, objective, and static collective narratives. However, it is not only their recognition of the perspectival that rejects fixed, static notions of human identity, and instead allows for the potential generation of positive social scripts (that are diverse and inclusive in nature). Rather, they additionally recognize and acclaim the power of human agency and action in the propagation of dominant discourses and social scripts; this recognition and acceptance is a necessary epistemic basis for the provision of self-determined social scripts that develop primarily out of human experiences and need. Theories that analyze and critique the power-knowledge relationship, such as standpoint theory, rightly afford weight and significance to the influence and experiences of human subjects in shaping power structures and social scripts. I will explain the *acknowledgement* of human agency in narrative creation that is implicit in such theories, and the epistemic benefit thereof to positive narrative construction and identity-formation.

The critical investigation into the relationship between socio-political structures and dominant epistemologies not only strips conceptions of collective human identities of absolutist, inherent authority, but also reveals the part played by human subjects in reproducing systems of power

and dominant discourses. Here one may draw on the words of Judith Butler, in which she states:

“subjective experience is not only structured by existing political arrangements, but effects and structures these arrangements in turn. Feminist theory has sought to understand the way in which systems or pervasive political and cultural structures are enacted and reproduced through individual acts and practices” (1988, p.522).

Whilst the above statement shows that human subjects reproduce existent hegemonic structures and social scripts, it nonetheless identifies the vital position of the human subject in narrative propagation (regardless of its content). In so doing, it acts as an ode to human agency. The recognition of the role of human subjects in disseminating hegemonic structures and exclusionary dominant narratives conversely entails a concession of the power held by human agents in the potential creation of new, inclusive narratives.

Put differently, one could state the theories that unpack the effect of power structures on meaning creation dissolves the boundary between the personal and the political, and instead elucidates that the *personal is the political*. My earlier exploration of hermeneutical injustice, in which uneven power relations obscure self-understanding and the subject’s ability to express her experiences to others, showed that the political shapes the personal (in terms of identity-formation and social interactions). However, it must be noted that the inverse holds true too – that is, that the personal shapes the political. As stated, analysis into the relationship between power structures and knowledge convey the significance of human subjects in the reproduction of these power structures, related social scripts, and the subsequent identity-creation process. The recognition of human agency (even if it is not always conceded or recognized by human agents themselves amidst the process of identity-formation, self-conception, and social relations) post-factum by such theories will hopefully translate into the creation of accommodating spaces in which various autonomous human voices converse to create diverse, inclusive and affirming social scripts.

The integral role of socio-symbolic meanings in the constitution of the human subject’s facticity and concomitant transcendence, upon which this thesis is premised, has led to my exploration of the types of social scripts required for positive identity-formation, self-conception, and

individual and relational human flourishing. First, authenticity, cohesion, self-awareness and self-understanding were established as necessary to a healthy human identity. Second, the particular features or properties required in narratives to cultivate or allow for the formation of such human identities and self-conceptions were investigated. I placed particular focus on the features of social narratives provided to members of subjugated social groups. The short-fallings and damaging effects of discriminatory, insufficient, and exclusionary (or wholly absent) social scripts on the identity-formation and self-conceptions of subjects belonging to oppressed social groups were contrasted with the positive effects on said subjects demonstrated by the development and provision of affirming, available, and heterogeneous social scripts. Finally, the epistemic conditions required to engender the provision of positive social narratives were shown to follow the critical investigation into absolutist, fixed, and (falsely) assumed universal notions of human identity and social relations. Herein lies the value (and necessity) of critical investigation into the relationship between power structures, social meanings, and human subjectivity. The concession and welcoming of perspectival, situated, and varied human experiences, interpretations, and understandings similarly arises from poststructuralist, standpoint theory, and Foucauldian bio-political positions. Epistemic conditions that accommodate malleability, locality, and human agency in the formation and solidification of social schema (and thus social scripts) are those most likely to allow positive social scripts and correspondent, flourishing human identities to germinate.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of this thesis has been to explore the positive effect of affirming, inclusive, and heterogeneous social scripts on the experiences, understandings, and resultant self-conception of the phenomenological subject and her subsequent engagement with the world. To this end I: (1) Provided a descriptive Sartrean account of the constitution of the human subject, and thus our experiential engagement with the world. (2) Explored the origins, meanings, role, and propagation of social narratives in relation to human identity. (3) Normatively derived the narrative features and conditions necessary for a fully-fledged, flourishing human identity and set of human relations.

