

# Politics, Emotion and Spirituality



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By

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**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



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This book first published 2025

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN: 978-1-0364-5071-7

ISBN (Ebook): 978-1-0364-5072-4

Original Spanish version published by Ediciones de la Catarata, Madrid (Spain)

To my loves, Gaia and Alejandro,  
for reminding me every day of the miracle of life.



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# INTRODUCTION

This text aims to construct an analytical, cognitive, and emotional reflection that intertwines two issues that, from the dominant perspective, are seen as antagonistic and must be placed in completely separate spheres. On the one hand, we have the realm composed of politics, power, and social–community issues; on the other, the dimensions related to the personal and intimate spaces of the self, such as affections, emotions, and the search for meaning in life. Thus, this work proposes challenging the fragmentation with which we usually navigate our daily lives, attempting to build an argument that establishes that the personal, the emotional, and the transcendent are political dimensions. Therefore, the quest for emancipation necessarily entails a journey toward processes of self-knowledge and healing.

From this perspective, I will address issues often neglected in social science studies to assert that the life journeys that allow us to free ourselves from fears, sufferings, and disciplinary frameworks that shape our perception require both individual and collective transformations toward the construction of more humane, just, equitable, and harmonious societies. With this conviction and hope, I have also delved into writing an essay on politics, emotions, and spirituality.

This text results from a personal and affective process that has ultimately merged my analytical work as part of the academic community with the experiences derived from a path of healing and integration, which I believe holds the meaning of my existence. Therefore, it is an essay offering personal reflections on structures of power, emotions, and spirituality. It does not aim to stand as an indispensable scientific contribution to academic knowledge but as a space for contemplating on the connections between suffering, despair, and systems of domination. For this reason, my writing has been much freer than in a typical academic work, reducing bibliographic references to the strictly necessary ones and using language much more laden with subjectivities, emotions, and personal experiences.

As a political science professor, subject to a series of hegemonies aimed at efficiency, scientific validity, and competitiveness, I am fully aware that it

may not seem desirable or scholarly to write a book that links spiritual and emotional issues with political dimensions, given that common sense dictates these are spaces that should be completely separate, both analytically and empirically. However, my process of personal deconstruction has intertwined with my academic analyses and teaching practice, generating needs and desires oriented toward addressing the importance of affection, compassion, and ethics in the analyses and practices of political actors, institutions, and processes.

Nevertheless, perhaps the most fundamental component in my current conception of politics, academics, and pedagogy is my life experience related to the search for healing, meaning, and spirituality that I have undergone in recent years. The experience of living with a chronic, painful, and (apparently) incurable illness for over thirty years has taught me to understand how pain operates in human life, to observe within myself how trauma breaks people and distances them from their vital essence, and to discover that love, compassion, and kindness are the only desirable paths we can aspire to for ourselves and our communities.

I have learned that human beings are integral beings where reason occupies a limited space in our vital metabolism and that we possess a spiritual, bodily, emotional, and relational dimension that must be introduced into the common senses that shape our reality. I have also observed that this denial of the integrality of the self is a fundamental cornerstone of the hegemonic political narrative, which drives us toward competition and individualism while further promoting the commodification of the body, emotions, and subjectivity.

This emotional, spiritual, and analytical experience has driven me to write this work, which seeks to intertwine the construction of another possible world—a fairer, more humane, and more respectful one toward all living beings—with a process of physical and emotional healing, of accepting the pain and trauma inherent to human life, and of searching for the meaning of life. Moreover, this is the political and personal message that runs through the pages of this small text: the greatest challenge and the primary transformation we can undertake is the one we direct toward ourselves and our consciousness. From a place of greater freedom and autonomy, we can commit to community spaces that will transform our (small and large) worlds into societies of greater justice, sustainability, compassion, and kindness.

*Torrelodones, April 2023*

## MAPPING OF THESE PAGES

This essay proposes an analysis based on the hypothesis that there is a system of power -which expands over the material, political and subjective spaces of communities- built on processes of fragmentation and rupture of the conscience, emotions and transcendence of human beings. Thus, this expansive structure is shaped as a hegemony in that it can impose specific processes of political, economic and social organisation through visible and invisible dynamics. These are devices that privilege inequality and the concentration of wealth, as well as the production of *meta-narratives* that legitimise and naturalise profoundly inequitable and violent socio-political hierarchies that condemn millions of human and non-human beings to poverty, violence and oppression.

The competitive and accelerated capitalist universe, which seems to manage our relationships, desires and representations, transcends the material and political spheres to create a communitarian imaginary of success, belonging and notoriety. This imaginary is embedded in people's bodies, unconscious and intimate, generating a mercantilist and artificial conception of the identity of the modern subject. This identity has been figured to integrate the lives of human beings into the laws, market guidelines and regulations, utilitarianism and productivity.

In the opinion of this book, this process is possible, sustainable and efficient as long as the values of the hegemonic culture can filter through the arteries and conduits of human minds and emotions, perpetuating the idea that individuals are mainly rational/mental actors and that the rest of the systems (such as the body or the feelings) that make up the human condition are secondary and even disposable.

I believe that, on the contrary, human beings are holistic and integrated existences of multiple dimensions, and it is precisely the denial of this multidimensionality that is the principle and primary basis for sustaining the normalised violence that characterises these power devices. In other words, there is a profound and intimate relationship between the construction of mechanisms of oppression that subject individuals *from the outside* and the denial of the multidimensionality of being that denies the necessary processes of self-healing and imposes itself on subjectivity *from within*. It

is on these reflections that the present essay is structured, both to the power of hegemonies and to the responses that human beings can make to emancipate our consciousness and build a human world that is more just, equitable, and fused with nature.

This work is organised into three sections that analyse the interconnection between politics, emotions, and spirituality in a complementary manner. The first is oriented towards diagnosing the structures of power and their implications in the rupture of being. The second addresses the processes of integration of consciousness. Lastly, the third section offers a political proposal for emancipation that interweaves the individual with the communitarian and the social.

Within this framework, the first section analyses these artefacts and narratives of oppression, considering their political, economic, social, social, emotional and personal implications.

The second focuses on the possibilities of integrating the multidimensionality of the self as the first link on the road to the emancipation of people, the search for their freedom and the encounter with paths of self-knowledge and independence. Given that, in the first part of the book, the argument revolves around the feedback between hegemonies and fragmentation of consciousness, this second section deals with the understanding of the emotional, spiritual, corporal and relational dimensions by appealing to diverse experiences, practices and doctrines that transcend Eurocentric westernisation and the restricted identification of the subject with their rational and egoic mind. In this sense, advances in disciplines such as neuroscience, quantum perspectives, evolutionary biology, anthropology and psychology already show the importance of exploring new worldviews based on the mind/body union, the supremacy of consciousness over matter and the interdependence and connection of all beings that inhabit the planet.

The third and last part proposes the communitarian construction of a new worldview. In this last section, I reflect on the conception of politics as a space for the management of the *res publica*, the importance of education in the shaping of freedom and critical thinking, and the need to incorporate the healing of the spirit and the overcoming of pain and trauma into the daily spaces of socialisation.

I would not like to end this small map of the book without commenting on the process of reflexivity that, I believe, characterises the world in which we live. The most recent advances in scientific research in psychology and

neurobiology demonstrate that the construction of our social ecosystem is subjective and is built through visions, values, and identities that are always partial in human beings. Thus, since reality is malleable in multiple directions, I am fully aware that this text's analytical and emotional proposal results from a relative, limited and personal vision of the study of political science, philosophy and teaching.

Therefore, these pages do not pretend to arrive at the confection of a complete theory, a significant scientific contribution or the edification of a *truth*. On the contrary, the aim is to make a complementary contribution to the structures of power, pain and subjection of the modern individual without disregarding the unquestionable scientific, rational and academic advances of Western analytical structures. Moreover, as a professor of political science, the approach I can make to disciplines from other areas of scientific knowledge, such as neuroscience, quantum theories or psychology, will always be peripheral and limited, not exempt from analytical and theoretical inadequacies. For this reason, when I refer to perspectives and positions derived from these areas of knowledge throughout this work, it is important to clarify that these are specific areas of research in these fields that are circumscribed to the different authors I cite throughout this text.