Initially, in the first two chapters, I focused on analysing and establishing the components of human being within a phenomenological framework. The make-up of the individual human subject was investigated, along with her interaction, engagement, and understanding of other human subjects, objects, and the *Lebenswelt* in general. The interactive relationship between subject and object that is integral to human consciousness (and thus human reality as recognized by the phenomenological school of philosophy) was shown to be microcosmically mirrored in the constitution of individual human subjectivity: the human subject consisting of object-like facticities and concomitant human freedom. As explained in Chapter 1, subject-object relations unvaryingly require both subject and object, and yet in their consciousness-constituting relationship may alter each other.

I proposed the human subject to be, somewhat analogously, comprised of both facticity and transcendence; the recognition of which is required for authentic human existence. I argued that whilst facticity and transcendence are constant and necessary features of human subjectivity, they are also mutually-affecting. The subject's experience, understanding and expression of each mode of being was proven to be influenced by the other – that is, being-for-itself and being-in-itself wield influence over each other, and thereby influence the self-actualization and authenticity of the human subject. The antecedence of facticity, as validated in Chapter 2, renders it vital to the subject's engagement with her transcendence, identity-formation, and eventual self-conception. The primacy of facticity in human subjectivity,

its influential relationship with the awareness and exercise of transcendence, and the effect of the resultant human subject's perceptions, ideas, and actions on objects encountered in the *Lebenswelt* imbue it with causal, ethical clout. The influential role of facticity in shaping both the individual identity of the subject and her subsequent interpersonal interactions impelled my in-depth analysis of its constitution and examination of its potential reconfiguration in ways that aid the end of human flourishing.

My account of facticity was focused on embodied facticities, consistent of material features inextricably and necessarily tied to socio-symbolic meanings. Human experience, understanding, and interpretation of the material features of facticity (and arguably material features in general) was shown to be mediated by shared social understandings and values, collectively termed social scripts. I argued that the values, norms, and practices embedded in social scripts are frequently disseminated by the socially-situated subject in her engagement with the world, thereby reproducing the social scripts present in the constitution of the subject. Thus, the human subject was established as both the recipient and (re)producer of social scripts. The significance of mundane, everyday human acts and rituals in reiterating inherited social meanings, as illustrated in an analysis of gender construction, revealed, first, the mechanisms by which dominant social meanings are propagated, and, second, the undeniable role of the human agent. Whilst human agency is influential in the process of social narrative creation, propagation, and related identity-formation (and allows for potential alteration of existing social narratives), the role of hegemony, social sanctioning, and abject sociological identity were shown to be significant in the maintenance and perpetuation of pre-dominant social scripts. I argued that the socially-reflexive relationship between hegemony, socially-situated subjects, and dominant social scripts has repeatedly suppressed, eradicated, or degraded the understanding, articulation, and expression of the identities of individuals who collectively embody facticities that do not align with the existent, pervading hegemonic interests.

The social relevance and potential normative contribution of this thesis lies in the focus placed on the relationship between social scripts pertaining to subjugated social groups and the resultant identity-formation and self-conception of individuals belonging to said groups, as

largely elucidated in Chapter 3. The ethically relevant and valuable examination of the social scripts surrounding oppressed collective identities entailed a descriptive and normative dimension. A description of heterosexist societies, containing deficient and demeaning social scripts surrounding female and queer identity was shown to result in the negative, stunted identity-formation and self-conception of the individuals belonging to the respective subjugated groups. Psychological theory, ethical-epistemological analysis, and empirical substantiation were provided to demonstrate the damage wrought on the process of healthy identity-formation and human interactions by absent and negative social scripts. More specifically, an account of psychosocial development explicating the harm of internal confusion and contradiction to ego-resolution, Fricker's analysis of the detrimental effects of lacunae to identity-development, and the personalized recounts of individuals belonging to oppressed groups with similarly oppressive social narratives that were provided all indicate a causal relationship between an ill-formed sense of self and negative or insufficient social narratives. The normative dimension of this thesis is located in the proposed cultivation and provision of positive social scripts that allow for authentic, self-aware, and cohesive identity-formation, self-conception, and flourishing human interactions. Through engaging with the aims of reclamation movements, identity politics, and first person accounts of individuals who had recently accessed and benefitted from social narratives associated with a previously suppressed, subjugated collective social identity, I identified the features of inclusivity, diversity, and availability as integral to both the process and content of positive narrative creation and provision.

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