I am also fully aware of another structural limit of this work, which is related to my social and academic position and allows me to reflect on the integration of pain and self-healing, from a situation of privilege and economic well-being. I understand that, in a society characterised by inequality, poverty and injustice, a significant part of the citizenry is subjected to precariousness, fear and exhausting working hours. In this context, as proposed in this essay, it may be inadequate—and even offensive—to establish the necessity of advancing towards the integration of the self and the emancipation of consciousness.

Nevertheless, and beyond the cognitive and epistemological limits that characterise this writing, I have included in these pages the analysis with which I may be able to contribute to the debate on the construction of a more sustainable and equitable world. This reflection is the fruit of an experience that imbricates the spiritual and the political, understanding that the paths for the deconstruction of this system of systematic violence also suppose, and principally, a transformation in the consciousness of human beings to find individual and collective paths to nationhood, emancipation and freedom.

## **PART I.**

# **THE NATURALISATION OF POWER, VIOLENCE, AND INEQUALITY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF FRAGMENTED IDENTITIES**

# CHAPTER 1

## THE DISCOURSES OF POWER THAT SHAPE, SUBJECT AND ESTABLISH REALITY

The main thesis on which this text is based is that the Western, capitalist and modern system has constructed a collective imaginary in which the identity of human beings is based on the primacy of the rational, individualised and competitive mind. By modelling a communitarian (and unquestionable) belief that conceives people as profoundly mental beings, power structures exert an intersubjective force that denies the rest of the dimensions of being related to bodily, emotional, relational/social and spiritual spaces. Thus, the first part of this essay focuses on studying the relationships between what I have called the *fragmentation of the being* and the construction of a hegemonic system with multiple hierarchies and inequalities.

To help shape the development of these ideas, the study of the nature and dimensions of power acquires a fundamental relevance that invites us to understand the processes that subject individuals and generate the dynamics of fragmentation and suffering that are discussed in depth throughout this text. It is worth noting that, in the social sciences field, many diverse writings analyse the essence of power and its impact on today's society, and, therefore, it is beyond the scope of this text to arrive at a complete definition of this concept. Nevertheless, to begin to configure the reflections proposed here, we may assume that, in the first instance, power is understood as the capacity to impose, through coercion, threats or violence, the interest and will of an actor on other actors and social groups. Thus, in this initial definition, it is possible to observe the visible structure of this power, which is easy to identify in the actions of States, authorities or criminal groups.

However, the devices to which I am referring possess a much more transcendent power in their capacity to erect a certain way of understanding and crystallising reality. In this way, power is also the faculty to create principles and foundations that are then experienced as common sense in a socio-political community. The imposition of these common senses leads to a specific judgement about what constitutes human beings, animals, and



nature, thus drawing an *ontology of being*<sup>1</sup>. Inside this process, the seductive capacity of power inserts itself into the psyche of individuals, determining which processes are desirable to obtain happiness, recognition and social success.

In this evolution, the mechanisms of domination are integrated into networks that transcend the material spaces referring to policies, institutions and actors to supply life and death drives alternately—*Eros and Thanatos* (Freud, 1992). *Eros* stands for a concrete idea of pleasure, desire and self-realisation, while *Thanatos* establishes mechanisms of coercion and violence that limit social, political, and economic relations between subjects.

In this way, power subjugates and normalises the dynamics of existence, embedding itself in our bodies, intimacy and unconscious to exert an irresistible influence on human consciousness.

In this context, modern societies seem to have produced, through educational institutions, media, family or public administrations, norms that impose a concrete and desirable way of living and being. In today's capitalist and transnational universe, aspirational structures are related to market dynamics and products. Thus, human beings are incorporated—as commodities—into the laws that regulate economic and commercial relations along with their premiums, assets, debts, interests and risks. In most cases—or at least in mine—these dynamics impose processes of individualisation and alienation that violate human nature and condemn us to profound suffering and disaffection. For all these reasons, the first part of this paper focuses on explaining the configuration of a polyhedral power structure that creates identities which, in my view, are of profound importance both for understanding the narratives and visions that shape our society and for analysing the mechanisms and material processes that organise a broad base of inequalities and violence in contemporary society.

As I will explain throughout this paper, this book intends not only to carry out a theoretical exercise aimed at briefly describing each of the main systems of domination that shape contemporary societies. On the contrary, the purpose of these reflections is to try to argue that the systems of power are part of the very basis of our everyday life; that is why I believe that in the context of the political proposals that we can imagine, we need to begin

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<sup>1</sup> Ontology is a branch of philosophy, specifically metaphysics, that studies the essence of being and its properties. The expression *ontology of being* I use in this work refers to a specific and intersubjectively constructed idea about the essentiality of human beings, nature and the rest of the living beings that inhabit the planet.

to imagine personal and communal paths of emancipation that allow consciousness to shed light on the devices that, in an unconscious and normalised way, shape our perceptions and feelings.

# CHAPTER 2

## A UNITARY AND INDIVISIBLE SYSTEM CONSTITUTED BY MULTIPLE APPARATUSES OF DOMINATION

As explained, the first part of this essay aims to understand how a system of power is articulated and constructs hegemonic ideologies that are imposed on nature and living beings. For the work I have set out to do, it is essential to carry out a complex diagnosis of the visible and invisible networks that envelop and hold us, which implies an analytical and emotional exercise that is inevitably fraught with despair and unease.

Perhaps a brief parenthesis is important to indicate that the other two sections of this manuscript deal with more hopeful and constructive positions concerning the emancipation and integration of the self, which are related to creating a more just and sustainable system. Thus, the final objective of these lines is to develop a political proposal that imbricates the intimate, the emotional and the spiritual with the political and material dimensions of our daily and public life.

Returning to the argument and contextualising the analysis within a historical framework, we can argue that the constitution of modernity—in the eighteenth century—institutionalised a rationalist, mechanistic and empiricist worldview in the West. In this sense, human beings are at the apex of the evolution of the species, while nature is imagined as a vast resource without spirit and intelligence.

Thus, it derives a sociological space founded on materialism that assumes a mechanistic vision of the earth and its beings, which are considered (consciously or unconsciously) commodities at the service of man's<sup>2</sup>

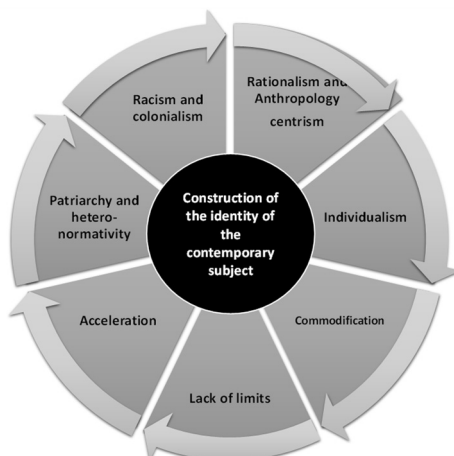
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<sup>2</sup> At some points in the text, I use the term "man" as a synonym for human beings because the instruments of power possess an androcentric worldview that crystallises in language as a producer and reproducer of realities. Taking this reference, it seems important to me to maintain this androcentric bias in certain analyses because it allows us to describe the supremacist visions that are being

capitalism and economies of scale.

From the analytical perspective I intend to develop here, the hegemonic system is considered an expansive structure that colonises our everyday life's cultural, social, political and economic spaces. Thus, Figure 1 illustrates the idea of a single device constituted by multiple hegemonies that, in addition, configure and subject the construction of the identity of the modern subject.

FIGURE 1. HEGEMONIES AND NARRATIVES THAT SHAPE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE CONTEMPORARY SELF



Source: Own elaboration.

As has been expressed, these are networks of domination that have been intertwined in a complex manner throughout history, making it very problematic today to conceive of them in isolation and independently. Thus, the concept of heterarchy, employed by decolonial studies to depict a system intertwined with various economic, intersubjective, and political relations (Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007), which disciplines individual identities, is insightful. This imposition affects not only the oppressed but

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analysed here. From here on, the rest of the text uses grammatical genders interchangeably as I consider that words have the enormous potential to build cognitive and emotional frameworks that allow us to imagine and decode the world.

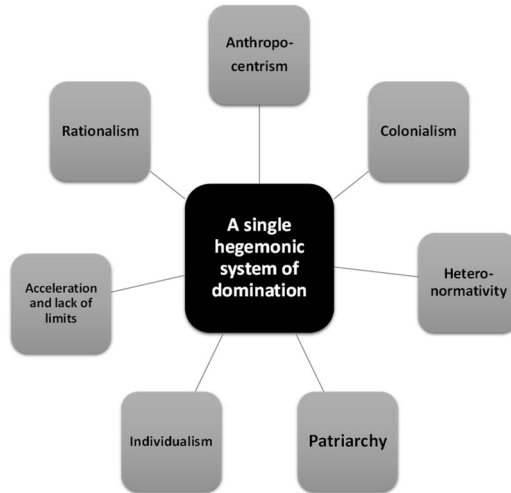
also privileged groups in the world system.

Likewise, these gears transcend the materiality of economic relations to become embedded in our bodies, feelings and pains. In this way, modern society builds an imaginary where the community is a mercantile space composed of subjects destined to struggle for a safe and successful place in the community. For the capitalist system, this safe place is nothing other than a dominant position both economically and socially. In this scenario, the subjects end up experiencing a life dedicated to incessant and exhausting competition, and—in my opinion—this struggle for economic security and social recognition conceals an unexpected demand for love and belonging that all people need in our life process.

I constantly observe these colonisation mechanisms in my own physical experience, desires, and wishes and in the systematic need to conform my identity to a series of aesthetic, material, and cognitive instances that are considered normal. I contemplate my unconscious and daily search for achievements that give me status and belonging, which only camouflages the deep need for acceptance, affection and recognition. I observe how my shortcomings and incompleteness are linked to the hegemonies of the system. It is at this point where I manage to interconnect (at least in my case) the processes of pain, trauma and denial of self with the foundation of a series of devices of domination and violence that shape a good part of human organisations.

For all these reasons, I am beginning the journey of this work by analysing the multiple faces of a system of domination where gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, social class, identity and sexual orientation are interconnected. I believe that only from this intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 2017) is it possible to recognise the complex cosmos of inequalities on which, historically, human societies have been structured. Thus, the following pages analyse, individually and by chapters, the systems of domination based on patriarchy, anthropocentrism, colonialism, racism, heteronormativity, individualism, competitiveness, commodification and the denial of limits as dispositions of domination that form part of a single and unique biosphere of power.

FIGURE 2. A HEGEMONIC SYSTEM CONSTITUTED BY MULTIPLE STRUCTURES OF DOMINATION



Source: Own elaboration.

I want to emphasise that, for pedagogical and expository clarity purposes, the hegemonies described below are presented independently and categorised by epigraphs, even though they are constructs built on a single substantivity.

The aim is to succinctly describe how each of these facets constructs an (artificial) universe of a patriarchal, anthropocentric and commodified nature incorporated into multiple spaces of everyday human life.

Finally, I want to warn the reader about the analytical exercises I developed below. The object of this essay is deconstruction, not destruction; consequently, inviting us to strip ourselves of hegemonies does not imply undervaluing, ignoring or denying the importance of rationality, science and Western knowledge. Nor does it imply ignoring the value of economic growth and human welfare that the development of capitalism and technology have generated in the last hundred years of contemporary history.

However, what has been said above does not prevent me from stating that the sense of this work is to imagine a broader understanding of reality, where, on the one hand, we can understand the shadows and violence in the construction of society and the modern subject, and, on the other hand, integrate other knowledge, imaginaries, practices and hopes to our sea of desires and possibilities. From there, we could establish dialectics and transits around the emancipation of being and the construction of the common good.

## CHAPTER 3

### RATIONALISM AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE SELF

Given the historical evolution of knowledge considered scientific and the political and social organisation of our Western societies, it seems logical to start with an analysis that places rationalism as a philosophical school of enormous importance, from the Enlightenment to the present day.

In the framework of this text, rationalism will be understood as a doctrine that conceives reason as the backbone of human existence. It is a vision rooted in a broad philosophical and political current of the seventeenth century that places cognition as the supreme dimension of being, understands that reality can be known through an analytical and scientific method, and equates human existence with its capacity to think (Descartes, 1637). Descartes is perhaps the most illustrious representative of this thought, which contains an ontology that advocated the displacement of God from the centre of the political and social system to place man in this supreme place from the seventeenth century onwards. As I have mentioned, in this ontology, the concept of man has a profound androcentric bias since, implicitly or explicitly, the man of the history and philosophy of this era is male, Western, white, heteronormative and bourgeois.

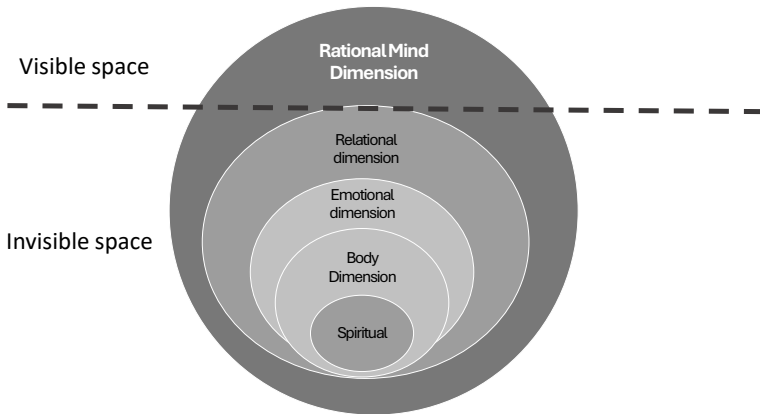
In my view, rationalism presents an analytical architecture that standardises people and configures the idea that an aseptic and objective being is possible, who can also function through a logical identity detached from life circumstances. Following this logic, the modern subject unfolds through a cognitive apparatus that allows him to evaluate all life's options. In this conceptual framework, this subject stands at the top of the evolutionary chain insofar as they possess the *logos* that—unlike the rest of living beings—give access to language, argumentation and mental contemplation of his existence. In the finding of these thoughts is built, in my opinion, the false idea that we are (primarily or only) mental subjects, and this process implies the denial of the emotional, bodily, spiritual and relational dimensions of the human being, which I will discuss in more detail in the second part of this essay.



In my experience as a university teacher and researcher, these positions have been endowed, over the last three centuries, with a veneer of academic and scientific legitimacy that strengthens rationalist ontologisation.

In this way, the form the present is interpreted is based on the hegemonic logics of the past, and, therefore, the supposed truths on which science and knowledge were founded are essential to understanding our current conception of life. Hence, academic and erudite knowledge has given these rationalists and cartesian positions political and epistemological legitimacy that has taken root in common sense. Thus, the foundation and development of the social sciences, which tend to provide answers to the problems of human organisations, are closely linked to these cognitive paradigms.

FIGURE 3. THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SUBJECT WITH RATIONALISM AND THE DENIAL OF THE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF BEING



Source: Own elaboration.

As Michel Foucault explained in the 1970s, the structures of domination have an ineluctable need for pure scientific knowledge; the aim is to impose, under the cloak of analytical legitimacy, the hegemonic "truths" that then shape, sustain and justify the administration of our reality (Foucault, 1975). In this sense, the narratives of domination imposed by power on society are gradually incorporated into perceptions, visions and desires until they become invisible every day and (almost) embedded in our bodies and

habitual behaviours in a powerful and unconscious way. In this sense, knowledge can become an exceptional ally of power.

Among the various authors, it is perhaps illustrative to highlight the philosopher Adam Smith, one of the most important pioneers in the development of economic sciences. In his book "The Wealth of Nations", this author develops a vision which proposes that individuals can maximising their options and obtain the ideal return for their personal interests in each of their daily decisions (Smith, 1776). This rational entity develops in an environment of scarce goods that will inevitably require a system that allocates resources and material elements: the market. Consequently, private and competitive dynamics generate the progress and welfare of human organisations.

This is how the idea of *Homo economicus* is born, a philosophical perspective that conceives of human subjects as profoundly individual, necessarily selfish, and with an extraordinary mind capable of acquiring complete knowledge of reality. These postulates represent, in my opinion, a complex fiction that has already been discarded by the progress of neuroscience and psychology, both because they deny the multidimensionality of being and the importance of emotions, the body and social relations in the processes of perception and decision-making, and because they naively believe that the human mind can access a complete and complex knowledge of reality.

### **3.1 Cartesian rational man and the ego of Buddhist philosophy**

In an exercise of absolute (and perhaps unwise) cognitive freedom, I believe it is plausible to relate these Western views—which, whether we are aware of it or not, are metaphysical—to the Buddhist conception of the *ego*. In contrast to the West, the ego is conceived in these philosophies in a negative and problematic way. It is possible to begin by describing the ego as a false identification of the self, a being whose mind evaluates, compares and qualifies everything, always judging and separating the good from the bad, categorising people according to their subjective criteria and establishing walls and borders with the rest of the subjects.

Buddhism has developed a philosophical doctrine that has studied the concept of the ego in immense depth, defining it as a powerful mirage that roots humans into frustration, fear and disconsolation. In this way, modern identity is built on pain, scarcity and incompleteness, and this lack of a sense justifies an endless search for recognition and validation through heightened

ambitions of importance, status and material security. Thus, people confuse being with having, love with recognition, freedom with hedonism, self-realisation with accumulation and wisdom with information.

All this ultimately involves constructing a material and social system that expands the ego to the arteries of society, erecting a political biosphere characterised by asymmetries that, observed from a distance, reach absurd and cruel extremes in the social organisations that administer our life in common. At this point in the text, you may question how one can outline the perverse idea of linking Cartesian rationalism with Buddhist perspectives that, according to our academic knowledge, have nothing to do with intellectual and enlightened analyses in the search for knowledge.

Well, one of the main reflections of what is being proposed is that precisely this ordinary and imperceptible way of thinking and feeling is built on a belief system based on control, judgement and competence. These narratives shape our reality while explaining and justifying the political, economic and social administration of our organisations and communities. From my perspective, this ego, or in Western words, this false construction of the self, stands as a foundational fact in the hegemonic system described in the first part of this essay.

In other words, this system of beliefs that shapes one's identity and anchors human experience in the becoming of the mind is what allows power to be a weapon for imposing, subjugating and modulating the rest of humanity, and—it is important to add—this subjugation is exercised according to the particular interests of the privileged actors of the system-world. On the other hand, political emancipation implies a personal path of gradual dismantling of this ego, freeing ourselves from the visions and processes that tie us tightly to an extremely painful system of thought while preventing us from imagining and building more sustainable, loving and just societies.

Before concluding this epigraph, I would like to make a precision. As will be seen throughout this text, the postulates I am defending are not, in any case, totalised elements impermeable to nuances and criticisms; on the contrary, I believe that doubts and questions are an important part of the cognitive, political and emotional approach to what I am proposing. For this reason, I would like to emphasise that this text does not propose to undervalue the importance of reason and cognitive capacities, which are essential for the development and evolution of human beings. Notably, these competencies—related to complex thinking, language, decision-making, emotional regulation and executive functions—are the ones that allow us to

go through itineraries of reflection and self-awareness to question ourselves about the meaning of life.

In this sense, this communicative exercise is now allowing the establishment of bridges of dialogue and interconnection between the people who, in different ways, are linked to this text. Therefore, the purpose of this section is not to discredit the importance of reason but, more precisely, to deconstruct the totalitarian idea that the human subject is just a rational and objective being with a mind whose incessant and competitive thoughts make up the integrity of our personality.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANTHROPOCENTRISM THAT DENIES THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF ALL LIVING BEINGS

As shown previously, the central perspective of this part of the book is linked to a complex system of beliefs that are unified in a single substantiality, although multiple hegemonies constitute them. Moreover, the idea of the primacy of the rational mind is accompanied by the notion that man is a superior being, separate from other living beings and nature. This perception is an ancient belief that crystallises—among other foundational documents of Western thought—in the Old Testament Genesis, which explains that man is destined to subdue the earth and to dispose of all beings that crawl on it (Genesis, 1940, VI:28). In this way, Christian ontological representations—as well as those of the other monotheistic religions - have traditionally placed man at the centre of God's creation, the only species capable of freedom without subjugation and capable of shaping its unique destiny.

Thus, the centrality of the human being (man) in ontological perspectives gradually developed in the Middle Ages through humanist thought. Among the various references that promoted these existential ideals, I would like to mention the Italian philosopher Pico della Mirandola, who, in his *Discourse on the Dignity of Man*, gives content to these speciesist and androcentric doctrines, conceptually anticipating the anthropocentric turn that later gave way to rationalist modernity (Pico della Mirandola, 1496). In other words, the importance that human nature is acquiring in Catholic theory allows the transition from the theocentric ideal to the anthropocentric perspective which is a foundational element of the Enlightenment.

It is important to understand the philosophical power of this metaphysics as part of the modern and Cartesian visions that institute our current conception of life based on Christian theology. Moreover, taking as a reference the biblical scripture, where man is modelled in the image and likeness of God, the Church has historically expanded this dominating archetype until the publication of *Laudato si'*, written by Pope Francis in 2015, which deeply criticises anthropocentrism and the degradation that

human beings are exerting on the earth and animals (Catholic Church and Pope Francis, 2015).

To complete this argument, I will examine anthropocentrism as a doctrine that sees humans as the innate owner of the planet; furthermore, this perspective understands nature as a productive and inert space destined to provide resources for people's well-being, comfort and pleasure. From this domination, Newtonian conceptions are derived, which conceive reality as a mechanistic entity comprising the sum of its parts in a material world perfectly intelligible to human reason.

Modern society has created an imaginary biosphere that denies the sacred condition of Mother Earth (or Pachamama) and turns it into a reified, desert-like, and inorganic entity to technological demiurgy (Jonas, 1966). Consequently, the domination of nature is an intrinsic condition of the modern system, which will use these "natural resources" to create and sustain incremental, productive and abundant societies. In this cognitive and emotional framework, the rest of living beings, especially animals, are embedded in the category of commodities, which has established a system of production and consumption that, in a naturalised and invisible way, subjects hundreds of millions of living beings to violence, torture and suffering. Thus, we go through our existence integrating a sort of social psychopathy that normalises the reification of all living beings and anaesthetises us in the face of the inconceivable cruelty with which we have decided to relate to this complex, subtle, balanced and mysterious ecosystem that is planet Earth.

All this leads to a capitalist imaginary based on a Cartesian dualism aimed at building an ecosystem of hierarchies and subordination: mind/body, nature/culture, good/evil, man/woman, human/animal, or civilisation/barbarism. This duality seems to mandate the existence of two definitive and antagonistic foundations that hierarchise a biosphere of people, resources and animals by defining who should possess wealth, power and cognition. This narrative and emotional foundation facilitates the development of a utilitarian system oriented to accumulation and the fiction of infinite growth. This hegemony of the modern imaginary ultimately allows the exploitation of the lives, bodies, and subjectivities of animals and people.